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Dispossession vs. Accommodation in Plaintiff vs. Defendant Accounts of Métis Dispersal from Manitoba, 1870-1881

D.N. Sprague

ABSTRACT. *Prairie Forum* 16, no. 1, contained an article by Thomas Flanagan that provided statistical evidence against the argument that the Métis of Assiniboia were dispossessed by the governments of Canada and Manitoba. This article, by a major proponent of the dispossession thesis, disputes that statistical evidence. An attempt is also made to review the evidence and lay bare the assumptions underlying that evidence for both the dispossession thesis and for the conflicting thesis that vindicates government behaviour in the Métis lands matter.

SOMMAIRE. Dans *Prairie Forum* 16, n° 1, on pouvait lire un article de Thomas Flanagan qui apportait des preuves statistiques visant à démolir l'argument selon lequel les gouvernements du Canada et du Manitoba dépouillèrent de leurs terres les Métis de l'Assiniboia. L'article qui suit, rédigé par l'un des principaux défenseurs de la thèse du dépouillement, remet en question les preuves statistiques. L'auteur tente également de passer en revue ces statistiques et de dévoiler les assumptions qui sous-tendent la thèse du dépouillement et celle, opposée, qui justifie le comportement du gouvernement dans l'affaire des terres Métis.

According to well-established Métis oral tradition, the Red River Resistance of 1869-1870 was more than Canada could bear. Riel was driven from power; his people lost their land; and the Red River Métis were forced to ever more remote parts of their own homeland by hostile invaders. They were classic victims. Such is the stuff of oral tradition — it simplifies and deifies, but reduces complex reality to the nub of some usable memory, not necessarily false.¹ An oral tradition is an inherited approximation, a collective editing of fact. For people without written history or archives, the importance of maintaining such touch with the past is perhaps most well developed.

For academic historians, oral traditions are useful for formulating questions in documentary investigation. From the 1930s George Stanley, for example, was alert to evidence of victimization and confirmed the injustice done Riel.² At the same time, he reiterated the legend of the wholesale swindle of the general population, but without elaborate documentation of the process, nor did Stanley impugn the essential good faith of Canada's negotiators of the Manitoba Act, or of the administration of the land-promise provisions of the statute by the Department of the Interior. Nor did W.L. Morton or the other academic historians touching upon the subject in the 1950s and 1960s. The novelty of the dispossession-preceding-migration explanation of the turnover of population in Manitoba in academic history appearing in the 1980s was the suggestion that Métis dispersal was fostered by "government lawlessness," processes of legislative amendment and administration that unfolded more or less without regard to legal propriety.³

The reckless amendment aspect of "government lawlessness" was found in the evisceration of the land-promise provisions of the Manitoba Act by amending statutes and orders in council (as if the law were any ordinary statute, rather than an integral part of the constitution of Canada). The other aspect of "lawlessness" appeared in the records of the Department of the Interior showing its discriminatory administration of land claims. Since the two patterns of

evidence together are the basis for allegations in a lawsuit still pending,⁴ the “government lawlessness” version of the story is fairly characterized as the plaintiff account of Métis dispersal.

Historians Gerhard Ens and Thomas Flanagan have been retained by the Canadian Department of Justice since 1986 to defend Canada from the plaintiff’s claims. Both have published what they consider a better view of the same evidence.⁵ As the defendants’ defenders they argue that the dispersal of the Red River Métis after 1870 was simply an acceleration or accentuation of disintegration evident for at least a decade before the transfer of Rupert’s Land to Canada. In 1870 (continuing to about 1872) many conflicts are admitted to have occurred between old settlers and newcomers, especially between the French-Catholic Métis and Ontario-origin Protestants. Such conflict (said to be completely beyond the control of Canada) is regarded by Flanagan and Ens as tipping the balance in the minds of many Métis who were already tempted by the pull factors that are supposed to have become almost irresistible by the 1860s. The assertion Ens and Flanagan stress is that virtually all persons who wanted to remain on the land they occupied in 1870 had merely to corroborate their claims to occupancy with the testimony of neighbours, and their titles would eventually be confirmed as free grants by Canada. So powerful was the temptation to sell, however, particularly in the context of escalating land values during the boom of 1880 to 1882, even many confirmed landowners sold out and moved on. At the same time, of course, they liquidated other assets. Flanagan argues that the prices received reflected fair current values. On that account, if descendants of the original settlers in poor circumstances today identify the root of their problems with the imaginary dispossession of their ancestors in the last century, they dream a “morally destructive”⁶ nightmare in Flanagan’s characterization. According to Ens and Flanagan, Canada fulfilled and overfulfilled the land promise provisions of the Manitoba Act. Some small mistakes were made, but as errors in good faith; the assertion of an overall pattern of *deliberate* discouragement conflicts with what Flanagan calls “overwhelming” evidence proving nearly the exact opposite was the case.⁷

What follows is a comparison of the evidence of the two sides on the issues for which a central claim and counter-claim have emerged to date.

Migration History

Did the pattern of the 1870s represent a dramatic accentuation? or abrupt departure from previous trends?

The position taken by Ens on migration, 1870-1881, is basically a continuity thesis. Table 1 exhibits some figures reported by Ens in support of his argument. A quick glance at the population trends in St. Andrew’s and St. François Xavier (SFX) shows that both parishes sustained phenomenal growth rates even with considerable out-migration for his first period of observation, 1835 to 1849. The population of the Protestant-Métis parish increased 195 percent in that fourteen-

year period. The Catholic-Métis example grew slightly less rapidly in the same interval (180 percent) because SFX sustained a higher rate of outmigration. Still, the base period was one of unsurpassed *rates* of growth for both areas of the Red River settlement.

TABLE 1

POPULATION TRENDS, WHOLE SETTLEMENT VS. SELECT AREAS

	St. Andrew's		SFX		Whole Settlement	
	Observed	Expected	Observed	Expected	Observed	Expected
1835	547	—	506	—	3646	—
1849	1068	—	911	—	5391	—
1856	1207	—	1101	—	8691	—
1863	—	2082	—	1640	—	7979
1870	1456	—	1857	—	11960	—
1877	—	4060	967	2952	—	11809
1881	947	—	743	—	—	—

Explanation: "Expected" figures are based on the rate of increase for each area observed in the interval between 1835 and 1849 (195 percent in 14 years for St. Andrew's, 180 percent in 14 years for St. François Xavier, and 148 percent in 14 years for the whole settlement).

Sources: The St. Andrew's and SFX "Observed" values are in Ens, "Dispossession or Adaptation," 128, 136, and 138 (footnote 62); Whole Settlement "Observed" values are the totals from the Red River Census of 1835 and 1849 in the Hudson's Bay Company Archives, Provincial Archives of Manitoba and the tabulation of the 1870 census of Manitoba reported in the Canadian Sessional Papers, No. 20 (1871).

The new pattern, allegedly extending into the 1870s, is supposed to be evident from the 1850s and 1860s. According to Ens, there was a steady increase in out-migration in response to a dramatic change in the economy, a shift away from summer-autumn pemmican production (with people maintaining a home-base claim to their river-front properties at Red River) towards winter harvest of buffalo for their hide and fur when the coat of the beasts was thickest. With more people chasing fewer animals at a different time of year, the result was expansion of the trade at the expense of the population of the Red River settlement. Ens argues that "scrip records" of the Department of the Interior, 1885-1921, show an ever-increasing exodus which began in the 1850s.⁸

The most serious difficulty with the attempt to locate the beginning of the great dispersal before 1870 is that the argument relies on population trends in two parishes taken in isolation from the rest of the settlement. When the focus shifts to the larger picture, the "Whole Settlement" column of Table 1, the obvious conclusion is that the older parishes began to exhibit declining rates of increase in the 1850s and 1860s as they became crowded and more and more people moved to well-timbered vacant land in nearby satellite parishes. As a result, the rate of increase in the older areas began to level off, but population increase for the settlement as a whole (projected as a figure from the overall rate of growth observed for the 1835-1849 period) continued unabated. Indeed, the whole-settlement population expected for 1863 and 1877 (on the sustained rate calculation projecting the 1835-1849 rate to 1877) was in fact exceeded by the observed figures for 1856 and 1870. In other words, while the rate of increase

in the over-populated parishes slowed, that of the newer areas in Red River accelerated because the population surplus from the old spilled over to vacant land in the new. The hypothesis of an increasing *rate* of outmigration to distant destinations is not sustained by the undiminished growth of the community taken as the old parishes and their nearby satellites. Net migration plus natural increase sustained the same rate of growth for that entity from 1850 to 1870, as from 1835 to 1849. Table 1 shows that the dramatic change from the pattern — the real break in continuity — dated from the 1870s, not the 1860s.

Persistence to 1875

Large or small?

While the population data show that the great dispersal began sometime before 1877, the same figures do not show the precise timing and, of course, the reasons for migration between 1870 and 1877. Ens and Flanagan admit that certain push factors were present in August 1870. They deny that the pushes — formal or informal — were as powerful as the lure of the new fur trade dating from the earlier period. They agree that a “reign of terror”⁹ began with the arrival of Canada’s peacekeepers and continued until 1872;¹⁰ they do not hold Canada responsible for the lawlessness. Nor do they see delays of Métis land claims during the terror period (along with encouragement of newcomers to take up land wherever they found apparently vacant locations)¹¹ as part of an unstated policy of deliberate discouragement to original settlers. Ens and Flanagan insist that the outcome was an inadvertent rather than an intended result. From that standpoint, it is important to show that large scale migration began before a single claimant was disappointed in his land claim.

Late in 1873 Canada finally opened the door to wholesale consideration of Métis claims to river lots and more than two thousand applications for letters patent confirming ownership came forward over the next twelve months. The surveyor general reported in December 1874 that “2059 applications under section 32, and subsequent amendment[s] of the Manitoba Act, have been received and filed, of which, 614 have been examined and recommended for patent.”¹² Over the next several years Canada completed the examination of several hundred more claims. Table 2 shows that by the end of 1877 approximately 850 river lot claims had passed through the process of application, consideration, and confirmation. The same tabulation also makes clear that roughly one-third (282 of 855) represented cases of purported buyers claiming the land of occupants who may have sold out *before* 1875. According to Ens, “This early glut of river-lot sales would seem to contradict Mailhot and Sprague’s assertion that 90 per cent of those Métis found in the 1870 census were still in the settlement in 1875.”¹³ In fact, the record of the “early glut of river-lot sales” exhibited in Table 2 is evidence of something completely separate from the issue of the persistence of an increasingly discouraged Métis population.

TABLE 2
MANITOBA ACT GRANTS OF RIVER LOTS BY PARISH AND YEAR

MANUFACTORY GRANTS OF REVENUE TO ST. PAULS AND LIND.									
French Parishes					English Parishes				
Old		New		Old		New		Totals	
Owner	Buyer	Owner	Buyer	Owner	Buyer	Owner	Buyer		
April-June 1875	57	10	2	—	102	11	28	—	210
June 1876-March 1877	78	46	9	15	124	34	29	20	355
March-Nov. 1877	44	52	24	45	41	33	35	16	290
Totals	179	108	35	60	267	78	92	36	855

Explanation: "Old" parishes are the areas included in the HBC survey in the 1830s. "Old French" are St. Boniface, St. Charles, St. Vital, St. Norbert, and SFX. "New French" are Ste. Anne, St. Laurent, Ste. Agathe, and Baie St. Paul. "Old English" includes St. Johns, Kildonan, Headingly, St. Pauls, St. Andrew's, and St. Clements. "New English" are Portage la Prairie, Poplar Point, High Bluff and Westburne.

Until 1878, special forms were used for different kinds of Dominion Lands grants. "D.L. Grant (33. Vic.);" distinguished Manitoba Act grants from all others. Each such patent described the land, named the owner in 1870 as well as the patentee.

Source: Government copies of the Manitoba Act grant patents are in the National Archives of Canada, microfilm reel C-3992, C-3994, and C-3996. The confirmation that the three cited locations embrace every "D.L. Grant (33 Vic.);" is the Alphabetical Index, Parish Land, Manitoba (1875-1883), also in the NAC, microfilm reel M-1640.

The data supporting Mailhot and Sprague's "assertion" of large-scale persistence are census returns reported in 1875 permitting comparison with the pattern of 1870. The 1870 figures, printed in the *Sessional Papers* of 1871,¹⁴ indicate that the Métis population then was 9,800 people (9,778 according to the enumeration of the whole province by "English" enumerators, 9,840 according to the "French"). The comparison number for 1875 is found in the returns of commissioners who took affidavits from Métis and descendants of "original white settlers" to enrol both for Canada's revised concept of the benefit of section 31 of the Manitoba Act and its amendments. Their lists of diverse categories of claimants have survived for nearly every parish.¹⁵ Table 3 shows that Commissioners Machar and Ryan accounted for more than 9,000 of the persons enrolled in the 1870 census. However, Machar found about 500 "half breeds" in the 1870 enumeration of the Protestant parishes ineligible for Canada's concept of benefits under section 31 in 1875 (mainly because they had "taken treaty" since 1871 and become "Indians," or because they were absent at the time of the transfer on 15 July but present for enrolment in the census in October, or because they were children whose birth dates fell between the date of the transfer and time of the census, between July and October 1870). Ryan's list of claims "disallowed" in the French Catholic parishes has not been found. But assuming a rate of disallowance in the Catholic parishes that was at least half as much as the Protestant (because French "half breeds" were less likely to have "taken treaty"), the number of disallowed claims for the Catholic parishes by reason of absence from Manitoba on the date of the transfer and disqualifying

birth date was probably no less than 250 persons, making an overall total of 9,334 — “half breeds” and “original white settlers” — in 1875. Since 714 of the claimants were in the “original white settler” category, the persistent Métis component would appear to be 8,620 persons, or 88 percent of the 1870 figure.

TABLE 3

ENROLMENT OF MANITOBA “HALF BREEDS” AND “ORIGINAL WHITE SETTLERS”
BY COMMISSIONERS MACHAR AND RYAN, MAY-DECEMBER 1875

BY COMMISSIONER HATCHER AND OTHERS, MAY DECEMBER 1875

	Categories of Claimants			Whites	Totals
	“heads”	“Half breed” “children”	disallowed		
Protestant Parishes					
St. Peters	35	61	270	—	366
St. Clements	132	251	3	—	420
St. Andrew’s	392	798	116	29	1335
Kildonan	23	58	5	369	455
St. Johns	44	106	27	38	215
St. Pauls	66	133	11	27	237
St. James	87	157	6	21	271
Headingly	56	156	11	45	268
High Bluff/Pop. Pt.	160	360	27	22	569
Portage/White Mud	78	178	33	24	313
Catholic Parishes					
St. Boniface	283	526	—	19	828
St. Vital	72	171	—	44	287
St. Norbert	252	562	—	19	833
Ste. Agathe	135	240	—	—	375
Ste. Anne	81	226	—	32	339
St. Charles	97	190	—	3	290
SFX/Baie St. Paul	495	897	—	22	1414
St. Laurent/Oak Pt.	80	189	—	—	269
Totals	2568	5259	543	714	9084

Machar canvassed the Protestant parishes, Ryan the Catholic. Sources: See footnote 15.

The situation of many persisting families with unresolved claims puts in question migration estimates based on purported sales of land by “landowners” where a landowner population is still indeterminate. The census of 1875 provides a more appropriate statement of the facts regarding persistence to that time. There were approximately 2,000 Métis families in the Red River settlement in 1870 and approximately 1,800 were enumerated again in 1875. River lot claims establish that 2,059 persons represented themselves as “landowners” by 1874 but 1,200 were still unconfirmed as late as December 1877. Since the beginning of the great exodus would appear to fall between 1875 and 1877, Canada's delays and denials might account for far more migration than Ens and Flanagan are willing to concede.

Canada's Confirmation of Titles to River Lots

Every occupant seeking accommodation? or systematic denial of the customary rights guaranteed by the Manitoba Act?

Ens's analysis of land occupancy and sale presupposes a system of formal survey and documentary evidence establishing a chain of title from date of survey to most recent recorded owner. No survey, no land description or record of ownership. No record of ownership, no owner. Sprague's discussion of Métis land tenure assumes a system of customary demarcation of boundaries and descent of rights by community consent. People allotted what they needed. They owned what they used. The obvious point of potential conflict between the two historians was also the point of disagreement between the Métis and Canada in 1869. Métis leaders recognized that the transfer of Rupert's Land to the new Dominion would bring a transition from the customary to the formal system of land tenures, and there was no assurance when Canada's surveyors started their work even before the transfer that the existing population would not be "driven back from the rivers and their land given to others."¹⁶ What made the potential for conflict all the more ominous was that the Red River settlement already had a system of land survey and registry that covered enough of the population that some future authority might be tempted to assert that everyone who deserved protection was already registered.

The system of survey and registry that was partially in effect dated from the mid-1830s. Always eager for a new way to turn a shilling, the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) had authorized subdivision of the settlement almost as soon as the company clarified the matter of overall title with the heirs of Lord Selkirk. The surveyor hired for the task of confirming the boundaries of the lots occupied by Selkirk settlers (to receive free land), other settlers (expected to pay), and room to grow (lot by lot as succeeding generations of established settlers and newcomers bought land from the HBC) was George Taylor. He laid out 1528 river lots of approximately 100 acres each by 1838 and the HBC capped the project with the opening of a land registry that most settlers cheerfully ignored.¹⁷ In effect, the settlement developed on a dual-track basis — customary as well as formal, especially as the population expanded beyond the limits of the Taylor survey in the 1850s.

By 1860 the HBC abandoned any pretense of enforcing payment for lands. That year, the local Council of Assiniboia adopted a homestead ordinance affirming the legitimacy of the customary, unrecorded system, but required a survey and registration of ownership (in the territory beyond the Taylor survey) where disputes arose. To be sure, settlers with some knowledge of the paper mysteries surrounding formal land tenure did order such surveys in advance of their occupation of vacant land. R.A. Ruttan, the commissioner of Dominion Lands in Winnipeg in the late 1880s, explained the practice to Archer Martin, a jurist-historian trying to make sense of Red River land tenures in the mid-1890s:

The Council of Assiniboia authorized two surveyors [probably the only ones in the settlement] Goulet and Sabine, to make surveys for parties desiring to take up land *outside the H.B. surveys*. A survey made by one of those gentlemen defined the land which you or I might hold: gave us a facility for recording too. There was no limit other than that imposed by custom to the river frontage (the country distant from the rivers wasn't considered of any value in those days) which might be taken, excepting the Minute of Council which prescribed 12 chains as the limit in cases of dispute which practically enabled one to take possession of part of the property if anyone were trying to hold more than 12 chains.

I cannot learn that there ever was a dispute before 'the transfer.'¹⁸

Unfortunately for the Métis, Canada took the formalities of ownership more seriously than the pattern of residency. Mailhot and Sprague were careful to point out that "the land surveyors were not part of a conspiracy to overlook most Metis while recording a few."¹⁹ They do suggest, however, that the surveyors were more interested in running the boundaries of lots than mapping the locations of persons in the haste to complete everything quickly.²⁰ The result was many families included in the 1870 census are not found in the surveyor's field notes²¹ even though most such persons enrolled in 1870 were enumerated as residents again in 1875 by the "Half breed commission." Subsequently, any such resident faced two obstacles in establishing his claim by occupancy under the amendments of the Manitoba Act. The first was proving his residency notwithstanding the surveyor's returns to the contrary. Ens and Flanagan correctly point out that supporting affidavits from nearest neighbours were sometimes sufficient to establish occupation overlooked by the surveyor. They conclude too readily, however, that officials at the first level of consideration (Dominion Lands Office, Winnipeg) were willing to accept claims without evidence of "really valuable improvements." No amount of neighbourly corroboration could establish a Métis claim in the mid-1870s if the level of improvements was considered insufficient proof of "occupation."²² And no level of improvements by "squatters" could establish their title if a non-resident "owner" produced documentation of a chain of title predating the tenure of the actual resident.²³ Table 4 exhibits the scope of vulnerability. What makes the tabulation especially interesting is that the labelling and numbers (except for the "Whole Settlement" column) are Ens's own words and data.

The key issue pertains to the half of the population that Ens and Flanagan consider justifiably outside the claims process. The observation that Canada eventually accorded direct or indirect recognition of everyone except the half of the population in Ens's "squatter" category begs the question of the accommodation or denial of "squatter" rights. A better view of the data in Table 4 (in comparison with Table 2) is that almost half of the entire population of the Red River settlement were excluded from the outset. Such a suggestion is supported by testimonial evidence as well.

TABLE 4

RECOGNITION OF 1870 OCCUPANTS BY CANADA

Occupancy Status	St. Andrew's		SFX		Whole Settlement	
	Number	(%)	Number	(%)	Number	(%)
"Owned or were recognized as being in possession	161	56	174	52	959	53
"Residing on lots owned by other members of the extended family ... or squatting on others' land"	126	44	160	48	849	47
Total	287	100	334	100	1808	100

Sources: The Occupancy Status labels and data for St. Andrew's and SFX are from Ens, "Dispossession or Adaptation," 136 (footnote 50) and 128 (Table 1); Whole Settlement data are from Mailhot and Sprague, "Persistent Settlers," 11 (Table 1).

Joseph Royal, member of Parliament representing the French parishes of Manitoba, wrote numerous letters to officials in Ottawa from the mid-1870s through the early 1880s seeking "more liberal" treatment of "squatters" claims. In the spring of 1880 his appeal took the form of a concise history intended to persuade the prime minister that the administration of such cases since 1870 had been anything but accommodating. Royal asserted that "hundreds of claims are disallowed, *not having this or that*, which was never required by the Act of Manitoba." The especially difficult cases involved settlement without survey, and occupancy with little "improvement":

We easily understand the difficulty for officials to recognize the condition of things [before the transfer] which admitted of nothing official, and it was in fact with a foresight of that difficulty that the people of Red River dreaded a loss of their property. They knew perfectly well that their right to the portion of the Settlement Belt regularly surveyed and occupied could not be disputed, but they apprehended that the same right to the land they possessed outside of the surveyed Settlement Belt might be contested: consequently that they would be, more or less, at the mercy of the New Government that might refuse to accept or understand the former condition of this country.²⁴

Royal was not alone in making the same complaint. The principal spokesman for Métis interests in the negotiations for the Manitoba Act, Noel Ritchot (parish priest of St. Norbert), also appealed to Macdonald, in Ritchot's case as one negotiator of the Manitoba Act to another. Ritchot reminded the prime minister that they both knew that the law was

not intended to say that all persons having a good written title and duly registered, etc etc that he shall have continually resided and cultivated so many acres of land yearly and for so many years before the Transfer to Canada, and that he shall cultivate and continually reside during the period of ten years after the Transfer to Canada, so many acres etc etc to be entitled to letters Patent for lands so cultivated

and inhabited, [but] ... this is what is required today by the Government through their employees.²⁵

Both quotations from credible sources confirm a pattern of discouragement by delay and denial. As early as 1876, large numbers of such discouraged "squatters" were liquidating their assets and moving on. Speculators purchased rights to their claims evidently confident that additional documentation from them would assure eventual confirmation of even the most "doubtful" cases.

Scrip and Childrens' Allotments

Valuable asset disposed of at fair market prices? or ephemeral benefit sold for derisory return?

The most plausible interpretation of the Métis people's understanding of the land promises they won in the Manitoba Act was that they had an assurance from Canada for continuity where they were already established and additional scope to expand freely for at least one more generation onto the unoccupied terrain along the rivers and creeks of the new province. One part of the Manitoba "treaty" (section 32) protected the tenure of land already occupied. Another part (section 31) assured heads of families that they might select vacant land for their children. Such a view was not inconsistent with the assurances outside the "treaty" given in writing by Cartier in the name of Canada to Ritchot in May 1870 and by Lieutenant Governor Archibald to Métis leaders when he invited them to designate areas from which families might select their land in 1871.²⁶ A great deal of claim-staking followed accordingly. Commissioner Ruttan joked about the proceedings in his correspondence with Martin:

They moved with wonderful alacrity and unanimity. Since '62 or about that time the [French Métis] had been in the habit of wintering stock along the Seine, Rat and La Salle Rivers. These lands naturally offered the favourite playground for the staker who in short order had the entire riverfront neatly staked off. A man didn't confine himself to 1 claim. He frequently had 2 or 3. Sometimes for children, present and in expectancy, he would have the riverside dizzy with 'blazes' and 'stakes.'

Venne, whose first name was most pertinently Solomon, must have staked 15 claims and, being of uncommon ambition, laid them down along the Red River.²⁷

Notwithstanding Archibald's encouragement, the Dominion government refused to recognize any such arrangement as an appropriate administration of section 31 of the Manitoba Act.

In 1875 Canada launched its substitute. In the new arrangement, married adults — with or without recognized claims to river lots — were to receive a special monetary gratuity called "scrip," redeemable for 160 acres of Dominion Lands open for homestead. The population of unmarried persons (not "heads of families" therefore "children" regardless of their age) were to have access to a lottery for drawing 240-acre rectangles of open prairie, no closer than two or four miles to the "settlement belt" along the rivers. Neither benefit was of great value to the Métis, especially as the proposed method for distributing the 1.4

million acres was random selection by lottery. Flanagan observes that “the partition of reserve land into 240-acre parcels made it difficult to resettle there as a group; it would only be by chance if a group of relatives happened to get allotments near each other.” The value of both “children’s” allotments and “heads of family scrip” was, therefore, as liquidated assets, in Flanagan’s characterization, “to finance a departure from Manitoba.”²⁸ From that perspective, the Métis would have been more justly served (and at considerably less trouble to the bureaucracy) if Canada had simply handed each head of family \$160 and each “child” \$240 and ordered them to move. Instead, the government called the residents of all of the parishes to meet with commissioners in the summer of 1875 to swear to their residency in Manitoba on 15 July 1870. Each person whose claim was corroborated by at least two neighbours was assured future consideration. In the meantime, on-the-spot speculators were willing to pay \$30 or \$40 instant gratification to secure power of attorney to collect whatever reward should arrive in the future.²⁹ The government then offered deliberate or inadvertent protection to such speculators by requiring every claimant “not known personally to the Dominion Lands Agent” to hire an intermediary who was known to the man behind the counter to do the actual collecting of the land or scrip.³⁰ The holder of the power of attorney thus had the edge over the claimant. Still, an important element of risk remained for “attorneys” because individual “half breeds” were said to have sold their claims more than once. Consequently, when the first scrip arrived in Winnipeg in June 1876, there was a great rush on the land office by the speculators to claim their property. They had to rush because Canada distributed the paper to the first “attorney” in line for the claim. Later arrivals were simply denied their reward (Canada did not wish to investigate frauds).³¹

The process of separating recipients of the 240-acre allotments from their land was somewhat more orderly. Moreover, since allotments were of land rather than a specialty currency, their distribution had the fuller cover of documentation that necessarily surrounds all transactions in real estate. More documents mean more room for conventional historical debate as well.

Flanagan does not question the propriety of Canada’s substitution of scrip and bald prairie for the benefit the Métis preferred but he does state the facts of enrolment and allotment clearly and correctly: by the end of 1875 more than 5,000 “children” were enrolled, drawings began in 1876, continued in 1877, then became stalled in 1878, according to Flanagan, “for reasons that are not fully understood.”³² Table 5 shows the pattern — Protestant parishes first, the large French-Métis parishes last. The sequence has considerable analytical significance because the timing meant that the allotments for SFX, for example, were not available until that parish had begun wholesale dispersal of its 1870 population (compare Table 5 with Tables 1 and 2).

TABLE 5

TIMING OF GRANTS BY PARISH, OCTOBER 1876-FEBRUARY 1880

Parishes*	1876	1877	1878	1879	1880	Totals
Portage la Prairie	183					183
Kildonan	55	11	11			77
Ste. Anne	163	58				221
St. Peters		68				68
St. Clements		264				264
St. Andrew's		840				840
St. Pauls		133				133
St. Johns		113				113
Headingley		163				163
High Bluff		359				359
St. Laurent		194				194
St. James			179			179
Ste. Agathe			279			279
St. Charles			186			186
St. Boniface			768	24		792
St. Norbert					631	631
St. François Xavier					1319	1319
Totals	401	2203	1423	24	1950	6001

*Poplar Point probably included with High Bluff, St. Vital with St. Boniface and St. Norbert, and Baie St. Paul with SFX.

Source: National Archives of Canada, "Register of Grants to Half-Breed Children," RG 15, volume 1476.

TABLE 6

TENURE OF CHILDRENS' ALLOTMENTS BY LAND STATUS OF PARENTS

Parents' Status	Childrens' Tenure (in years)			Totals
	less than 1	1 to 5	5 or more	
landless French Métis	72	5	4	81
landless English Métis	27	9	11	47
French Métis patentees	63	7	9	79
English Métis patentees	35	30	17	82
Totals	197	51	41	289

Sources: Every tenth grant starting with grant 10 drawn from the Grants Register (NAC RG15, vol. 1476) yielded a sample of 626 cases. Linkage with a separate register of "Manitoba Half Breed Children" (NAC RG 15, vol. 1505) yielded information on parentage enabling linkage with the land tenure data compiled from the "Census of Manitoba, 1870" (MG2 B3) and land patent data cited in Table 2. Information on tenure of the children's allotments was taken from the Abstract Books in the Winnipeg and Morden Land Titles Offices.

Still, the migration of recipients was no impediment to the sale of their land. Table 6 shows that in a random sample of 289 allottees whose parentage and sale history has been traced, French-Métis children with landless parents (probably the first to migrate) were also the most likely to become separated from their land within one year of allotment. Nor was age a barrier, almost 60 percent of a larger random sample of "vendors" were under the legal age of 21 (the age of majority in general application). Flanagan's sample of fifty-nine cases shows that a

smaller proportion of land recipients were under age when they became separated from their allotments,³³ in part because Flanagan uses age 18 as the appropriate threshold, and partly because his sample is too small to test the relationship between age and date of sale. Table 7 shows that the ages of the overall population are so skewed beyond 21 years by the time most allotments occurred, a much larger sample than Flanagan's is needed to draw a population of minors large enough for meaningful statistical generalization.

TABLE 7

AGES OF RECIPIENTS OF CHILDREN'S ALLOTMENTS AT DATE OF SEPARATION FROM LAND GRANT

Ages	Sale Periods				Totals
	1876-78	1879-81	1882-84	1885 and later	
8	1				1
9	1				1
10	3	4			7
11	2	4			6
12		14	1		15
13	1	12	4		17
14	2	7	1		10
15	1	4	4	1	10
16	1	9	3		13
17	1	7	4	1	13
18	4	23	19	23	69
19	2	16	9	11	38
20	6	15	2	12	35
21	8	16	1	13	38
22+	40	51	15	26	132
Totals	73	182	63	87	405

Sources: Grant registers and Abstract Books cited under Table 6.

TABLE 8

AVERAGE RECORDED SALE PRICES OF CHILDREN'S GRANTS
BY CHRONOLOGICAL PERIOD OF SALE AND ETHNICITY OF "VENDOR"

Ethnicity	Chronological Period		Overall Averages (Totals)
	1876-78	1879 and later	
"French" vendors (74 percent illiterate)	\$213 (N=31)	\$394 (N=245)	\$374 (N=276)
"English" vendors (44 percent illiterate)	\$126 (N=76)	\$317 (N=119)	\$242 (N=195)
Overall Averages (Totals)	\$151 (N=107)	\$369 (N=364)	\$310 (N=471)

Sources: Literacy information taken from Powers of Attorney in NAC, RG 15, volumes 1421-1423. Ethnicity and sales price data are from grant registers and Abstract Books cited under Table 6.

Given customary preferences as to location and patterns of occupancy, the issue of sale versus retention was settled as soon as Canada devised the lottery scheme from section land on open prairie. No better system for encouraging immediate sale could have been invented. The more open question concerns value received. Table 8 exhibits data from sales records supporting Flanagan's contention that the proceeds to Métis vendors were more than reasonable, an overall average exceeding \$1 per acre (approximately the same value obtained by sellers of other unimproved lands distant from the rivers).

On closer scrutiny, however, a surprising anomaly becomes readily apparent. It is known that the exodus from the French-Métis parishes such as SFX was well on its way by 1877, and nearly complete by the time of the allotment of that parish in 1880. There is also reason to suggest that almost three-quarters of the "children" in the French parishes could neither read nor write to the extent of signing their own names on the sales documents. Notwithstanding the two disabilities of absenteeism and illiteracy, the anomaly is that they appear to have received the very best prices for their land — almost \$400 per 240-acre allotment.

One possible explanation is the rapidly rising land values after 1879, but the other anomaly is that the recipients of land in the English parishes in 1876 and 1877 who held on to their allotments waiting for just such a speculative return fared remarkably more poorly than the illiterate, absentee recipients of land in the French parishes purportedly selling in the same period after 1879. Is it possible that the documents filed at the Land Registry and Dominion Lands Office were fictional covers for much less respectable — or even nonexistent — sales?

According to the sworn testimony of the chief justice of the Manitoba Court of Queen's Bench before a provincial commission inquiring into the sales of "half breed lands" in 1881, actual prices were \$40 to \$80 per 240-acre claim.³⁴ The reason for the discrepancy with the documentary evidence, in Justice Wood's testimony (and he was in an excellent position to know because he and three of his sons played important roles in claim running), is that almost anything was possible in the construction of the paper trail from allottee to the land office:

All sorts of conveyances were resorted to. Deeds were executed beforehand in blank. A power of attorney was taken to fill them up, or they were filled up without it. And so soon as the allotment came up, there was such a race to the Registry Office with the conveyances to get registered first that horses enough could not be found in the City of Winnipeg for that purpose. In some cases, a man would be at the Registry Office with his deed, and they [his accomplices] would telegraph him the number of the section [as soon as it was posted in the parish outside Winnipeg], when he would fill it in, and thus be enabled to put in his deed first — five or ten minutes perhaps before half a dozen others would come rushing into the office with deeds for the same lands. The Halfbreed lost all moral recititude and would sell to

every man as fast as they possibly could — all the contest was as to registering the papers first.³⁵

While Wood blamed the allottees for multiple “sales” of the same property, the absence of hundreds if not thousands of “vendors” from the province at the time of the purported transactions would suggest many instances of “sales” with no involvement of the owner at all. Either way, however, the risks to buyers were great and would predict low prices for Métis lands. Quite simply — why would a claim runner pay “retail” prices for land he was acquiring “wholesale,” especially considering that the “wholesale” buyer had little assurance that his paper was going to be the first conveyance registered? Flanagan concedes that such purchases were risky, and his selective quotation of testimony from the record of the provincial commission of inquiry impugning the veracity of all such documents suggests deep skepticism is warranted.³⁶ Inexplicably, however, Flanagan concludes that the sales contracts all “appear normal.”³⁷ The conclusion strains his credibility to say the least.

Conclusions

Undisputed statistical data impugn the hypothesis of accommodation on four central points.

The Red River settlement sustained the phenomenal growth of the 1830s to 1870.

Crowding of population was a problem in the older parishes, but the pull of migration before the transfer was mainly to nearby river frontage rather than to the smaller settlements in the distant west and north. Red River remained the central location of the Métis “nation.” To be sure, profound internal divisions developed along lines of religion and economic interest. Even so, the shared fear of disruption by colonization from Canada united Red River in one effective community, the provisional government of 1869-1870. The success of negotiating the “Manitoba treaty” with Canada in April appeared to guarantee continuing political autonomy and adequate land to assure continuity for the Red River settlement as a province of Canada after 1870.

Almost 90 percent of the Métis population enumerated in the autumn of 1870 persisted to 1875, evidently waiting for the terms of the “Manitoba treaty” to come into effect.

Flanagan concedes that Métis patience was bound to be disappointed, however, because Canada had “no intention of establishing a Metis enclave,”³⁸ no intention of administering the Manitoba Act as understood by the Métis leadership. Nor did Canada sustain Lieutenant Governor Archibald in his similar understanding of the law and its appropriate administration. The Government of Canada regarded the Métis as a “semi-barbarian,” “insurgent” population in need of rule by a “strong hand until ... swamped by the influx of settlers.”³⁹ For two years the population was terrorized by a Canadian “peacekeeping” force. For four years, not one Métis claim to a river lot was

confirmed in accordance with section 32, not one Métis reserve was established "for the benefit of the families of the half-breed residents" in accordance with section 31.

Once Canada did devise a process for administering claims through the Department of the Interior in 1873, the Lands Branch received 2,059 applications for titles to river lots by the end of 1874, but confirmed less than 42 percent as late as 1878, moving especially slowly on the claims to river lots in the parishes that had developed without general survey before 1870.

Registered owners of lands surveyed under the authority of the HBC were most likely to obtain their patents within one or two years from date of application. A "squatter" improving vacant land registered in the name of another person had to disprove the competing title to establish his own; a "squatter" on vacant Crown land with improvements overlooked by surveyors faced enormous frustration proving occupation contrary to surveyors' returns. Anyone discouraged by the process (for whatever reason) became increasingly tempted to sell his land (at discounted value) to the growing army of land sharks willing to pay at least some pittance for a claim, no matter how "doubtful." Then, after submission of appropriate supplementary documentation a patent would eventually issue to the speculator. As more and more lots passed from original occupants to apparent newcomers, Canada relaxed its criteria concerning the kind of improvements needed to establish a "squatter's" claim. Virtually any type of land use that had routinely disqualified a Métis claim in the mid-1870s was allowed purported buyers of such lands pressing their claims in the 1880s. By that time, the dispersal of the original population was so advanced that there was no longer any threat of a significant Métis enclave remaining. By that time, Flanagan agrees, much of the "agitation carried on in the name of Metis rights had little to do with the actual interests of the Metis."⁴⁰ By the same admission, of course, most of the patents conceded after 1878, had little to do with accommodating the Métis and their claims. On that account, the observation that Canada eventually patented 1,562 river lots in the old surveyed part of the Red River settlement, and 580 in the newer, outer parishes⁴¹ does not prove that the Métis migration was "not caused by any inability to obtain Manitoba Act patents"⁴² nearly so much as the statistic documents Canada's willingness to reward the informal agents of Métis dispersal. Flanagan's interpretation mistakes long term results (river lots were eventually patented) for what should have occurred many years earlier (when the lands were still occupied by Métis claimants).

Discouraged by harrassment and unreasonable delays, most Métis people dispersed from their river lot locations in the 1870s before the 1.4 million acres of reserve lands were distributed.

The value of the 1.4 million acres went to claim runners who collected patents at the Dominion Lands Office as "attorneys" of the allottees. Many nominal recipients may have known of their grants and intended to sell, some may have realized substantial considerations. The sales documents were certainly in-

tended to create such an impression. However, the testimony of knowledgeable claim runners, lawyers, and jurists concerning transactions in Métis lands in November 1881 suggests a different reality. The sworn testimony of several witnesses impugned the veracity of the documentation generated routinely by most rapacious speculators. Since the same small population of claim runners were at the forefront of transactions in the transfer of claims to river lots as well, a cloud of suspicion must remain over all of the evidence generated by claim runners. In sum, it would seem that the "cascade of benefits"⁴³ concerning Métis lands in Manitoba fell upon land sharks and their cronies with connections in the bureaucratic apparatus created by Canada more than upon the people who rallied to the provisional government in 1869, and cheered the triumph of their collective resistance in 1870. By 1877 most of that population had become "desperate under the repeated delays"⁴⁴ and began selling out to finance retreat west and north. Interpreting the exodus as a reasonable adaptive response states the obvious; asserting that the migration had nothing to do with the frustration of land claims in Manitoba before 1877 is completely contrary to fact. In the case of the dispersal of the Red River Métis, justice delayed was quite literally justice denied.

NOTES

1. See Jan Vansina, "Oral Tradition and Historical Methodology," in D.K. Dunaway and W.K. Baum, eds., *Oral History: An Interdisciplinary Anthology* (Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1984), 102-6.
2. See Stanley's account of his work in "Last Word on Louis Riel — The Man of Several Faces," in F. Laurie Barron and James B. Waldram, eds., *1885 and After: Native Society in Transition* (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 1986), 3-22.
3. D.N. Sprague, "The Manitoba Land Question, 1870-1882," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 15 (1980): 74-84; Sprague, "Government Lawlessness in the Administration of Manitoba Land Claims, 1870-1887," *Manitoba Law Journal* 10 (1980): 415-41; Sprague, *Canada and the Métis, 1869-1885* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1988); and P.R. Mailhot and D.N. Sprague, "Persistent Settlers: The Dispersal and Resettlement of the Red River Métis, 1870-1885," *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 2 (1985):1-31.
4. In *Dumont, et al. vs. A.G. Canada and A.G. Manitoba*, Canada's initial defense was a motion for dismissal on grounds that the outcome of the case was so "plain and obvious" the question was "beyond doubt." In March, 1990 the Supreme Court held that the constitutionality of the legislation enacted in the course of administration of the Manitoba Act was "justiciable" and in the event that judgement went in favour of the plaintiffs, "declaratory relief ... in the discretion of the court" was an appropriate remedy. New procedural motions have now been brought by Canada. Rejected in the Manitoba Court of Queen's Bench, Canada has appealed to the Manitoba Court of Appeal.
5. Gerhard Ens, "Dispossession or Adaptation? Migration and Persistence of the Red River Metis, 1835-1890," Canadian Historical Association, *Papers* (1988): 120-44. Thomas Flanagan, "The Market for Métis Lands in Manitoba: An Exploratory Study," *Prairie Forum* 16, no. 1 (Spring 1991): 1-20; and *Metis Lands in Manitoba* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 1991).
6. Flanagan, *Metis Lands*, 232.

7. Ibid., 189.
8. Only the general reference appears in Ens, "Dispossession or Adaptation," 131. There is no citation of a particular series.
9. Ens uses the "reign of terror" phrase in "Dispossession or Adaptation," 137; Flanagan prefers less colourful language. The evidence of assault, rape, and murder inflicted on the Métis people by Canada's troops becomes merely a "push of English-Protestant immigrants" in Flanagan's latest characterization of the process, "Market," 17.
10. Fred J. Shore, "The Canadians and the Metis: The Re-Creation of Manitoba, 1858-1872" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Manitoba, 1991).
11. See Sprague, *Canada and the Métis*, 94-95.
12. Canada, *Sessional Papers*, 1875, no. 8.
13. Ens, "Dispossession or Adaptation," 138.
14. Canada, *Sessional Papers*, 1871, no. 20, 90-93.
15. The missing returns are Machar's list of "Half breed heads of families" for the parish of St. Johns; the supplementary heads of families list prepared by Ryan in January 1876; and Ryan's claims disallowed in the Catholic parishes. The first deficiency is remedied by the figure of forty cases for St. Johns appearing in the preliminary tabulation published as Appendix 4 in the "Report of the Surveyor General, 31 October 1875," in Canada, *Sessional Papers*, 1876, no. 9. The second can be estimated from the supplementary children's claims on the assumption that there would be two heads of family per family of claimant minors. Even if such an assumption is somehow defective, the resulting bias is trivial: 30 cases in the Protestant parishes, 76 in the Catholic, for a total of 96 in a universe of 9,000. Thus Table 3 is primarily a tabulation of the "Returns of Half Breed Commissioners" exactly as found on the lists in National Archives of Canada (NAC), RG 15, vols. 1574-1607. Two aspects of aggregation are that heirs are reduced to single decedents and claimants disallowed by reason of double enumeration are not included in the tabulation.
16. NAC, MG 26A, Macdonald Papers, Incoming Correspondence, 40752, William McDougall to Macdonald, 31 October 1869.
17. D.N. Sprague and R. Frye, "Manitoba's Red River Settlement: Manuscript Sources for Economic and Demographic History," *Archivaria* 9 (1978-80): 179-93.
18. Provincial Archives of British Columbia, Archer Martin Papers, Add Mss 630, box 1, file 5, Ruttan to Martin (11 July 1894).
19. Mailhot and Sprague, "Persistent Settlers," 5.
20. One of the surviving diaries, that of M. McFadden, surveyor of Baie St. Paul from 29 July to 7 September 1871, shows that the survey of that parish occupied him for a total of thirty-one working days. Only two days, 4 and 11 August, were noteworthy for "a good deal of time taken up with the claimants in getting their claims properly defined." PAM, RG 17-C1, Survey Diary and Report, No. 274: 8-14.
21. McFadden's "Field Notes" recording the names, locations and readily apparent improvements of occupants in Baie St. Paul are in *ibid.*, Field Notebook, No. 533: 3-9.
22. Flanagan does not admit that the level of improvements demanded by officials was fluid and more stringent in the 1870s than in the mid-1880s. The kind of case Flanagan cites as typical of Canada's generosity was dated 1883, but all such claims were consistently

- rejected in the 1870s. Compare evidence cited in Flanagan, *Metis Lands*, 164, with Sprague, *Canada and the Métis*, 115-20.
23. A particularly instructive example affected the family of Alexis Vivier, in occupation of unsurveyed land in Baie St. Paul between Baptiste Robillard and James Cameron since 1863. One of the first difficulties was Canada's surveyor divided the Vivier claim into four different lots, with only one showing significant improvements. Still, the Viviers' regarded the entire tract as their land, and claimed more cultivation, housing, and outbuildings than that recorded in the survey. A new problem arose in 1878 when documentation purportedly proving the sale of part of the tract by the now absent Robillard to one Isaac Cowie brought Vivier into a conflict with Cowie over title. Cowie's claim prevailed. See documentation in PAM, Parish Files, Baie St. Paul, lots 126-130.
24. NAC, RG 15, vol. 245, file 22638, Royal to Macdonald, 8 March 1880.
25. NAC, MG 26A, Macdonald Papers, Incoming Correspondence, 141514-141526, Ritchot to Macdonald, 15 January 1881.
26. See Sprague, *Canada and the Métis*, 94-95.
27. Provincial Archives of British Columbia, Archer Martin Papers, Add Mss 630, box 1, file 5, Ruttan to Martin, 11 July 1894.
28. Flanagan, "Market," 10.
29. *Ibid.*, 11-12.
30. Order in Council of Canada (23 March 1876) stipulated that recipients with "proper identification to the satisfaction of the Dominion Lands Agent" might collect their scrip in person, otherwise, they would be required to hire an agent with power of attorney. In practice, however, the route was as stated above. See the form letter from Donald Codd, Dominion Lands Agent, Winnipeg, to Mrs. E.L. Barber (10 May 1879) in Provincial Archives of Manitoba, Barber Papers (MG 14 C66), item 2954.
31. Sprague, *Canada and the Métis*, 124-25.
32. Flanagan, "Market," 4.
33. *Ibid.*, 5-6.
34. Provincial Archives of Manitoba, RG7 B1, Commission to Investigate Administration of Justice in the Province of Manitoba, Transcript of Testimony, 207-208.
35. *Ibid.*, 210-11.
36. Compare Flanagan's quotation in "Market," 8, with the fuller text of Wood's testimony cited above. See also Flanagan's admission of "artificially high" prices evident by comparing certain sales instruments and figures in the Abstract Books ("Market," 18, footnote 11).
37. Flanagan, *Metis Lands*, 231.
38. *Ibid.*, 229.
39. Sir John A. Macdonald quoted in Sprague, *Canada and the Métis*, 89.
40. Flanagan, *Metis Lands*, 179.
41. *Ibid.*, 186-88.
42. *Ibid.*, 190.
43. Flanagan's ill-chosen phrase, *Metis Lands*, 227.
44. Report in *Manitoba Free Press* quoted in *ibid.*, 147.

Demonstrating Success: The File Hills Farm Colony

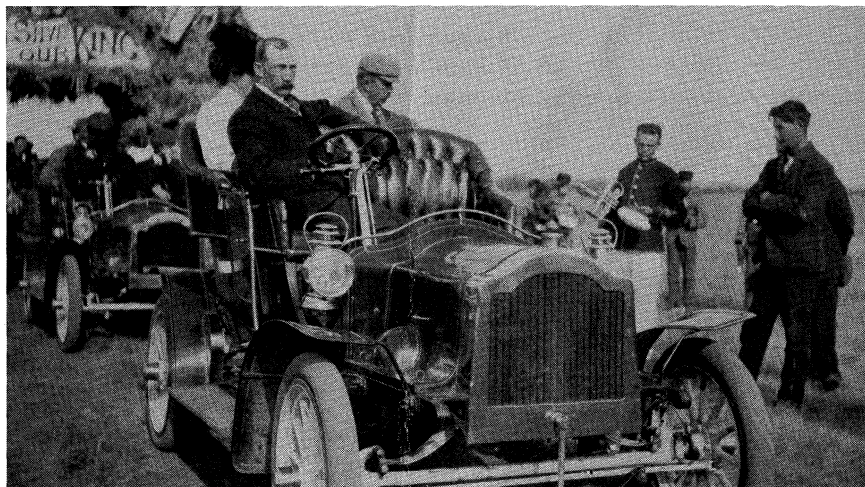
Sarah Carter

ABSTRACT. The File Hills Colony in Saskatchewan, which had modest beginnings in 1901, became a carefully contrived showpiece of Canadian Native treatment by Indian Affairs. But what official visitors and newspaper commentators saw there was neither representative of Native life in Canada generally nor the entire story of life on the colony's reserves. The government wished to demonstrate that graduates of industrial schools — who made up most of the File Hills settlers — could become cultural replicas of Euro-Canadians. But the ability of the File Hills colonists to acquire land and machinery made them atypical of aspiring Native farmers; and Indian Affairs' attempts to stamp out Native cultural practices at File Hills met fierce resistance.

SOMMAIRE. La colonie de File Hills Farm en Saskatchewan qui connut des débuts modestes en 1901, devint le modèle artificiel parfait du traitement des Autochtones canadiens par les Affaires indiennes. Mais ce que les visiteurs et les journalistes voyaient là n'était représentatif ni de la vie autochtone au Canada en général, ni de la vie dans les réserves de la colonie. Le gouvernement voulait prouver que les diplômés des écoles industrielles — qui constituaient la majorité des colons de File Hills — pouvaient devenir des répliques culturelles des Euro-canadiens. Mais le fait que ces colons pouvaient acquérir des terres et des machines faisait d'eux des fermiers qui ne ressemblaient en rien aux Autochtones aspirant à le devenir. Les tentatives des Affaires indiennes visant à détruire les pratiques culturelles à File Hills.

“Canada's Prosperous Red Men” was the title of a 1925 article in the *New York Literary Digest*.¹ It was noted that the aboriginal people of Canada, under “wise leadership and intelligent encouragement,” made important contributions to the nation's chief industry of agriculture. Most of the item was devoted to the southeastern Saskatchewan File Hills farm colony for ex-pupils of residential schools. The colony was singled out as a fine example of the policies of the Canadian government. The scheme, credited with wonderful results, was briefly described. A portion of a reserve was surveyed into eighty-acre lots for the colonists who were each loaned \$125 to buy housing material, a yoke of oxen, harness and a plough. From humble beginnings in 1901 when three colonists enlisted, by 1915 the community had grown to thirty-six farmers and their families and they had over 3,000 acres under cultivation. Readers of the *Digest* were told that the contribution of the colonists to the World War I effort was particularly noteworthy. Per capita it was higher than that of any white community in the province; with but one exception, every able-bodied man enlisted for overseas service.

The File Hills colonists were accustomed to such attention. The colony was featured in numerous journal and newspaper articles as an example of the sound administration of Canada's Department of Indian Affairs which resulted in a happy, contented, even prosperous people. During the war years the colony was used to illustrate the intense patriotism that these “wards” exhibited in return for the kind treatment they received. A 1924 history of Saskatchewan devoted several pages to the colony, “the solution of the Indian problem,” and its founder William Morris Graham, who “thoroughly deserved” his recent promotion to Indian commissioner.² Here were Native farmers with “big barns, bank accounts and automobiles.” The two churches, hospital and farms on the colony “would do credit to white men.” Commissioner Graham was quoted as



Fred Dieter delivering welcoming address to Governor General Earl Grey, seated in back of car. File Hills Colony, 1906. Source: Glenbow-Alberta Archives, NA-3454-13.

saying that the Natives “instead of being a leech on the country, as might be expected ... are an asset to it.”

The greatest pride however was taken in the “international” attention the colony received. As part of his 1914 eight-week study of the methods and policies of Native administration in Canada, Frederick Abbott, secretary of the American Board of Indian Commissioners, toured the File Hills colony. His 1915 publication, which was highly complimentary of the “simplicity, comprehensiveness, elasticity and efficiency” of Canadian Native policy, presented the File Hills colony as the best illustration of the Canadian system.³ Abbott’s findings were boasted of for many years in the Canadian press. In a 1921 item in the *Winnipeg Free Press* it was proclaimed that the File Hills colony had become “famous over the whole continent of America and has drawn visitors from officialdom at Washington to find out ‘how it is done’.”⁴ Many other dignitaries, including royalty, toured through the colony. Earl Grey, governor general of Canada took a special interest and visited on several occasions, as did his successor, the duke of Connaught.

Readers of the articles and newspaper reports of distinguished visitors to the colony might well be excused for imagining that all reserve residents in western Canada were exceedingly comfortable, if not prosperous, with homes, outbuildings and equipment comparable to those of the surrounding settlers. This was certainly the impression that the Department of Indian Affairs, and especially Graham, the mastermind of the colony, wished to convey. The colony was created with a view to the needs of the non-Native visitor. It was never intended to be a model farm for other aboriginal people. Tours for them were not arranged, nor were they encouraged to visit individually. The colony did not

mark the inauguration of a more widespread scheme aimed at the improvement of living conditions on all reserves. Most prairie reserves were pockets of rural poverty. The poorly fed and poorly clad residents lived in log shacks in winter, canvas tents in summer, and attempted to farm with increasingly out-of-date and out-of-commission equipment. The colony addressed the need, long felt by government officials, to have a "showpiece" reserve which could advertise Canada's sound administration. Through vigorous promotion of the colony the impression was left that this was representative of the work of the department.

The Department of Indian Affairs had always shown concern for public image, particularly in the wake of criticism of its activities following the resistance of 1885. Annual reports from Indian agents and inspectors of agencies were frequently "altered by the excise of paragraphs which it is considered inadvisable to print," before they were sent to the publisher.⁵ (One example was the excise of a report of a northern Manitoba agent who found children in a so-called school on one reserve squatting on the ground, huddled in a small canvas tent blackened with smoke.)⁶ The department took pride especially in its sterling record in comparison to American policy, and this theme was often emphasized in the partisan press. American crimes against Natives were catalogued, and contrasted with the more just and honourable methods of Canada. The department was congratulated for the "fairness, good faith and liberal consideration which our country has always displayed towards the aboriginal population."⁷ A very special effort to exhibit the work of the department was made at the Chicago World's Fair in 1893. Young people from Manitoba and the North West were taken to Chicago to demonstrate their skills at a variety of trades and household duties, while alongside them were displayed remnants of the "warpath" days, including, according to one reporter "horrid, bloody scalps."⁸ A Montréal correspondent wrote that the exhibit "portrayed to all visitors the splendid treatment and intelligent supervision and provision of the Canadian Government for these wards of the country ... it is an 'object' lesson indeed for other nations."⁹

Those who had an opportunity to view actual conditions on western Canadian reserves seldom boasted about Canada's treatment of aboriginal people. A missionary in the Touchwood Hills reported in 1893 that the exhibit at the World's Fair and the annual reports of the department reminded him of "the drawing classes at school just before show or inspection day, at the end of a term. They do not convey a fair idea of the general state of the Indian, and are only a fancy picture of the situation."¹⁰ While the department successfully created a favourable impression of its work through newspaper reports and distant exhibitions, the question of where to send dignitaries such as the governor general when they actually visited the west in order to emerge with the same impression, had long posed a problem. Certain reserves were considered much more "advanced" than others, but prairie conditions were unpredictable from day to day, and visiting dignitaries could be left gazing at wastelands of

shrivelled up stalks dried out by hot winds or at barren fields flattened by hail. For an 1895 visit of the governor general the agent at one of the "advanced" reserves was instructed to send word immediately "if by any means you do not desire him to visit you, owing to failure of crops or otherwise."¹¹ Other considerations had to be taken into account. Where reserve residents keenly felt certain grievances they were likely to place these before distinguished guests, particularly if they were given advance warning of the visit. Some of these problems were sidestepped for the 1901 visit of the duke and duchess of Cornwall and York as the department carefully staged a "demonstration" at Shaganappi Point near Calgary, not on any reserve. Such displays however, involving the movement and provisioning of people, were expensive and regarded as disruptive to farm work.

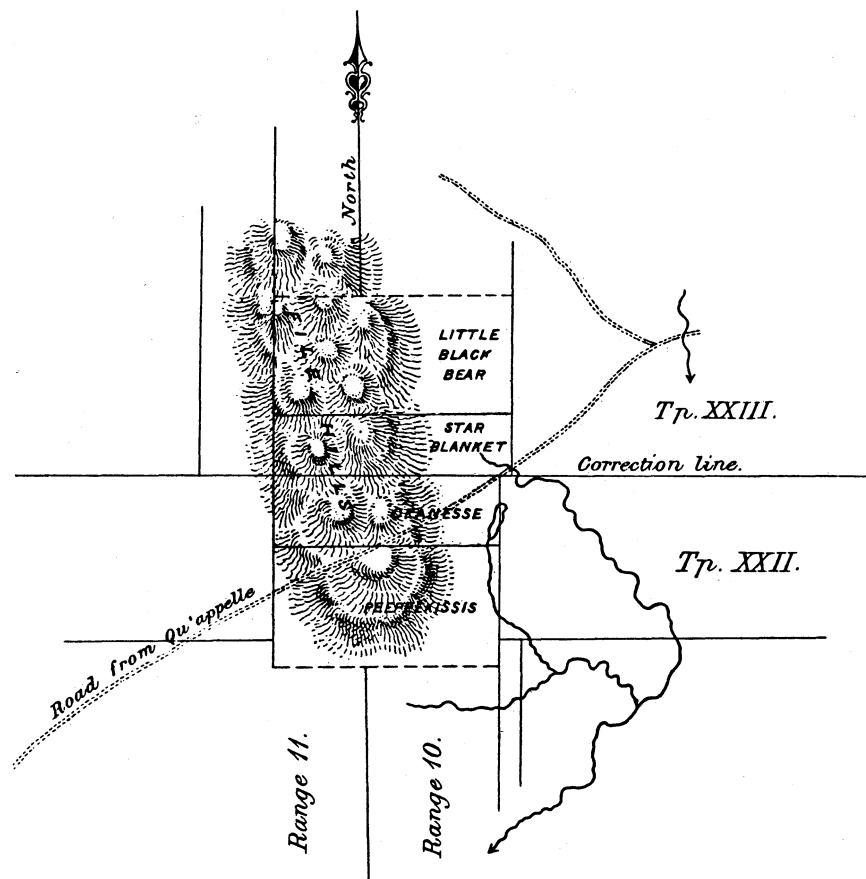
The establishment of the File Hills colony solved the problem of where to take dignitaries. With its churches and cottage hospital, neatly whitewashed homes surrounded by vegetable and flower gardens, and tree-lined roads, the community presented a most pleasing appearance of pastoral charm, even if crops should happen to fail. This was at a time when it was difficult to find any "advanced" reserves. Government policies of the 1890s prevented reserve farmers from using the technology required to be successful on the prairies, and brought agriculture to a standstill on many reserves.¹² A change in government in 1896 did not brighten prospects for reserve residents. The new Liberal administration slashed the budget for Indian Affairs, dismissing many employees including farm instructors and lowering the salaries of those who remained.¹³ This administration showed no commitment to the advancement of agriculture on reserves. This was made vividly clear in a preoccupation with reserve land surrender, which ran counter to efforts to create a stable agricultural economy on reserves. The rationale for the encouragement of land surrenders was that Natives held land out of all proportion to their needs, that they did not effectively use this land, and that it should be placed in the hands of more capable owners.

In western Canada land surrenders were enthusiastically pursued by Graham. He handled the negotiations for the surrender of large tracts of land from the Pasquah, Muscowpetung, Cowesses and Kakewistahaw bands between 1906 and 1909, reserves in the same district as File Hills. At the same time as he urged bands to sell their agricultural land, Graham was heralded as the person who had done more than any other to promote farming among aboriginal people. "To him," it was boasted in a 1921 *Free Press* article, "belongs the very proud distinction of being the first man to solve the problem of making the Indian take kindly and successfully to farming."¹⁴ Graham was an extremely astute promoter, conveying the impression through the colony that a great deal was being done to assist reserve farmers. The colony was a carefully orchestrated showpiece for the public, and a means of enhancing Graham's own reputation and opportunity for advancement.

The File Hills colony also demonstrated the wisdom of the government's new goals for the education of aboriginal people. The Liberal administration was skeptical of the large sums spent on education unless "the certainty of some practical results could justify the large expense."¹⁵ There was concern that children were being educated "above the possibilities of their station" and that a "distaste for what is certain to be their environment in life" was being created.¹⁶ Deputy superintendent general of Indian Affairs James Smart wrote in 1901 that in the western provinces especially "it may well be that the graduates are for the present doing the greatest amount of good in the direction of elevating their race, by returning to live on their reserves, and ... it would appear that for the large majority there is no alternative."¹⁷ In Smart's opinion experience had shown that graduates returned "to the communities of their own race" and "to all intents and purposes remain Indians, with all their deepest interests, affections and ambitions centred in their reserves." Indian Commissioner David Laird reported in 1903 that as agriculture and stock raising were likely to be the pursuits of ex-pupils, only those skills that would prove useful in connection with farm work were to be taught to the boys, and for the girls the emphasis was to be upon practical housewifery, so that as farmers' wives they could become "useful helpmates."¹⁸

This approach to the education of "backward races" was evident elsewhere in the English-speaking world at this time. Curriculums of "low expectations and practical lessons" predominated. The thinking was that Native people should be taught only those subjects that would directly apply to their daily experience. Instead of giving these people unrealistic ambitions, they should be educated to return to their own rural communities where they could be the "leaven" of civilization. The File Hills colony demonstrated to the public that the place for ex-pupils was indeed back on the reserves which they could help mould into thriving communities. The department's duty was to guard against "retrogression," the tendency of ex-pupils to return to a traditional lifestyle once they graduated, and for this reason it was announced in 1901 that experiments were being undertaken "in the direction of the establishment of little colonies of these graduates on their reserves, in the hope that they will not only retain for themselves the benefits received at the schools but exert a beneficial influence upon their own people."¹⁹

Graham's colony scheme began modestly and without fanfare in 1901, and for several years the "school-boy colony" was referred to as an "experiment." In February 1901, Graham wrote to the superintendent general of Indian Affairs asking for a share of the funds provided for the assistance of ex-pupils and a month later, \$1,500 of the \$2,000 set aside in the estimates that year were made available to him.²⁰ Graham proposed that the southeastern portion of the Peepeekisis reserve in the File Hills be subdivided into eighty-acre lots, and the survey of ninety-six of these was completed in 1902. The File Hills appears to have been chosen, not because of its agricultural suitability and potential, but



*Sketch Showing Reserves in the File Hills,
the dotted lines are yet to be run.*

*J. C. Nelson
1881.*

because this was Graham's scheme, and he had been the Indian agent for these reserves since 1896.

The four File Hills reserves were surveyed in a grid-like fashion in the fall of 1880 for the bands of Little Black Bear, Star Blanket, Okanese, and Peepeekisis, which were predominantly Cree. It was soon recognized from the point of view of agriculture that the File Hills was a poor choice. Surveyor J.C. Nelson visited these reserves in 1884 and found that well over half the land was dotted with swamps, ponds and lakes, poplar bluffs and clumps of willow.²¹ This was the western slope. In the centre of the reserves, at the height of the hills, were heavy woods. Prairie land suitable for farming was found only along the eastern slope. (See Figure 1.) Agent Allan MacDonald lamented in 1883 that the reserves were so cut up by lakes and marshes that large fields could not be made.²² The File Hills reserves also suffered in the late nineteenth century as they were well back of the settlements that hugged the Canadian Pacific Railway, and were thus remote from any markets for labour or produce. A further disadvantage suffered by these bands was that, after the resistance of 1885, the government regarded them as "disloyal." Their annuities were withheld, and they were ordered to surrender their arms, which limited their abilities to hunt what game there was. The Indian commissioner at Regina, Hayter Reed, formulated a plan to break up the agency altogether, and distribute the people on other reserves in order to put an end to what was regarded as their "fractious" behaviour.²³ Other reasons he cited for this move were "the disadvantages of the district for the cultivation of grain, the dearth of game, and the absence of a market for the industries of the Indians, and of opportunity for them to get freighting or other work." The scheme was never implemented even though Ottawa officials concurred with Reed's view.

Matters were not quite as dismal for the File Hills people by 1900. They sold cattle, hay and seneca root, and were gradually increasing their acreage under cultivation. The establishment of a railway branch line in 1905, which ran along the southeast boundary of the Peepeekesis reserve made this a more attractive situation as there was a ready market for grain and stock, which was formerly hauled to Indian Head, a round trip of eighty miles.

Graham and his superiors in Ottawa initially hoped that any possible obstructions to the colony plan could be removed by inducing the four bands to amalgamate, and to congregate on one, or perhaps two, of the reserves.²⁴ Altogether the population of the four reserves was then 234. Graham thought the bands would "readily give their consent," but this never proved to be the case, even though the effort was made over a number of years. In 1906 Graham reported that he did everything he could think of to bring about an agreement but the Star Blanket and Little Black Bear bands would not consent.²⁵ Amalgamation and "abandonment" of the Peepeekisis reserve would have allowed Graham a free hand in administering the colony; without this, he had to consult with the band. Admission to the colony, for example, had to be made through a

vote of the Peepeekisis band which included all the male voting members, but in the beginning there appears to have been little difficulty getting applicants admitted. Colonists became members of the Peepeekisis band, were allowed a share in the land and other privileges of the band, and gave up membership in their band of origin.

The young colonists were all from other bands; some were from other File Hills reserves but others were from farther afield, such as St. Peter's reserve in Manitoba. It is likely that candidates were not selected from the Peepeekisis band itself as the philosophy was that colonists had to be separated from their family and associates. The colonists soon began to outnumber the original Peepeekisis band members who came to be referred to as the "old guard." They lived on the unsubdivided portion of the reserve, raised cattle and sold hay, wood, and pickets but grew little grain. The presence of the colony left them little opportunity to expand their industries, or to ever consider farming. After the second subdivision survey for the colony in 1906 the original band members were left with less than one-quarter of their reserve, and the portion left to them was the least suitable to agriculture. Their housing and clothing was not of the same standard as the colonists but in their appearance they served a useful function for department propaganda purposes by way of contrast as visitors could clearly appreciate what was being done for the rising generation.

In selecting the colonists, Graham worked closely with the principals of boarding and industrial schools, especially Father Joseph Hugonard of the Qu'Appelle Industrial school at Lebreton, and Katherine Gillespie of the File Hills Presbyterian Boarding School which adjoined the Okanese reserve. Gillespie was appointed principal in 1902, the year after the colony was established, and she maintained an avid interest even after 1908 when she left missionary work to marry W.R. Motherwell, a local farmer and Liberal politician. Motherwell became minister of Agriculture in the first Saskatchewan government (1905-1918) and later federal minister of Agriculture (1921-1930). As his wife visited the colony regularly so did the minister of Agriculture, often giving lectures on farming and this connection with government may account for some of the public attention the colony received over the years.

Educators and government officials were concerned with what was called "retrogression," the tendency of ex-pupils to "revert" to a traditional lifestyle once they returned to their reserves, or to go "back to the blanket." Some attributed the difficulties of ex-pupils to the chasm between student and parent created by the long period of separation. Most authorities however believed that the progress of ex-pupils was retarded not by the chasm between parents and children but by the "proximity to, and influence of, family connections of the old type who oppose submission to the new order of things."²⁶ It was part of the "official mind" of the department of Indian Affairs to routinely blame aboriginal people for obstinately clinging to tradition, and for refusing to modify, modernize or improve their lifestyle.

There was recognition however that ex-pupils did not have the means to start farming for themselves, and the department began a program of assisting select graduates who showed an inclination to begin farming on their reserves. Aid in the way of oxen, wagons, harness, seed and materials for home building were loaned to the male ex-pupils, their value to be repaid within four years.²⁷ Females were given a small sum with which to purchase "useful" articles such as sewing machines or furniture, particularly if they were married to another graduate. As a powerful incentive to return to their reserves immediately, assistance was only offered for two years from their date of discharge.²⁸ Indian agents were instructed in 1914 to "carefully select the most favourable location for ex-pupils, and [they] should also consider the advisability of forming them into separate colonies or settlements removed to some extent from the older Indians."²⁹ Lengthy lists were drawn up, recommending some ex-pupils as clean, industrious and worthy of assistance, and describing others as simply "no good."³⁰ There appear to have been no concerted efforts on other reserves however to establish colonies on the scale of that at File Hills. Elsewhere government officials were disappointed, even with some ex-pupils who were given assistance. The authorities generally agreed with Reverend W. McWhinney of the Crowstand Boarding School who believed that the problem lay with the proximity to the older "lodge" Natives. "It is not pleasant," he wrote, "to see our best and most hopeful boys shipwrecked by these derelicts."³¹

The separation of the "lodge" people from the school people was the method pursued at File Hills, extending the process begun in the educational institutions. In its discipline and daily supervision the colony was also very much like the schools. "Hardly a day passes," Graham wrote in 1911, "that some officer of the department does not visit them, and if there had been success, it has been the result of this close and constant supervision."³² As Indian agent, Graham already enjoyed considerable authority. Agents were responsible for enforcing the Indian Act and were justices of the peace under that act. Graham was vigilant in enforcing the act, and the other rigid rules and regulations that governed the colony. Women, for example, were not allowed to visit frequently with each other as they were to be attending to their duties at home, and the use of Native languages was strictly forbidden.³³ Church personnel helped oversee the activities of the colonists. Sermons imparted correct values and attitudes such as industry, self-discipline, and punctuality. Leisure time was controlled as well. Traditional popular recreations or ceremonies, even fiddle dances, were prohibited and were replaced with a brass band, a sewing circle, and lecture groups. The colony had a fine brass band that entertained not only on the colony but in the schoolhouses and towns of the surrounding settlements. Two of the musicians were "natural comedians" who never failed to "bring down the house."³⁴ In the winter months there were literary evenings and a Farmers' Institute which sponsored visiting lecturers. Baseball was the acceptable summer recreation, as was the annual File Hills agricultural exhibition.



File Hills Indian Band (pre-1914). Source: Glenbow-Alberta Archives, NA-3454-36.

A high premium was placed upon the creation of Christian family homes. One of the steadfast rules of the colony was that no couples were allowed to live together unless “lawfully married by the laws of the country or their respective churches.”³⁵ When a new colonist had his house built he was encouraged to marry. It was explained that this was because “the bachelors with no home ties soon became restless and discouraged.”³⁶ Only graduates of residential schools were regarded as suitable candidates for marriage. Graham explained that these



Judging oxen, Agricultural Fair, File Hills, 1907. Source: Glenbow-Alberta Archives, NA-3454-25.

women were the key to making respected and prosperous citizens out of their husbands, and it was also their responsibility to use the skills they learned at school to see their children were brought up in a "civilized way."³⁷

The File Hills colony appears to have been unique during its time, but it bears striking resemblances to the model Christian Tsimshian village of Metlakatla established in 1862 by Methodist missionary William Duncan.³⁸ The residents of this village appeared to its many distinguished visitors to have completely adopted the religious and social values of Victorian England. They wore European-style clothing, attended church, worked at a variety of industries, and observed a set of strict and specific guidelines governing behaviour. They had neat white houses, gardens and picket fences. The Metlakatla system was similarly all-embracing, involving leisure hours that were devoted to brass bands, games such as football, and to the library and museum. This settlement also owed much to the authority and ambition of one man. This "utopia" had broken down by 1887. One of the legacies of the system was a highly politicized people who pressured for recognition of their aboriginal rights and refused to recognize the authority of the Indian agent.³⁹

A similar kind of model settlement called Greenwood Village was situated near the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama. This "Model Negro Village," a residential counterpart of the institute, was intended to demonstrate "that blacks could live in the clean, orderly, middle-class way."⁴⁰ The colony at File Hills also bore some resemblances to the settlements advocated by individuals and charitable organizations as a means of improving and reforming the needy, the urban working class, and a wide variety of groups such as criminals.⁴¹ The Salvation Army, for example, created farm colonies which aimed at uplifting and reclaiming the thieves, drunkards and other "lost souls" of the city, and making honest, pious, thrifty citizens of them. In "social settlements" such as two in Gary, Indiana in the early twentieth century, Europeans, Mexicans and Afro-Americans were weaned away from their cultures and indoctrinated with American customs and values.⁴²

A wide variety of rural community experiments were undertaken in the Canadian west in the settlement era from 1885 to 1910.⁴³ Invariably called colonies, these ranged from the "sacred to secular, from aristocratic and arcadian to democratic and futuristic, from ethnic to nationalist, and from conservative to communistic."⁴⁴ Some, like the colony at Wapella sponsored by the Jewish Colonization Association, were, like File Hills, intended to demonstrate that a certain people had a capacity for farming. But the File Hills colony differed from most of these experiments as the primary motive for them was to preserve minorities persecuted elsewhere, to defend religious beliefs and customs. File Hills was established to indoctrinate a group of people to majoritarian values. In many ways they had less freedom to manoeuvre than other prairie colonists. If they withdrew or "migrated," as a few did in the early days, they had few alternatives open to them since they had given up member-

ship in their band of origin, and as status Indians they were not eligible to take up homesteads.

The 18-year-old pioneers of the File Hills colony in 1901 were Fred Dieter, Ben Stonechild, Marius Peekutch, Remi Crow and William Bird. Peekutch and Crow soon deserted, and Bird died of tuberculosis in 1903; Dieter and Stonechild became model colonists for others to follow. Dieter, a grandson of Chief Okanese, attended the Regina Industrial School. Graham liked to boast that this boy was taken from "a home which is today one of the worst hovels on the reserve and where his people were purely Indian in all their habits and do no farming."⁴⁵ Dieter had a five-room home with a basement cellar, and in 1911 he had built, on contract, one of the finest barns in the district. He kept cows, pigs and hens, had four "magnificent Canadian horses" and a full complement of farm machinery. Dieter had a hired hand, a non-Native, whom he paid \$30 per month. For many years in a row Dieter won a bronze "challenge" shield, donated by Earl Grey in 1907 to "the boys" of the colony. It was to go to the farmer with the best wheat crop and serve as an incentive to all members. Dieter's wife, Marybelle Coté, a granddaughter of Chief Gabriel Coté, was the first bride in the colony. She had also attended the Regina Industrial School.

Among the other names cited in Graham's annual reports as the most successful farmers were John Thomas, Frank Dumont, John Bellegard, Mark Ward and Joseph Ironquill. Ironquill joined the colony in 1905, at the late age of 24. Graham boasted in 1914 that Ironquill's fields were a "magnificent sight," and his buildings "splendid."⁴⁶ He had an enormous barn with the name of his farmstead "Lakeview Farm" lettered on the front. Ironquill shipped grain by the carload, and in 1914 had ten head of heavy horses, twenty head of cattle, as well as pigs and poultry. He managed his farm by employing a non-Native and his wife year-round, paying them \$500. Ironquill's clothes were "made-to-order" and he used printed stationery for his business correspondence.⁴⁷ In 1917-1918 he attended the Manitoba Agricultural College to make a special study of traction engines and their management, and he became expert with motor engines, doing all his own repairs.

Not even Graham had anticipated that colony farmers would have such large operations. He initially thought that eighty acres would be adequate, and had not settled the original settlers on alternate lots. By 1907 nearly every member occupied from 160 to 240 acres. The result was that some of the farmers had a patchwork of eighty acre lots. Ben Stonechild, for example, had one lot interrupted to the south by P. Jackson's, then the agent's, before his next lot could be reached.⁴⁸ This meant more road allowances than in ordinary townships, as well as the awkward moving about of men and machinery. By 1906 Graham alerted Ottawa that all the "good farming plots" in the colony were taken up, and that an extension of the survey was required.⁴⁹ He felt this had to be done with some haste as he could not "now keep the Indians from plowing fields just outside of the Colony," nor could he "insist on men

remaining in their Colony and farming inferior lands when there is better just outside the Colony that they have an equal right to." Graham required the extended survey, which was granted, to maintain his control over the expansion of the colonists, and to permit new applicants. The fact that the "old guard" was to have access to less and even more inferior land does not appear to have concerned officials. (See Figure 2.)

While the colony gave every outward appearance of conformity, the ideal of a model Christian settlement, there is evidence that the colonists were not prepared to give up their cultural heritage. Traditional ceremonies and rituals were carried on, despite injunctions against them. These included feasts and funerals, as well as illicit "fiddle dances."⁵⁰ There were persistent efforts to hold traditional dances at File Hills, although Graham and his staff attempted to break these up. An 1895 amendment to the Indian Act intended to undermine dancing and other types of ceremonial behaviour was vigorously applied in the prairie region by Graham. In February 1902 the North West Mounted Police were alerted to the situation at File Hills as the principal of the school there had learned that "the Indians ... were going to attack and destroy the school, in revenge for the Agent having pulled down a building used as a dance house."⁵¹ The assistant commissioner of the police explained that the Indian agent (Graham) had "made many radical changes in the management of the Reserves, some of which, I believe the Indians resent." The attack on the school did not take place but efforts to hold traditional dances continued, and these efforts were not confined to the "old guard." Joseph Ironquill headed a 1910 movement to "start dancing on the colony."⁵² In 1914 Graham again complained that he was experiencing difficulty with "an element who are determined to revive dancing which has been a thing of the past for the last 12 years."⁵³ While he was away in Winnipeg the residents gathered for a dance which was successfully dispersed with the assistance of the clerk and farm instructor. Graham blamed the movement this time on Chief Star Blanket, who had always been "more or less a serious drawback to progress," but was certain that dancing would not be confined to the old Natives if it was allowed to begin. A year later Graham complained that the File Hills Natives wished to go to other agencies to attend dances, and asked that these be stopped altogether, as they had a "demoralizing" effect on the graduates.

Colonists could not simply be ousted if Graham found their behaviour unsuitable. They were expected to assist the agent to "further the interests of the Department," but when they did not yield to this authority they could not simply be ejected from the colony.⁵⁴ Privately for example, Graham was concerned about Ironquill and believed that "a serious mistake was made the day this man was admitted to the Colony, and if there is any way by which he could be removed it would mean a great deal for the future harmony and progress of the Colony."⁵⁵

INTO 80 ACRE LOTS

J.K.M⁵L⁶Lean DLS 1906

Scale 30 Chains to 1/m



UNBID DIVIDED

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456	457	458	459	460	461	46					

Only 1st Down
return in 1st Dec 1916
dth/1916 1916

It was Ironquill who also led the 1911 opposition to Graham's desire to admit fifty new colonists and change the method of admitting them. Graham encountered "quite a lot of opposition," particularly from colony members to the entry of new colonists.⁵⁶ He found a "tendency on the part of these young Indians who have been doing well, not to listen so readily to advice as they did when they were in poorer circumstances." The colonists were likely taking into consideration the expansion of their own operations as well as the needs of their children. Graham however wished to continue to be at the helm of an ongoing program for ex-pupils. He proposed that the balance of the Peepeekisis reserve be surveyed and that each of the 150 resident members be given a cash settlement of \$20 "on the understanding that the Department will have the right, without reference to the Band, to admit, say sixty male graduates."⁵⁷ (Graham was well-known for his use of ready cash as an incentive to Indian bands, and he always insisted that the department provide him with money at the time he presented documents for approval.) This money would gradually be repaid by the persons who joined the colony under this agreement. Graham wanted the new people to be settled as quickly as possible, perhaps anticipating the growth of opposition again, and proposed that funds be made available to "grub stake" them while they were breaking land and building homes. In the past beginners had to provide themselves with provisions. In order to avoid future and further defiance of his wishes the new colonists were "to clearly understand when they are admitted, that they must carry out the instructions of the Officers in charge."

The law clerk in Ottawa drafted an agreement which was sent to the band for approval along with a cheque so that distribution could be made immediately. The agreement gave the superintendent general the right to locate future graduates on whatever quantity of land. To Graham's surprise the band voted against the agreement. Ironquill was blamed for this, because he resented authority according to the agent. It was reported to Graham that Ironquill "went to the elders of the original band, who were in favour of the deal at one time and influenced them to oppose the agreement by making false statements."⁵⁸ About a month later however, the agreement was submitted to the band again, and the necessary approval was given. It is unclear just what strategies Graham used to overcome opposition, but his persistence was rewarded and he was pleased to report that now "one of the greatest obstacles in starting up graduates has been removed."⁵⁹ By 1915 there were nine new admissions to the colony under the new agreement.

Among other evidence that colonists were not prepared to bow to authority was their campaign to have a day school in the settlement rather than send their children to residential schools, but once again they were unsuccessful. This had long been a grievance of reserve parents, but their opinions were seldom taken into consideration. Graham supported the colonists in this, perhaps to maintain good relations and silence opposition but also because a modern day school would make the settlement appear even more like the off-reserve communities

he was always comparing it to. The children could carry their lunches to school "as white farmers' children do."⁶⁰ He wrote however that "of course I am counting on the Department insisting that Industrial and Boarding schools shall not draft children from this Colony." For a time Ottawa officials agreed that the school should be built, and that the other educational institutions would not be allowed to recruit pupils. The secretary of the department, J.D. McLean explained that as these Natives were "well advanced in civilization, the Department does not think it politic to separate children from their parents by lengthy periods of residence in boarding or industrial schools but on the contrary wishes to keep the home ties intact."⁶¹

Father Hugonard, who was alarmed at not being able to recruit for the Qu'Appelle school, and at the prospect of Catholic children attending a secular school, was told that the department thought it well to meet the wishes of the colonists, and that the children could be trained at home in household work and agriculture, "as is the case with the children of white people." Hugonard quickly alerted Archbishop Adelard in St. Boniface who warned that public discussion, as well as the knowledge and consent of Parliament was required for this departure in practice, as a secular school system could not simply be inaugurated by the department. Restrictions upon recruiting children at File Hills were hastily withdrawn. It appears that the colony did not get a day school until 1949, despite repeated requests from the residents.

The public heard nothing of what went on behind the scenes at the colony as Graham presented only those aspects that reflected well on himself and his work. In his annual reports several themes were continually emphasized. One was that the colony would compare favourably with any other community. "I have lived in this country all my life," Graham wrote in 1907, "and can say without hesitation that, to my mind, no white community has made such a showing as these young people have. The style of farming here is not surpassed in any of the farming districts in the country."⁶² He stressed that Native languages were not used, that colonists attended church regularly, and that there were seldom infractions of the Indian Act. The housing on the colony was the most tangible evidence of the success of the program. All were one and a half stories so that sleeping quarters were separate from the living quarters. In the early years the homes were all made of logs which were plastered and whitewashed, but after 1910 more frame structures were built. That the "old ways" had been left behind was also visible in the interiors of these homes which were comfortably furnished with carpets or linoleum, wallpaper, pictures on the walls, sideboards, chairs, sewing machines, clocks, and lace curtains. The annual report of the department for 1904 showed a photograph of three people at the table in Ben Stonechild's house, with tablecloth, tea service, crystal, a pump organ, clock and calender all in view. (Most homes on reserves at this time were one room, with rough planks for flooring, mud fireplaces rather than stoves and no furniture, not even bedsteads.) It was boasted that the women of the



Women of the File Hills Colony, 1907. Source: Glenbow-Alberta Archives, NA-3454-33.

colony maintained their homes systematically, "the result of the training they have received at school ... If one would visit this colony on a Monday, one would see clothes hanging out to dry at almost every house. If one should go on Saturday, one would find them scrubbing."⁶³

Graham claimed that the colonists raised larger and healthier families, and that there was "less sickness in this colony than there is among other Indians on the reserve, which fact is attributable, no doubt, to the manner in which their food is prepared and to the generally improved conditions under which they are living."⁶⁴ Eight of the male colonists however died of tuberculosis before 1911, as did thirteen children. The chief medical officer, P.H. Bryce, concluded in 1911 that the men "were almost certainly infected before entering the colony."⁶⁵ Several came from File Hills school which had a particularly high rate of death. At the end of its first sixteen years of operation 75 percent of all pupils who had been at the school were dead.⁶⁶ The colony death rate however was not high when compared with the situation on other reserves. In his 1922 pamphlet, "The Story of a National Crime," Bryce used the colony as his example of how under normal conditions of housing and sanitation, Native reserve populations could have a low mortality rate.⁶⁷ Bryce did not put File Hills statistics to their usual purpose — to show how healthy and prosperous reserve residents were — but used them as a means of highlighting the very different and dismal living conditions of most other aboriginal people of the west. The colonists enjoyed improved health care after 1911 when the department built an attractive "cottage hospital," situated in the centre of the reserve. A trained nurse was placed in charge, and a doctor visited upon request. The hospital demonstrated that the young graduates put their faith in "modern medicine" rather than in the powers of the medicine man. This too was an

amenity enjoyed by few other reserve residents. There was a hospital on the Blackfoot reserve, for example, but it was run by the Roman Catholic church, not by the government.

The File Hills colonists distinguished themselves during World War I, and at this time they received their most extensive press coverage. A brief item in a 1915 issue of *Saturday Night*, "The Fire [sic] Hills Indians Do Their Bit," was typical of the attention they received.⁶⁸ The work of these people, "an example to many of paler complexion," illustrated the enthusiasm the Native people of Canada had for the cause of Great Britain. Even those who had within recent memory "rebelled" against the Crown were now showing their loyalty and commitment, as "among the younger men who contributed to the Patriotic Fund, were two sons and a nephew of Gabriel Dumont, a lieutenant of Louis Riel in the Rebellion of 1885." The contributions of the farmers to the Patriotic Fund, and of the women to the Red Cross Society were detailed, and it was noted that in the surrounding towns the File Hills brass band gave concerts to raise money for the Belgian Relief Fund. It was pointed out that the older "pagan" people were every bit as enthusiastic as the modern farming colonists. *Saturday Night* included the story of an "aged medicine man, Kee wist [who] brought to Mr. Graham a dollar one day, saying, 'It's for those poor, poor people, far across the big water, who suffer so terribly from the war'."

The File Hills people were also featured in a 1916 issue of *The Courier* on "How Dark Men Help the Empire," which was accompanied by a photograph with the caption: "Sepoys, once enemies of England in the East, now in the trenches at Kut."⁶⁹ Readers were told that Canadian Natives were also defending the empire. Twenty-four men from the colony enlisted, out of a total adult male population of thirty-eight, and several others wished to go but were found to be medically unfit. After rendering assistance at recruitment meetings in the province most of the brass band enlisted. Bandmaster Alex Brass was awarded the Military Cross for conspicuous gallantry in action. In 1917 Graham claimed that "no white community in Saskatchewan ... has given more on an average than these Indians," and after the war it was widely circulated that "the Indians of the File Hills Reserve ... contributed more per capita than any other community in Canada when due allowance is made for their station in life."⁷⁰

With such a high rate of enlistment the war years were difficult for those who remained on the colony. Graham's correspondence for these years was full of complaints that he and his staff shouldered massive added responsibilities. They had to look after the accounts of a large number of women and children, and there were many farms which had to be kept under active operation.⁷¹ It was impossible to place these farms in the hands of tenants because of the shortage of labour. When Graham's 1917 request to have an extra clerk at the agency was turned down he threatened to resign but his dispute with his superiors was resolved by the next year when he was appointed Indian commissioner, moved to Regina, given a greatly increased salary and placed in charge of a "greater

production" scheme, which aimed at increasing the amount of reserve land under cultivation.

World War I was the golden age of the colony, at least as far as the public attention it gained. The community was still mentioned in articles of the 1920s such as "Canada's Prosperous Red Men," but even in this the statistics quoted were from ten years earlier. The colony's major promoter was in Regina, dealing with the affairs of many other agencies, and only visited File Hills once a year. From his distant desk Graham was frustrated by what he knew of the affairs of the colony. His targets were the agent and farm instructors whom he never found up to standard. By 1924 Graham had made up his mind to fire farm instructor Charles Wills because the agency "had not made the progress I expected," and because Wills did not "go round enough amongst the boys."⁷² (No matter how aged the colonists got they were often referred to by officials as "the boys.") Wills was given three more months and warned that he was to pursue an energetic policy.

Graham's wrath then descended upon Indian agent F.L. Deacon who was "suspended" for two weeks in November of 1924 for deliberately ignoring instructions. According to the commissioner the cattle herd had decreased by 100 since 1920, and farming operations had increased by only 372 acres in four years.⁷³ This agency, Graham informed Deacon, had more employees than many others with a much larger population. (Although Graham himself had always claimed that agencies should not be graded according to the number of people supervised, and that where there were more farming Natives the office work load was much heavier.) By August 1926 Graham had turned once again on Wills who was fired for being "much too easy going to properly handle Indians."⁷⁴ "The land on the colony," Graham wrote, "is in a deplorable state, and drastic steps are going to be taken to clear the situation up." Wills had apparently not carried out instructions with regard to wild oats and many of the fields were infested with the weed. Shortly after this, agent Deacon resigned because of ill health, and was replaced by George Dodds.

It is not certain which agent author and colonist Eleanor Brass referred to when she wrote that one of Graham's successors "had very dictatorial methods and administered in a negative way. As a result many couples became discouraged and left the colony. Some rented their farms to white farmers and thus avoided having any business with the Indian agent."⁷⁵ She and her husband got along well with Deacon so this was likely Dodds, who "came in with the idea that he was either going to make a success of the reserve or break us all. He was a real dictator. It seems as though I was always fighting with him." The Brass's, a young couple, eventually left the reserve altogether. Even some of the original colonists left their farms, especially during the 1930s. Alex Brass, for example, found work off the reserve as a carpenter. Like other reserves during the Depression, the File Hills reserves were short of equipment, horses, seed, feed, houses, and food, and hundreds of acres once under cultivation were idle.⁷⁶

One legacy of the colony was that the Peepeekisis reserve had an unusually high population.⁷⁷ Because of this, there was little “vacant” or “unused” land that officials might regard as available for surrender. During the Depression however, when many fields were abandoned, there was pressure placed on the band to lease land to outsiders. It is ironic that in one case pressure to lease was put to bear by the colonists’ old friend, W.R. Motherwell, who wanted some land for his farm manager.⁷⁸ Band members were very much opposed to the lease of any land as they had to first “surrender” it, and there was concern that “if they surrender they will not get the land back again.”⁷⁹ In order to make them change their minds, they were refused whatever assistance they were receiving from the department. As always, surrenders or leases of land were regarded by officials as of great benefit to reserve residents. Inspector of Agencies Thomas Robertson explained the reasons for withholding assistance from the band. “The Band can, by leasing some of this land, do a great deal to expedite improvements for themselves and children, and if they do so we will give them all further assistance possible, but I wish to make it clear that we are not wasting money by attempting to help those who will not do anything to help themselves.”⁸⁰ Not surprisingly, the band eventually consented to a five-year lease although the lease was never renewed.

By 1930, in the annual reports of the Department of Indian Affairs, any special reference to the colony as distinct from the File Hills agency had disappeared, but the settlement was still referred to as a colony as late as 1950 when the File Hills Indian Colony Day School was opened. During the 1950s however, another set of events led to the dispersal of many of the people. In the spring of 1952 some members of the Peepeekisis band protested the status of the original colonists and their descendants, involving over 400 people.⁸¹ An amendment to the Indian Act provided that if ten members of a band protested the rights of any person living on a reserve, a hearing could be held to determine if that person rightfully belonged to the band. Several Saskatchewan bands precipitated action against band members but the Peepeekisis case was unique as it involved not just one or two individuals; much of the population of the reserve was threatened with eviction. If the protests had been allowed membership in the band would have been reduced from 500 to 75 or less. At stake was a loss of status and privileges, a loss of the right to farm or to live on the reserve. The action might be called the “revenge of the old guard” as the protesters were descendants of the original band, they lived on the subdivided portion of the reserve and did not farm.⁸² In 1954 a federal commission held a four-day hearing into the charges at Lorie but reserved a decision. The controversy was not resolved until 1956 when Judge J.H. McFadden of the District Court of Melville, held an eight-day hearing and in December made his decision which preserved the status of the colonists.

During the years that the case remained in limbo the colonists became discouraged as they faced the possibility of leaving their reserve and home.

Many had been resident at File Hills for over fifty years and others had been born there and knew no other home. Among the members protested were six widows, nearly all elderly, who would have found it difficult to adjust to new surroundings. Noel J. Pinay, a colony farmer and wounded veteran of World War II told the press in September 1956 that "this matter has been prolonged too long and has affected our people economically and morally."⁸³ Ida Drake of the Women's Missionary Society wrote that "after the first hearing many of our people lost heart and felt that there was no use in cultivating their land or improving their homes for someone else's benefit. Many left their homes altogether and took work off the reserve where possible. Band funds were also tied up due to the uncertainty of membership status, so that no help towards improvements, etc. could be obtained. During these years much of the land has become infested with weeds."⁸⁴

For a time however, especially during the first two decades of the twentieth century, the File Hills colony achieved a standard of living unparalleled on other prairie reserves. What factors account for this? Graham believed that this was due to the policy of the separation of the elders from the young graduates, and to the constant supervision of the colonists. He also once wrote that any success was due to the fact that the operations of the colonists had increased beyond the point where all proceeds were required to pay for such things as twine, threshing, and repairs.⁸⁵ When anthropologist David Mandelbaum visited the File Hills in 1934 the agent and clerk gave him the impression that the colony had received large infusions of money during Graham's time. Mandelbaum wrote in his notebook that

this Agency is the old stamping ground of Graham who was Indian Commissioner for many years. As a result it has better grounds and more buildings than most Agencies ... Graham got the idea that if only he could get the young fellows off by themselves, away from the influence of the older people, they would become 'good Indians.' And so he picked out the land in the Pipikisis [*sic*] Reserve and went through the schools, picking out the likely boys and getting them into the Pipikisis [*sic*] band. Few of the boys were full-bloods. The Colony looked good on paper because a great deal of money was pored [*sic*] into it. But actually there were only three or four good farmers among all the graduates of the schools on the land. When money was not put in at as great a rate, the whole business sagged badly.⁸⁶

Voices of the Plains Cree author and Anglican priest Edward Ahenakew wrote that the key to the functioning of the colony was that the young people accepted the authority of one man, as they had learned to do in school. The colonists

are under the guidance of an official who has more authority than most, and he is an able man whose authority these young people accept in the way to which they become accustomed in boarding school ... I do not think that if he were asked to do the same thing again, that he would be willing. That colony is a tribute to his own ability and to his strong desire to improve the Indian, but I do not believe that it is a natural development.⁸⁷

Eleanor Brass, who was born and raised on the colony, wrote that the achievements at File Hills "may be attributed to the initiative of the colonists, who were allowed to conduct their own affairs," combined with the constant encouragement of missionaries and officials. She referred to "by-laws" that the colonists made themselves.⁸⁸

It is unlikely that the agricultural accomplishments of the colony could be attributed to the separation of the elders from the younger school graduates. Officials customarily blamed the state of reserve agriculture on the supposed stubborn resistance of aboriginal people to change, and they overlooked economic, and environmental factors, as well as the role of government policy. Although Graham regularly credited himself with introducing the aboriginal people of the West to agriculture, he arrived on the scene two decades after the beginning of reserve agriculture. Many Plains chiefs and prominent spokesmen of the 1870s, former buffalo hunters, led the way in this respect including Mistawasis, Ahtakakoop, Kakewistahaw, Day Star, Pasquah, Poundmaker, and Louis O'Soup. There was no widespread opposition to agriculture, indeed at the treaty negotiations and subsequent assemblies it was aboriginal people who insisted that they should be allowed the means to farm in return for their land. That there was very little to show for these efforts after twenty years was due to a wide variety of factors, including in some cases poor land, limited oxen and implements, seed shortages, restricted access to markets, and setbacks due to drought, frost, hail and prairie fire.⁸⁹ Government policies, particularly those of the 1890s, placed obstacles in the way of agricultural expansion. Many had very little choice but to pursue whatever other options were available including the sale of wood, hay, and seneca root, but this was not because of opposition to agriculture.

On the File Hills colony there was concern to create conditions that would allow for the establishment of agriculture, beginning with the initial loan. While loans were offered to select ex-pupils on other reserves, they were not available to any person wishing to begin farming; nor were they eligible to apply for bank loans. Spokesmen made it clear that this was a great grievance of reserve residents. Many were induced to surrender large tracts of their land in the early twentieth century largely because they were promised funds to outfit those wishing to begin farming. By 1913 however, the department declared it would no longer make loans to farmers from the land surrender money it held in trust, unless in the form of short-term loans to be repaid from the sale of the crops harvested.⁹⁰ If the crops did not cover expenses "farming may be considered a failure and it would be unwise to continue it." There was little concern about whether farming succeeded or not.

The issue of threshing machinery allows comparison between the situation at File Hills and on other reserves. By 1911 the colonists owned, in common, two steam threshing outfits; the department did not purchase these but the farmers were allowed to go into debt with implement dealers. On other reserves the

farmers were not allowed to enter into such arrangements. Agents were told that this should not be encouraged, that they would be burdened with collecting debts, and that if one reserve was allowed to make such a purchase it would only lead to others making similar requests.⁹¹ The equipment on reserves, particularly threshing machinery, became increasingly out-of-date and out-of-commission, and was rarely replaced. Agent H. Nichol of the Muscowpetung agency near the File Hills complained in 1913 that there was not an operable threshing outfit in his agency, and he outlined the many reasons why it was impossible for the Natives to pay for one themselves.⁹² The department would not allow the farmers to purchase machinery out of capital funds derived from land already surrendered, and the only solution the agent could see was to surrender more land in order to raise the funds. The want of threshing machinery became a chronic problem throughout the prairie reserves. In 1922, for example, it was reported that the Battleford agency, which had a large acreage under cultivation, was greatly handicapped for the want of proper threshing outfits.⁹³ The son of a farm instructor on one western reserve recalled how difficult it was for Native farmers as they "were fifty years behind the times in their machinery."⁹⁴ His father "had an awful time trying to get the Indian agent to buy even one mower for twenty-seven farmers. You can imagine how much hay was harvested with one mower."

The File Hills colony farmers were allowed to purchase the machinery necessary to their enterprise while other reserve farmers were not. It was not so much that money was "poured in" to the colony but that there was concern to create conditions that would allow farmers to enjoy some success. As Graham himself recognized, the colonists got beyond the point of seeing their entire proceeds going to pay their debts, and this allowed them to acquire amenities unheard of on other reserves. Because of their relative prosperity, the colonists were perhaps able to demand a greater say in the management of their own affairs, as Eleanor Brass wrote. Certainly Graham was concerned about the tendency of those who were doing well not to "listen so readily to advice." In his annual published reports Graham claimed to encourage this independence. He wrote in 1911 that

particular attention is paid to the matter of giving those Indians who are able to conduct their own affairs, a chance to do so, as I consider this most essential. We have a few among those who first entered the colony who have a comparatively free hand in conducting their own business. Several of these Indians have private bank accounts, which show a credit balance the year round, and against this they draw cheques from time to time.⁹⁵

Graham may simply have been making the best of a situation that presented itself to him, as it seems unlikely that he would have encouraged such independence.

Without doubt some credit for the agricultural achievements of the colony must go to its energetic founder and promoter. Graham's constant supervision

of the colonists and the dedication he demanded of his staff must have had its drawbacks, but may also have been of assistance. It is unfortunate that the same energy was not applied to other prairie reserves where farming floundered. Graham was interested in the success of farming only on the colony. Elsewhere Graham sought to alienate Native reserve lands, an initiative that most certainly worked against the best interests of reserve farming.

NOTES

1. *The Literary Digest*, (New York), 7 March 1925.
2. John Hawkes, *The Story of Saskatchewan and its People* (Regina: The S.J. Clarke Publishing Co., 1924), 104. William M. Graham was born in Ontario in 1867 and came west with his family in the 1870s. His father James Graham was Indian superintendent for the Manitoba district. He began work with Indian Affairs in 1884, first as a clerk in the Birtle and Moose Mountain agencies. File Hills was the first agency Graham was placed in charge of, in 1896, and he remained resident there for twenty-one years, although he was appointed inspector of agencies in 1904. Graham was promoted to Indian Commissioner in 1918 when he left File Hills for Regina, and retired in 1932. See E. Brian Titley, "W.M. Graham: Indian Agent Extraordinaire," *Prairie Forum* 8, no. 1 (1983): 25-41; Titley, *A Narrow Vision: Duncan Campbell Scott and the Administration of Indian Affairs in Canada* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1986), chapter 10, "The Ambitions of Commissioner Graham," 184-99.
3. Frederick H. Abbott, *The Administration of Indian Affairs in Canada* (Washington: 1915), 51.
4. *Free Press* (Winnipeg), 1 January 1921.
5. National Archives of Canada (NAC), Records relating to Indian Affairs, RG 10, vol. 3784, file 41/61, Robert Sinclair to Edgar Dewdney, 27 July 1887.
6. *Ibid.*, Angus McKay's report, 4 October 1885.
7. *The Empire* (Toronto), 19 January 1891. See also *The Tribune* (Winnipeg), 23 December 1890 and *The Week* (Toronto), 13 December 1890.
8. *The Mail* (Toronto), 15 September 1893.
9. *The Gazette* (Montréal), 19 September 1893.
10. *Leader Post* (Regina), 6 July 1893 and *Mail* 11 July 1893.
11. NAC, RG 10, Deputy Superintendent General Letterbooks, vol. 1117, p. 319, Hayter Reed to Amédée Forget, 20 July 1895.
12. Sarah Carter, "Two Acres and a Cow: 'Peasant' Farming for the Indians of the Northwest, 1889-1897," *Canadian Historical Review* 70, no. 1 (1989): 27-52.
13. D.J. Hall, "Clifford Sifton and Canadian Indian Administration, 1896-1905," *Prairie Forum* 2, no. 2 (1977): 129.
14. *Free Press*, 1 January 1921.
15. Canada. House of Commons (CHC), *Sessional Papers*, Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs for 1901, xxix.
16. Jean Barman, "Separate and Unequal: Indian and White Girls at All Hallows School, 1884-1920," in *Indian Education in Canada*, vol. 1, *The Legacy* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1986), 120.

17. CHC, *Sessional Papers*, vol. 36, no. 27 (1901), xxix.
18. *Ibid.*, vol. 38, no. 27, (1903), 238-39.
19. Frederick E. Hoxie, *A Final Promise: The Campaign to Assimilate the Indians, 1880-1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 196. See also Kenneth James King, *Pan-Africanism and Education: A Study of Race Philanthropy and Education in the Southern States of America and East Africa* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971).
20. NAC, RG 10, vol. 7768, file 27111-2, W.M. Graham to the superintendent general of Indian Affairs, 4 February 1901.
21. *Ibid.*, vol. 3703, file 17,728, J.C. Nelson to Dewdney, 31 December 1884.
22. CHC, *Sessional Papers*, vol. 17, no. 4, (1883), 72.
23. NAC, Hayter Reed Papers, vol. 21, large letterbook, no. 94, Hayter Reed to L. Vankoughnet, November 1889.
24. NAC, RG 10, vol. 7768, file 27111-2, David Laird to the secretary, superintendent general of Indian Affairs, 30 September 1902.
25. *Ibid.*, Graham to Laird, 31 March 1906.
26. CHC, *Sessional Papers*, vol. 45, no. 27 (1911), 347.
27. NAC, RG 10, vol. 1392, circular letter, D.C. Scott, 12 March 1914.
28. *Ibid.*
29. *Ibid.*
30. Glenbow-Alberta Institute (GAI), Blood Indian Agency Correspondence, File 97, W.J. Dilworth to D.C. Scott, 1914.
31. NAC, RG 10, vol. 4072, file 431,636, Rev. W. McWhinney to the assistant deputy and secretary, 26 February 1913.
32. CHC, *Sessional Papers*, vol. 46, no. 27 (1911), 520.
33. Eleanor Brass, *I Walk in Two Worlds* (Calgary: Glenbow Museum, 1987), 11.
34. W.W. Gibson, "Indians at Work for the War," *East and West: A Paper for Young Canadians* (Toronto), 14 April 1917.
35. Eleanor Brass, "The File Hills Ex-Pupil Colony," *Saskatchewan History* 6, no. 2 (1953), 67.
36. Alice W. Tye, "Indian Farmers at File Hills Colony," *Nor'West Farmer*, 5 September 1912, p. 1169.
37. CHC, *Sessional Papers*, vol. 42, no. 27 (1907), 158-59.
38. Jean Friesen (Usher), *William Duncan of Metlakatla: A Victorian Missionary in British Columbia* (Ottawa: National Museums of Canada, 1974).
39. *Ibid.*, 127.
40. Louis R. Harlan, *Booker T. Washington: The Wizard of Tuskegee, 1901-1915* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 169-70.
41. Clark C. Spence, *The Salvation Army Farm Colonies* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1985).
42. Raymond A. Mohl and Neil Betten, "Paternalism and Pluralism: Immigrants and Social Welfare in Gary, Indiana, 1906-1940," *American Studies* 15, no. 1 (1974).

43. A.W. Rasporich, "Utopia, Sect and Millenium in Western Canada, 1870-1940," *Prairie Forum* 12, no. 2 (1987), 217-43.
44. *Ibid.*, 222.
45. CHC, *Sessional Papers*, vol. 42, no. 27 (1907), 157.
46. *Ibid.*, vol. 50, no. 27 (1914), 229.
47. *Free Press*, March 1918, clipping in NAC, RG 10, vol. 7768, file 27111-2.
48. See the map in NAC, RG 10, vol. 6300, file 641-1, part 1.
49. NAC, RG 10, vol. 7768, file 27111-2, Graham to J. McLean, 9 March 1906. The strip Graham recommended was three miles wide and extended to the west boundary of the reserve. It contained 120 lots of 80 acres and 12 of about 120 acres. This left 6,500 acres of the reserve unsubdivided.
50. Brass, *I Walk in Two Worlds*, 13.
51. NAC, RG 10, vol. 6307, file 653-1, pt. 1, J.H. McIlree to comptroller, 4 February 1902.
52. *Ibid.*, vol. 7768, file 27111-2, Graham to J. McLean, 17 June 1911.
53. *Ibid.*, vol. 1394, Graham to Mclean, 31 July 1914.
54. *Ibid.*, vol. 7768, file 27111-2, Graham to McLean, 17 June 1911.
55. *Ibid.*
56. *Ibid.*, Graham to the secretary, Department of Indian Affairs, 18 October 1910.
57. *Ibid.*
58. *Ibid.*, 24 July 1911.
59. *Ibid.*, Graham to McLean, 23 August 1911.
60. *Ibid.*, vol. 6300, file 641-1, pt. 1, Graham to Scott, 28 September 1909.
61. *Ibid.*, McLean, 17 March 1909.
62. CHC, *Sessional Papers*, vol. 42, no. 27 (1907), 156.
63. *Ibid.*, vol. 46, no. 27 (1912), 520.
64. *Ibid.*, vol. 42, no. 27 (1907), 159.
65. *Ibid.*, vol. 45, no. 27 (1911), 285.
66. P.H. Bryce, *The Story of a National Crime: Being an Appeal Justice to the Indians of Canada* (Ottawa: James Hope and Sons Ltd., 1922), 4.
67. *Ibid.*, 10-11.
68. *Saturday Night* (Toronto), 17 April 1915.
69. *The Courier*, 25 March 1916, in NAC, RG 10, vol. 11198, scrapbook no. 1, 1884-35.
70. NAC, RG 10, vol. 1394, Graham to Scott, 15 January 1917, and Hawkes, *Story of Saskatchewan*, 103.
71. *Ibid.*, vol. 4070, file 427,063-A, Graham to Scott, 12 August 1917.
72. *Ibid.*, vol. 9131, file 306-4, Chas. Will to Graham, 14 May 1924 and Graham to F.L. Deacon, 24 April 1924.
73. *Ibid.*, Graham to Deacon, 3 November 1924.

74. Ibid., 24 September 1926.
75. Brass, *I Walk in Two Worlds*, 19.
76. NAC, RG 10, vol. 9135, file 306-6, T. Robertson to C. Dodds, 7 March 1938.
77. According to the 1929 census there were 239 colonists as well as 45 others on the Peepeekisis reserve. On the other File Hills reserves the population was much lower — Star Blanket - 58, Little Black Bear - 40, Okanese - 31. By 1947 the population on the Peepeekisis reserve had increased to 390.
78. NAC, RG 10, vol. 9135, file 306-6, G. Dodds to Thos. Robertson, 28 February 1938.
79. Ibid., Robertson to the secretary, Department of Mines and Resources, Indian Affairs Branch, 18 January 1939.
80. Ibid., Robertson to Dodds, 7 March 1938.
81. Saskatchewan Archives Board (SAB), annual reports of the Women's Missionary Society of the Presbyterian and United churches, 1887-1956, typescript, 84-85.
82. *Leader Post* (Regina), 9 June 1954.
83. Ibid., 17 September 1956.
84. SAB, Women's Missionary Society reports, 85.
85. NAC, RG 10, vol. 1390, Graham's annual report, 4 February 1914.
86. Canadian Plains Research Center, Dr. David Mandlebaum Fieldnotes, File Hills 1.
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A Female Frontier: Manitoba Farm Women in 1922

Sara Brooks Sundberg

ABSTRACT. In 1922 the United Farm Women of Manitoba conducted the "Rural Home Survey" to assess the living and working conditions of Manitoba farm women. An analysis of the results of the survey demonstrates that the impact of technological change on farm women's lives remained limited in 1922. Thus, even though farm areas were undergoing a technological transition in the early twentieth century, farm women shared a continuity of tasks and concerns with their nineteenth-century pioneer sisters. Manitoba women, as late as 1922, were part of an extended female frontier. This frontier, defined by factors related to farm women's lives at home, progressed slowly along a timetable separate from that of the agricultural frontier traditionally defined by male experiences.

SOMMAIRE. En 1922, le United Farm Women of Manitoba effectue le "Rural Home Survey" afin d'évaluer le mode de vie et les conditions de travail des fermières manitobaines. L'analyse des résultats de cette enquête montre que l'impact des changements technologiques sur la vie de ces femmes est encore limité en 1922. De ce fait, et bien que certains domaines de l'exploitation agricole aient subi l'influence d'une transition technologique au début du 20^e siècle, les femmes, elles, effectuent les mêmes tâches et ont les mêmes préoccupations que les pionnières du 19^e siècle. Les Manitobaines font encore partie en 1922 d'une "frontière" définie par des facteurs ayant trait à la vie de ces fermières chez elles, progresse lentement à une allure différente, de la "frontière" agricole traditionnelle établie selon des expériences masculines.

By traditional definitions the pioneer era of farming in Manitoba had passed by the early 1920s; yet, the lives of women revealed in responses to the United Farm Women of Manitoba's (UFWM) "Rural Home Survey" in 1922, bear a striking resemblance to descriptions of pioneer farm women's lives more than a half century earlier.¹ This study demonstrates the persistence of a female farming frontier in Manitoba to 1922, a frontier determined by the work lives of farm women. Nineteenth and early twentieth-century farm women shared common tasks of domestic production and family care, and they performed these tasks under similar conditions.² Responses to the UFWM survey demonstrate that, despite the increasing use of technology on the farm, Manitoba farm women lacked even some of the most basic labour-saving improvements within the farm home, the primary work place for most farm women at the time. Mechanization, which helped transform the Canadian prairies from its pioneer to modern form, changed the farm work of women at a much slower pace than that of men. Prairie farm women as late as the 1920s were, in the words of one Alberta farm woman at the time, "modern pioneers."³

Changes in the work lives of women are rarely viewed as indices to measure the passing of frontier conditions. The Canadian prairie frontier is no exception. Most often, a complex process of change, more applicable to the male experience, marks the end of the pioneer period. Changes in the rate of settlement of prime farm land, changes from the use of horse power to machine power for outdoor farm labour and/or changes in the farm market economy are a few indices traditionally applied to the prairie frontier in Canada.⁴

In general, scholars have neglected to distinguish the separate effects of these changes on men and women, or to isolate additional factors which may have had greater significance to women in terms of the passing of the frontier.⁵ Since much of women's work took place within the confines of the home, it makes sense that an important way women experienced the frontier, and the passing of

the frontier, was through conditions surrounding them in their homes. Pioneer farm women's lives are often characterized as physical drudgery. The introduction of electricity, indoor plumbing and other labour-saving tools may serve as direct indicators of the passing of the frontier for women since these improvements lightened the physical burden of farm women's tasks.⁶

Studies of Canadian rural women's diaries, letters, account books and reminiscences provide substantial information concerning the patterns of pioneer farm women's lives. These studies demonstrate that economic necessity and cultural prescriptions for prairie women's lives combined to demand that women be strong, helpful, enduring and married. Not surprisingly then, tasks connected with the care and support of families shaped their lives. These studies also demonstrate that the living conditions and daily domestic activities of prairie farm women were rigorous and demanding.⁷

A look backward through literary sources at the home lives of prairie women during the nineteenth century illustrates some general changes that occurred in Manitoba farm women's work lives during the pioneer period. The earliest records of white, female domestic activities in an agricultural setting in Manitoba came from the Red River Colony, originally settled in 1812. The daily domestic roles of these pioneer farm women as homemakers, home manufacturers and wage earners provided valuable goods and services for the maintenance of the family farm. Women of the Red River spun yarn and wove cloth, milked cows, cleaned "old oak coolers" and cut wheat with sickles. Their homes, often one or two-story log structures, used fireplaces or box stoves for cooking and heating. Women cleaned and filled fish oil lamps for lighting and carried water to the house in pails.⁸

Forty years later, following the first big wave of migration to Manitoba farm lands, women's daily activities began to reveal the influence of industrialization and mechanization. Instead of spinning and weaving, women might purchase factory-made cloth. Metal milk cans, now available, made the job of cleaning the milk containers less time consuming, and instead of cutting wheat by hand pioneer farm women might stook the wheat while their husbands drove a horse-drawn harvester. Labour savers were available only to the more prosperous settlers however. "Don't pay anybody for anything you can do yourself" and "buy nothing that you can raise" were words of advice to newcomers from an Archibald, Manitoba, woman in 1885.⁹ Reflecting the movement of agricultural settlement to the open prairie during this period, pioneers described houses made of sod, as well as the traditional wood-frame houses found in the more wooded eastern regions. Typical utilities in the frontier home included oil-burning lamps with glass chimneys, and coal or wood, or less frequently, straw-burning stoves. Pioneers hauled water for household use either from a nearby slough or from a homesite well.¹⁰

The final decade of the century brought the beginning of the last big

migration to Manitoba farm lands. It also brought labour savers such as glass canning jars, cradle churns, separators, manual water pumps and cooking stoves with copper reservoirs capable of heating several gallons of water. These labour savers made pioneer women's crucial role as providers of goods and services such as food, clothing, and butter for sale less burdensome than in the earliest years of settlement. The labour savers available to Manitoba farm women when the UFWM initiated its "Rural Home Survey" in 1922 had barely advanced from the 1890s. Many of their homes employed the same types of systems for heating, lighting and water. Moreover, the role of farm women as domestic producers who worked to sustain the farm as a viable economic unit continued remarkably the same.¹¹

The UFWM's mission to work for "the betterment of rural life" implied its awareness of the need for improving living and working conditions in the countryside. Established in 1918 as the women's arm of the United Farmers of Manitoba, the UFWM paid particular attention to issues concerning women and children in rural areas.¹² Through its 1922 "Rural Home Survey," one of several surveys conducted after World War I, the UFWM focussed on the problems of farm women at home. Specifically, the UFWM examined complaints received through an earlier survey, of the "oppressed farm women, the hard work on the farms, ... girls of the farm choosing other occupations, and the farm women who filled an early grave."¹³ These complaints reflected the unhappiness of women with the quality of their lives and raised the spectre of significant numbers of them leaving rural areas for the amenities of more modern urban life. In fact, Manitoba had experienced a steep decline in the percentage of its rural population since the turn of the century. The prospect of a rural exodus to cities posed a serious challenge to traditional country life ideology which glorified the virtues of rural living.¹⁴ The UFWM survey emerged against the backdrop of the inconsistency between farm women's complaints and the ideals of the country life movement.¹⁵

The UFWM recognized that the strenuous work life of "oppressed" farm women was the primary source of their discontent with rural life. They systematically investigated the labour-saving needs of Manitoba farm women. The group surveyed 364 women, contacted through UFWM "locals," the community level of organization for the UFWM. Of these, 330 returned fully completed questionnaires.¹⁶ The UFWM prepared a summary report based on 307 of these responses and published some of its findings in the widely read farm periodical, *Grain Growers' Guide*.¹⁷

The women who responded to the survey provided a valuable indication of the labour-saving needs and home life conditions of Manitoba farm women. The women represented a geographic cross section of settled farm areas as well as a cross section of farm wealth measured according to farm acreage.¹⁸ (See Figure 1.) The smallest farm reported was seven acres. "We are only homesteaders,"

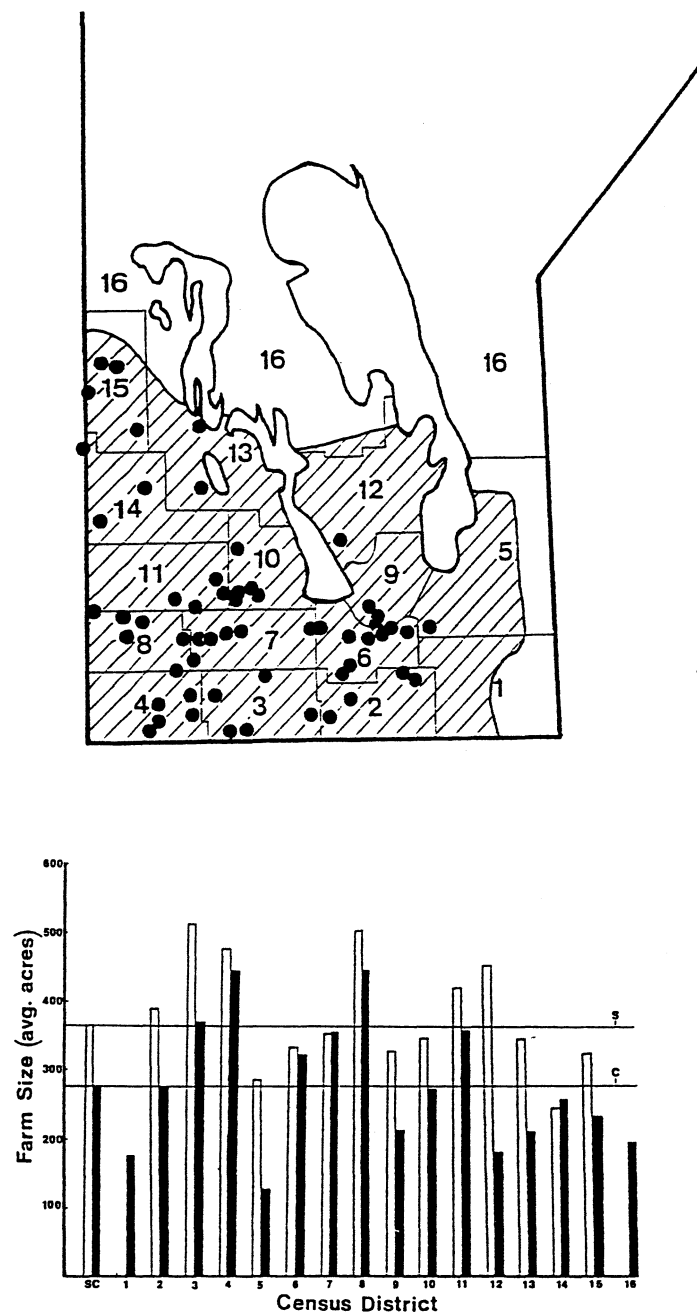


Figure 1. Map indicates locations of survey respondents by census district. Prairie and parkland regions represented by shading. Bar graph indicates average size of farm by census district. Open bars "s" indicate average size of farms for survey respondents. Closed bars "c" indicate average size of farms for all farms in that census district. Source: *Sixth Census of Canada, 1921*, Vol. 5, census district end map and Table 79, p. 120.

commented a woman on an 160-acre farm in the Valpoy district. In contrast, the largest farm reported, near Virden, was 1600 acres.¹⁹

The survey of 1922 did not tap a cross section of Manitoba farm women. Instead, a conservative bias appeared in favor of those women who were more likely to benefit from modernization in their homes. Because the survey questionnaire asked questions only in English, the women who responded were most likely literate and spoke English.²⁰ Moreover, the women in the survey came from slightly wealthier families measured in terms of the number who owned land, and the amount of land they owned.²¹ These biases only underscored the relevance of the UFWM's findings in terms of the lack of labour-saving technology within Manitoba farm homes and the hard work required of farm women. The women who were underrepresented in the survey, those less wealthy and non-English-speaking, most probably experienced home conditions as primitive, or even more so, than those represented in the survey.

This study reexamines the data collected by the UFWM. It utilizes all 330 completed questionnaires, instead of the 307 considered in the UFWM summary report, and it examines them in more detail. First, it provides and analyzes summary statistics for individual responses to all questions. Second, a multiple variate correlation matrix, generated from a random sample of one hundred respondents, identifies correlations and trends between responses to individual survey questions. These correlations provide a statistical measure of the relationships between various factors in the women's lives, for example wealth, as measured by size of farms, and the presence of conveniences in the home.²²

The marital status of most women represented in the survey is not precisely known because the survey did not specifically ask whether the women were married. The leaders of the UFWM probably assumed most, if not all, of the women in the survey were married. There is justification for such an assumption since 308 women in the survey legibly signed their questionnaire with "Mrs." and census figures demonstrate that the majority of rural women in Manitoba were married.²³

Moreover, unmarried women faced formidable legal and financial obstacles in starting up or maintaining a farm on their own. Unless a woman was widowed, divorced or separated, and had dependent children, she did not qualify for a free homestead under federal homestead law. This requirement made the start-up costs of farming greater for single women than for men. It also limited the number of widowed or divorced women who were able to take advantage of the reduced costs of homesteading. These restrictions on female homesteaders were never lifted in Manitoba.²⁴ Even if a woman farmed with her husband it might be difficult for her to hang on to the farm after his death. It was not until 1918 that dower laws in Manitoba guaranteed widows a share of their husband's estate. Given the legal and financial handicaps confronting women who attempted to farm on their own, it is understandable that in 1921 women

accounted for only 2 percent of all workers classified as farmers in Manitoba.²⁵ It is also reasonable to conclude that for most of the women of marriageable age who lived in rural Manitoba during the early 1920s, "'woman' still meant 'wife'."²⁶

Each of the "Rural Home Survey" questionnaires asked forty-eight questions concerning living conditions, women's work, and family. Questions falling within the category of living conditions included the size of the family farm and house and whether the farm was owned or rented. The distance of farms from important services, including the market, doctor, hospital, schools, churches, and the community, appeared on the questionnaire. The survey asked about the presence of home conveniences such as running water in the kitchen and a sink, how the home was heated, whether the house had power, whether it had an indoor toilet and bath. Additionally, the survey questioned whether the home had a telephone, whether the household owned a car and if the woman could drive.

Responses to these questions demonstrate that for many rural Manitoba households, modern household technology remained a luxury in 1922. Although both gasoline-operated water pumps and pneumatic-pressure water systems were manufactured by 1915, two-thirds of the homes in the survey lacked running water in the kitchen and less than half of all respondents, 41 percent, reported even having a sink in the kitchen.²⁷ "Think of the time and strength used ... in handling the required amount of water a day, by the use of the pail and dipper," complained the UFWM report.²⁸ Only six of the sixteen homes reporting machine-powered water pumps as labour savers, 1.8 percent of the total sample, pumped water to the kitchen. Two women who reported the presence of machine-powered water pumps on the farm voluntarily explained that their families used water pumps solely for watering livestock.²⁹ In fact, advertisers of power pumps argued that the savings gained from the installation of water pumps in the stables could pay for the installation of running water in the home.³⁰ Evidently, few farmers heeded this advice. As late as 1931 less than 2 percent of all Manitoba farms reported running water in either the kitchen or the bathroom.³¹

The location of wells added to the inconvenience of manually pumping or drawing and transporting water. The average respondent's home stood a distance of sixty yards from the family well, although the standard deviation from this average was 158 yards. One woman reported a distance of one mile between the house and the well!³² In part, sanitary precautions determined the location of a well. Canadian rural planners discouraged farmers from locating wells for convenience near the house or in the barn yard, recommending instead a minimum of fifty yards between the well and any source of contamination.³³

Cisterns or rain barrels offered a partial solution to the problem of water handling. Three women in the survey indicated they used such containers.

Cisterns and rain barrels were more convenient for water handling at least part of the year; but, ice formed in the barrels during the winter months. Thus, even though the water might be closer at hand, melting the ice created an additional household chore.³⁴ Recognizing this chore as a widespread problem for farm women, one prairie woman recommended, through a letter to the widely read farm periodical *Grain Growers' Guide*, that women employ their children in the task of bringing ice from the barrels into the house for melting. "They will do it willingly for lots of hot cookies," she advised. These types of "hand outs" in exchange for help were just as useful "where you have all men folk to deal with," she commented.³⁵ This advice indicates that water handling was frequently a woman's responsibility and that obtaining assistance required persuasion.

Not surprisingly, given the inconvenience of water handling and lack of indoor plumbing on farms, only 28 percent of the women surveyed reported an indoor toilet and only 15 percent of homes had a bathtub. In some homes, vented chemical closets replaced outhouses and chamber pots. Canadian farm experts included septic tanks in their illustrations of model western farm lots as early as 1916.³⁶ Nevertheless, even in the densely settled area surrounding Melita, modern flush toilets did not appear until the 1940s.³⁷ Women reported a variety of tubs, ranging from zinc to rubber, and folding tubs.³⁸ Regardless of type, filling the tub with heated water and then emptying it after a bath required strenuous effort.

Eighty-six percent of the homes in the survey lacked electricity. Despite the fact that the pages of *Grain Growers' Guide* carried numerous advertisements for gasoline-powered generating plants for the farm, and that its women's editor touted the "woman power" that could be saved with electrical labour savers, most farm families chose not to invest in these systems. The initial expense of a labour-saving system like an electrical generating plant ranged anywhere from \$375 to \$600, depending upon the type of system installed.³⁹ Undoubtedly this expense discouraged many farm families from updating their homes. Some women felt that men were simply not sympathetic enough of their labour-saving needs to seriously consider purchasing or sharing even small labour-saving devices. "It is not simply the lack of money that has bereft farm houses of comfort," the authors of the UFWM survey report argued, "it is the lack of 'the will to do' and 'the care for others'."⁴⁰ Farmers used gasoline-powered engines to operate some labour-saving devices for women, particularly washing machines. But, a farm woman from Dand pointed out that she used it (the gasoline engine) only when "it will go" and when "the men are not using it."⁴¹ She probably shared the sentiment of another woman in the survey who pencilled in the margin of the questionnaire, "What I have hoped for is that Hydro-Electric power might be developed through the country and that we might have cheap light and power."⁴² Improvements in electrical facilities for Manitoba farm homes came slowly, however. Only 3.7 percent of Manitoba

farm homes reported electric light or gas in 1931 and the province did not achieve full electrification until 1950.⁴³

In the absence of electricity, coal oil, kerosene, or gasoline lamps provided light for farm homes. Women usually assumed responsibility for the daily wick trimming, chimney cleaning and refilling of the lamps.⁴⁴ 1920s Alberta pioneer Kathleen Strange preferred gasoline lamps over the messy coal oil and kerosene varieties. The tasks of cleaning the latter left her "exasperated beyond endurance."⁴⁵ Similarly, women assumed responsibility for stoking the fires and carrying out the ashes from coal or wood-burning stoves. One-third of the respondents reported central heat of some sort in their homes. Most used coal or wood as fuel in space-heating stoves. Alberta pioneer Palma Blackburn's duties concerning the stove, recalled here by her husband, were probably typical of the period. "As long as we lived on the farm we burned coal and wood in our stoves. Palma had to stoke the fires and carry out the ashes." The Blackburns farmed until the late 1930s.⁴⁶

If a farm woman enjoyed any of the labour-saving conveniences discussed above she was also likely to enjoy others. Some conveniences, like water in the kitchen and indoor toilets, probably occurred together as part of a common indoor plumbing system. Others may have been related to farm wealth. Large farms generally had large houses and these generally had more conveniences than smaller homes.⁴⁷ Although these tendencies suggest a relationship between farm wealth and modernization, among large farms of 640 acres or more (13 percent of all the farms surveyed), nearly half lacked water in the kitchen, fewer than half had kitchen sinks, less than one-third reported indoor toilets, and less than one-fifth had a bathtub. One farm woman from a 960-acre farm near Rapid City reported none of the above conveniences.⁴⁸ This information, along with the fact that 96 percent of the respondents reported ownership of their land, provides some support for the contention of UFWM leaders and other contemporary reformers that ownership of land received priority over providing conveniences in the home. The UFWM survey report argues this case, "Would ... cooperation not be applied better if at least one-quarter section were sold and the proceeds spent in labour-saving devices, comforts for the home and the finer things of life? If the home is not a home in the true sense, what is it?"⁴⁹

In a more positive vein, the report of the UFWM survey lauded the significant number of households that indicated women had the possibility of communication with others outside the family farm: 63 percent owned cars, 72 percent had telephones, and 98 percent subscribed to periodicals. Some early twentieth-century observers expressed the belief that the automobile significantly reduced the isolation of prairie life. Others, like the UFWM survey report, remarked upon the importance of cars and female drivers to community social life, and to farm operation in general. "They [the women] can assist the men in numerous ways during the busy season when breakages occur or supplies are needed," the report stated.⁵⁰ Yet, the full impact of automobiles on the lives of farm women

in the 1920s is unclear — fewer than one-half of the women who reported having an automobile said that they could drive it.⁵¹ Farm women clearly lagged behind men in gaining the mobility and independence automotive technology offered. The average distances of farm homes from needed services illustrate how important learning to drive could be. The average woman in the survey lived twenty-seven miles from the nearest hospital, eight miles from the closest doctor and seven miles from the nearest market. Telephones probably alleviated the isolation for some women. Ironically, women living farthest from hospitals, doctors and markets, and therefore the most likely to benefit from telephone service, were the least likely to have a telephone.⁵²

The widespread adoption of communications technology among Manitoba farm families in the early 1920s did not extend to labour-saving technology within Manitoba farm homes. Consequently, women in the survey cooked, cleaned, sewed, milked cows and churned butter, all with technology familiar to nineteenth-century pioneer women. Women's pages and advertisements in *Grain Growers' Guide* praised the wonders of new labour-saving devices such as vacuum cleaners, power washing machines, churns and separators. Nevertheless, most farm women in the survey lacked these conveniences.

Less than half of all the women surveyed, 39 percent, reported having machine power for labour savers in their homes. Only 43 percent owned washing machines: manual, gasoline powered or electric. Of those who did own washing machines, 20 percent of the machines were hand powered. These machines reportedly taxed women's physical strength nearly as much as the traditional scrubboard and washtub. Even so, women considered them an improvement.⁵³

If a farm family invested in machine power, it was likely the family also invested in a washing machine as one of its labour savers. Regardless of whether a washer was operated by hand power or machine power, washing machines still required the water to be heated and drained manually. Recalling that 67 percent of the women lacked running water in the house and that, on average, the nearest well was sixty yards away, washday for women entailed the gruelling task of hauling water to and from the machine. Heating the water created another chore. Farm woman Kathleen Strange recalled, "The boiling sudsy water had to be carried in pails from the stove to wherever my tubs were set. More than once I burned myself severely, spilling water on unprotected hands and legs."⁵⁴ Despite the gruelling, regular nature of washday chores, expenditures for improvements to make these chores less burdensome ranked last, well behind telephones and automobiles, in the allocation of farm income for household conveniences.⁵⁵

The use of machine power for traditional female tasks rarely extended beyond washing machines. The next most frequently mentioned machine-powered labour savers were butter churns, gasoline irons and cream separators,

all reported by less than 10 percent of the respondents.⁵⁶ “The outside work on the farm is done by horse, steam or gasoline,” Manitoba farm woman and feminist Nellie McClung argued, “but the indoor work is all done by woman-power.”⁵⁷ UFWM leaders echoed McClung’s claim when they complained, with cause, that farmers purchased unnecessary farm machinery in place of home conveniences.⁵⁸ In fact, farmers tended to purchase machinery as soon as they had the means, and some farmers simply bought more machinery than they needed.⁵⁹ The survey questionnaires did not specifically ask whether farm families employed power-driven machinery for outdoor farm work. Nevertheless, eleven women (8 percent of those reporting power) volunteered that was the case and that farm work was the sole use of machine power on their farms. Census statistics confirm that the number of tractors, combines, binders and threshing machines far outnumbered the number of farm homes with electricity.⁶⁰

Women clearly benefitted indirectly from purchases of modern farm machinery. Women cooked and sewed for fewer hired hands after the purchase of tractors, for example.⁶¹ But purchases of tractors and other farm implements did not directly alter the tasks of cooking and sewing. As if to underscore the lack of modern technology in the home, which could have lightened these tasks, women listed everything from dust mops to “well trained men” as labour savers.⁶²

Farm women’s appreciation for the purchase of farm implements that reduced the size of the household is understandable. The number of individuals in the farm household compounded women’s labours. The majority of the women in the survey reported children at home, with an average of three children per family. Farm women relied on their children for help as indicated by the advice given in the *Grain Growers’ Guide* on how to employ children as helpers in the home. Of course, the ages of the children affected how much help they could be expected to give.⁶³ Strangely, the survey questionnaires did not ask farm women the ages of their children at home.

Besides children, the number of hired hands affected the workload of farm women. Forty-five percent of the women reported hired hands as part of their household. Kathleen Strange recalled having to do the laundry for as many as eight to fifteen people, depending upon the season of the year and the number of hired hands employed.⁶⁴ If the farm had a hired hand it was highly likely that the farm woman did his laundry. One woman changed the survey question “Do you do his washing” to “Do you do ‘their’ washing,” suggesting that she laundered for more than one hired hand.⁶⁵ Other women, like the one from Dand who wrote, “yes, if he helps milk,” may have exchanged chores with hired help.⁶⁶ A hired hand was also likely to have the farm woman mend his clothes. But, farm women did not always cheerfully comply in providing domestic service for hired help. “Nothing doing,” one woman remarked on her question-

naire.⁶⁷ Nevertheless, if a farm woman provided one of these services it was likely she provided others as well.⁶⁸

Farmers were more likely to hire someone to help with the outdoor chores than to help with the domestic work. In contrast to the 45 percent of women reporting hired hands, only 17 percent of the women reported home-helps, domestic help within the home. In part, this discrepancy may be due to a shortage of female domestic labourers, a problem also familiar to nineteenth-century farm women. The period of time women employed home-helps ranged from "threshing" to "all year," the fortunate few with home-help employed them for an average of five months.

Whether or not a woman shared equally in the allocation of funds for labour savers on the farm or for the employment of farm help, she very likely contributed to the accumulation of those funds. The day-to-day responsibilities of farm women for the care and sale of poultry and dairy produce, for instance, provided much needed cash for the operation of the farm. Fifty-five percent of women earned cash income through sale of poultry, 79 percent sold eggs, 55 percent sold cream and 46 percent sold butter. One woman pencilled in the margin of her questionnaire, "I believe it is the wish of all farm women that prices on butter, cream and eggs would improve, as we all depend on them so much."⁶⁹ Many of these women were in a position to know their own economic importance — 42 percent of them reported they kept the family accounts.

Few of the farm women employed power-driven labour savers in the production of goods for sale.⁷⁰ This held true despite the fact that 39 percent of the respondents reported that the money they earned from the sale of dairy and poultry products nearly financed their homes. In fact, labour savers were more highly correlated with other conveniences than with the need for production. The survey demonstrated a weak correlation between owning a separator and a churn and selling cream or butter, but if a household could afford conveniences such as plumbing, they were more likely to own dairy equipment as well.⁷¹

Other tasks performed by women contributed to the farm economy by saving money. Only 6 percent of the women acknowledged working in the fields, but 43 percent helped eliminate the need for hired help by regularly milking the cows. A slight majority of the women, 51 percent, tended gardens, making purchases of some fruits and vegetables unnecessary. "There is perhaps no one thing that helps out with the cooking ... more than a really good kitchen garden," a woman explained to the *Grain Growers' Guide*.⁷² Eighty-nine percent of the women canned food. If a woman tended a garden it was likely she also canned, suggesting that most of the women canned their own produce.⁷³ Despite the obvious economic advantages of gardening, some women apparently received little support from their husbands. "I know it is hard to get the men folk to plow the necessary bit of land [for a garden]," the woman above

continued in the the *Grain Growers' Guide*, "but keep on the good side of them..."⁷⁴

Women also economized by sewing for their families. Most women, 96 percent, sewed for the family, usually making clothing for themselves and their children. A woman from Dauphin, for example, reported sewing "all necessary garments for three and mending for five in the family."⁷⁵ She did not report owning a sewing machine. In fact, only 4 percent of the women reported a sewing machine in the home. Surprisingly, there is no correlation between owning a sewing machine and sewing for the family — apparently sewing machines were an under-used luxury in the more well off households.

The economic contributions of the farm women in the survey indicate that many families still practiced the traditional family labour pattern of agriculture. This pattern of family labour implied that women were partners with their husbands on the farm. Yet, the fact that the UFWM felt compelled to investigate women's complaints of hard work on the farm suggests women questioned whether that partnership was equitable. Women not only lacked labour savers for their portion of farm work, many lacked money of their own. Only 17 percent of the women reported any personal spending money.⁷⁶

Economic conditions influenced decisions on how money would be spent. During the 1920s the Canadian prairies suffered a severe depression. At the beginning of the decade the price of wheat restricted cash expenditures on the farm. The UFWM local from Manson noted this dilemma in their criticism of the survey, "We have had six or seven bad crops in this district, — but — we have a lot of nice homes here, we are sure that what labour savers we lack, we will get them as soon as the funds allow..."⁷⁷ Indeed, wheat prices did improve during the second half of the decade.⁷⁸ But was increased income used for modernizing the home? Farmers' purchases of new farm machinery declined in the early 1920s and then rose again significantly during the latter part of the decade. "Canadian Plains farmers were intent on mechanizing and did so when they had the means," explains historian Bruce Shepard.⁷⁹ Given the tendency for farm men to invest in farm machinery before purchasing domestic labour savers, it is doubtful whether any new funds were spent on home improvements. If this was the case, modernization of the farm home probably waited until the 1940s, since the Great Depression of the 1930s more than likely postponed, until a better day, plans for modernization outside and inside the home.

Home conveniences such as electricity and indoor plumbing were luxury items for many Canadians in the 1920s, both urban and rural. Nevertheless, rural women were much slower than urban women to acquire these conveniences. Only 3 percent of Canadians who used electricity in 1921, for example, lived on farms.⁸⁰ Rural women were also less likely than urban women to have access to commercial services such as laundries. Commercial services lightened the burden of urban women's household duties and made modernization within the

home less imperative.⁸¹ Following extensive travels in western Canada during 1913 and 1914 writer Elizabeth Mitchell summed up the discrepancy between urban and rural home patterns on the prairie. "Even among the married women, in a city say ten years old," Mitchell observed, "there are marked differences from the prairie situation. Half of their work no longer deals with the primary necessities — the labour saved by electric light and water laid on is spent on larger and more elaborate houses and on 'social duties'."⁸²

Despite differences in urban and rural domestic work patterns, time/work studies demonstrate that urban women spent as much time on housework, not including traditional farm chores, as rural women.⁸³ Perhaps, as Elizabeth Mitchell concluded, prairie town women "wear themselves out now in polishing wood and silver and in keeping smart drawing-rooms clean and thus housekeeping is still burdensome."⁸⁴ Even though domestic technology did not necessarily lessen the time women expended on housework, it did help to lessen the physical burden of that work. The physical burden and primitive tools of farm women's work were characteristic of the work of both nineteenth-century pioneer women and early twentieth-century farm women.

The strenuous burden of farm women's work continued into the twentieth century, despite the fact that technology existed to lighten their workloads, and despite the fact that for many Manitoba farm families, women's work was still crucial to the maintenance of the farm as a whole. Ironically, according to some observers, by the time modernization occurred within the home, farm women's domestic work had lost much of its economic value. "After the Second World War farm mechanization rapidly took over..." a contemporary farm woman explained. "Industrial methods of production supplanted the old family labour type of work on the farm... Vertical integration in the poultry and egg business soon put farm women who raised eggs for a 'cash crop' out of business. The same with the dairy and hog industry."⁸⁵

The UFWM survey provides documentary evidence of the absence of modernization within many Manitoba farm homes in 1922. Because so many women's lives centered around work within their homes, the status of modernization in farm homes is an important factor in determining whether or not the pioneer period had passed for farm women. Many Manitoba farm homes lacked improvements which could lessen the physical burden of the traditional chores of farm women. Consequently, the lives of women in the survey bear a striking resemblance to those of pioneer farm women nearly half a century earlier. This continuity between women's lives during the last half of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century suggests the persistence of a female frontier, a frontier defined by women's work within the home. This female frontier changed more slowly, along a timetable separate from that of the agricultural frontier traditionally defined by male experiences. The "Rural Home Survey" provides a strong argument for its recognition by historians.⁸⁶

NOTES

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1. See, for example, W.L. Morton, *Manitoba: A History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1967), 380-406; Provincial Archives of Manitoba (PAM), United Farm Women of Manitoba Papers (UFWM), MG10, E1, box 12, Survey of Farm Homes, c. 1922.
2. Discussions of the concept of a female frontier in the following two books by Glenda Riley served as models for this study, *Frontierswomen: The Iowa Experience* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1981) and *The Female Frontier: A Comparative View of Women on the Prairie and Plains* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1988).
3. Kathleen Strange, *With the West in Her Eyes: The Story of a Modern Pioneer* (New York: Dodge Publishing Company, 1937), viii.
4. For examples of the use of these criteria in defining the frontier see Morton, *Manitoba: A History*, 380-406; Gerald Friesen, *The Canadian Prairies: A History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), 314; Douglas Hill, *The Opening of the Canadian West* (Don Mills: Longman, 1973), 249-50; Vernon C. Fowke, *Canadian Agricultural Policy: The Historical Pattern* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978), 7-9.
5. Tamara K. Hareven makes this point in terms of modernization in general in "Modernization and Family History: Perspectives on Social Change," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 1, no. 1 (1976): 193. Two notable exceptions are Corlann G. Bush's examination of the separate effects of changes in technology on the lives of farm men and women in "'The Barn is His, the House is Mine': Agricultural Technology and Sex Roles," in George H. Daniels and Mark H. Rose, eds., *Energy and Transport: Historical Perspectives on Policy Issues* (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1982), 235-39 and Katherine Jellison's study of the technology needs of farm women in "Women and Technology on the Great Plains, 1910-1940," *Great Plains Quarterly* 8 (Summer 1988): 145-57.
6. For descriptions of the work of prairie pioneer women see, for example, Linda Rasmussen et al., *A Harvest Yet to Reap: A History of Prairie Women* (Toronto: Women's Press, 1976), 42; The Corrective Collective, *Never Done: Three Centuries of Women's Work in Canada* (Toronto: Canadian Women's Educational Press, 1974), 54. Prairie farm women's work is viewed similarly in the United States — see, for example, Everitt Dick, "Sunbonnet and Calico: The Homesteader's Consort," *Nebraska History* 10 (March 1966): 3-13.
7. See, for example, Rasmussen, *A Harvest Yet to Reap*, 88. Other studies focussing on nineteenth and twentieth-century pioneer women's lives include: Sara Brooks Sundberg, "Farm Women on the Canadian Prairie Frontier: The Helpmate Image," in Carol Fairbanks and Sara Brooks Sundberg, *Farm Women on the Prairie Frontier: A Sourcebook for Canada and the United States* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1983), 71-90; Margaret Conrad, "'Sundays Always Make Me Think of Home': Time and Place in Canadian Women's History," in Veronica Strong-Boag and Anita Clair Fellman, eds., *Rethinking*

- Canada: The Promise of Women's History* (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman, 1986), 67-81; Nora J. Milton, "Essential Servants: Immigrant Domestics on the Canadian Prairies, 1885-1930," in Susan Armitage and Elizabeth Jameson, eds., *The Women's West* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987), 207-17; Eliane Silverman, "Women's Perceptions of Marriage on the Alberta Frontier," in David C. Jones and Ian MacPherson, eds., *Building Beyond the Homestead: Rural History on the Prairies* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 1985), 49-64; Silverman, *The Last Best West: Women on the Alberta Frontier 1880-1930* (London: Eden Press, 1984).
8. W.J. Healy, *Women of the Red River* (Winnipeg: The Women's Canadian Club, 1923), 81, 96, 141 and 147.
 9. Canadian Pacific Railway, *What Women Say of the Canadian Northwest* (n.p., 1886), 10.
 10. Isabel M. Reekie, *Along the Old Melita Trail* (Saskatoon: Modern Press, 1965), 48-70.
 11. Ibid.
 12. PAM, UFWM, MG10, E1, box 18, "Constitution of the United Farmers of Manitoba and the United Farm Women of Manitoba," pp. 20-21.
 13. Ibid., box 21, "Rural Survey Report," p. 1. The UFWM conducted surveys in 1920, 1921 and 1922.
 14. Despite a slight increase in the percentage of rural population in Manitoba between 1911 and 1921, Manitoba experienced a dramatic decline in rural population from 70.40 percent in 1901 to 57.12 percent in 1921, according to *The Canada Year Book* 1921, Table 8, p. 102. J.F. Newman discusses the connection between rural outmigration in the 1920s and technology in "The Impact of Technology upon Rural Southwestern Manitoba, 1920-1930" (M.A. Thesis, Queen's University, 1971). Studies providing descriptions of the types of domestic technology available in early twentieth-century towns, cities and rural areas include: Susan Strasser, *Never Done: A History of American Housework* (New York: Pantheon, 1982) and Ruth Schwartz Cowan, *More Work for Mother: The Ironies of Household Technology from the Open Hearth to the Microwave* (New York: Basic Books, 1983).
 15. David Jones, "'There is Some Power About the Land' — The Western Agrarian Press and Country Life Ideology," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 17, no. 3 (1982): 103-6. Veronica Strong-Boag connects the 1922 UFWM "Rural Home Survey" with country life ideology and with feminine activism of the 1920s and 1930s in "Pulling in Double Harness or Hauling a Double Load: Women, Work and Feminism on the Canadian Prairie," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 21, no. 3 (Fall 1986): 37-38. Mary Kinnear suggests that the UFWM survey was a natural outgrowth of the 1920 survey conducted for the purpose of investigating the impact of the tariff on homes. She also notes that farm women expressed commitment to the ideals of rural life in their responses to an essay contest, "Should My Daughter Marry a Farmer?" See "'Do You Want Your Daughter to Marry a Farmer?': Women's Work on the Farm, 1922," *Canadian Papers in Rural History* 6 (1988): 127-53. See also Hal. S. Barron, "Rural Social Survey," *Agricultural History* 58, no. 2 (April 1984): 114.
 16. Eleven survey respondents listed their residences in Togo, Saskatchewan. These respondents are included in the analysis because of their close proximity to Manitoba, and because the respondents were apparently affiliated with the UFWM in some way. For a discussion of the methods of distributing the questionnaires see Kinnear, "Do You Want Your Daughter," 140.

17. *Grain Growers' Guide (GGG)*, 14 February 1923, p. 21.
18. Based on the classification of farm sizes included in the UFWM "Rural Survey Report," respondents represented a cross section of farm sizes with 24 percent living on small farms of 160 acres or less, 48 percent living on medium-sized farms of between 160 and 480 acres, 16 percent living on moderately-large farms of between 480 and 640 acres and 13 percent living on farms of 640 acres or more. Moreover, the locations of the survey respondents represented each of the thirteen prairie and parkland census districts in the 1921 Manitoba census. Respondents from each district reported a range of farm acreages whose mean farm size paralleled the mean farm size reported in the census for that district. See *Sixth Census of Canada*, 1921, Vol. 5, Agriculture, census district end map and Table 79, p. 120.
19. PAM, UFWM, MG10, E1, box 12. The questionnaires were hand numbered. See questionnaires 32, 264 and 320 [henceforth only questionnaire numbers will be cited in cases where quotations or specific information are taken from an individual questionnaire].
20. Twenty-nine percent of all rural females in Manitoba in 1921 were born in non-English-speaking countries. This percentage was compiled from *Census of Canada 1931*, Vol. 1, Table 12, p. 140 and Table 25b, pp. 548-50. Because literacy figures compiled in the census do not indicate whether or not literate persons could read or write English, it is difficult to measure to what extent the English requirement of the questionnaire biased the survey sample. See also the explanation for literacy figures in *ibid.*, pp. 258-59.
21. Mary Kinnear makes this point in "Do You Want Your Daughter," 142. The data analysis of the survey in this study revealed that 96 percent of survey respondents owned their own farms, compared with 82 percent of all farmers who owned their farms in Manitoba in 1921 — *Sixth Census of Canada* 1921, Vol. 5, Table 31, p. 4. The farms included in the data analysis of the survey averaged 362.3 acres, compared to the average of 274.2 acres for all Manitoba farms — *ibid.*, Table VII, p. xviii. Additionally, even though the pattern of farm size by district reported by survey respondents paralleled that reported in the census, survey averages were consistently higher — *ibid.*, Table 79, p. 120. Also see Figure 1, p. 4 of this article.
22. "Statistics with Finesse," a statistics program developed by James Balding, Fayetteville, Arkansas served as the program for data analysis. This study utilized only the 330 fully completed questionnaires, the remaining thirty-four returned questionnaires were omitted because one or more questions were not answered and thus the data was not useful for correlation analysis. In addition to incomplete questionnaires, several completed by male farmers are not included in the data analysis because of the study's focus on the female farm experience. Differences in sample size probably account for the minor discrepancies in summary statistics in this paper and those published in Mary Kinnear's article, "Do You Want Your Daughter." Kinnear based her statistics on 364 questionnaires.
23. Sixty-seven percent of all rural Manitoba women fifteen years old or older at the time of the 1921 census were married — see *Census of Canada 1931*, Vol. 1, Table 18, p. 459. Comments pencilled in the margins of four questionnaires indicate the respondents might not be married. Two women lived on their brother's farm — one of them lived in a small house, 14 feet by 14 feet, while caring for an aged mother; another woman lived "in a cottage on Mr. Wilson's farm;" the other lived on her uncle's farm. See questionnaires 18, 270, 275 and 364.
24. Susan Jackel, "Introduction," in Georgina Binnie-Clark, *Wheat and Woman* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979), x-xxxii.
25. Rasmussen, *A Harvest Yet to Reap*, 149. The UFWM demonstrated keen interest in reform

- of Manitoba's dower laws, see PAM, UFWM, *United Farmers of Manitoba Year Book, 1920*, "Minutes of Women's Section," p. 90. Also see *Census of Canada 1931*, Vol. 7, Table 66, pp. 982 and 985.
26. Rasmussen, *A Harvest Yet to Reap*, 89. More than half, 67 percent, of Manitoba's female population aged 15 years and up in 1921 lived in rural areas. *Census of Canada 1931*, Vol. 1, Table 18, p. 459.
 27. Mary W.M. Hargreaves, "Women in the Agricultural Settlement of the Northern Plains," *Agricultural History* 50, no. 1 (January 1976): 187.
 28. PAM, UFWM, MG10, E1, box 20, "Rural Survey Report," pp. 1-2.
 29. Questionnaires 45 and 307 reported pumping water only for the livestock.
 30. *GGG*, 27 June 1917, p. 31.
 31. Census takers elicited detailed information concerning facilities in the farm home for the first time in 1931. At that time, 1.9 percent of Manitoba farms reported running water in the kitchen and 1.6 percent reported running water in the bathroom. See *Census of Canada 1931*, Vol. 5, Table XXIX, p. lxxiv.
 32. Questionnaire 86.
 33. Frank T. Stutt, *The Farm Well* (Ottawa: Department of Agriculture, 1916), Dominion Experimental Farms Exhibition Circular No. 34, p. 3.
 34. Questionnaires 62, 150 and 217 reported cisterns or rain barrels.
 35. "Women's Problems," *GGG*, 28 February 1917, p. 35.
 36. S.A. Bjarnason, *Planning the Western Farmstead* (Ottawa: Department of Agriculture, 1916), Dominion Experimental Farms Exhibition Circular No. 79.
 37. Reekie, *Along the Old Melita Trail*, 51.
 38. Questionnaires 179, 192 and 289.
 39. Mary McCallum, the woman's editor for *GGG* estimated the cost of installing an electrical generating plant between \$400 and \$600, with an additional \$150 for household wiring. See *GGG*, 12 September 1917, p. 10. The pages of the *GGG* were filled with advertisements for electrical generating systems ranging from portable power plants costing \$53.50 to Delco light plants for \$375. See, for example, advertisements in *GGG*, 21 January 1917, p. 25; 21 February 1917, p. 17; 21 March 1917, p. 37.
 40. PAM, UFWM, MG10, E1, box 20, "Rural Survey Report," p. 2. Katherine Jellison makes a similar point in "Women and Technology on the Great Plains," 40.
 41. Questionnaire 90.
 42. Questionnaire 104.
 43. *Census of Canada 1931*, Vol. 5, Table XXIX, p. lxxiv; and "Annual Report of the Manitoba Power Commission, 1954," in William Ivens, *Prismatic Picture of Hydro-Electric Power Development in Manitoba: Past, Present and Future* (Winnipeg: The Commission, 1955), 6.
 44. Reekie, *Along the Old Melita Trail*, 57-58.
 45. Strange, *With the West in Her Eyes*, 62.
 46. John H. Blackburn, *Land of Promise* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1970), 170.

47. Correlation coefficients, which vary from 0 to 1, indicate the degree of association between two factors. Zero indicates no relationship and 1 indicates a perfect relationship. Positive correlations indicate similar trends and negative correlations indicate opposite trends. Positive correlation coefficients ranged between 0.23 and 0.76. The highest positive correlation coefficient at 0.76 occurred between ownership of a sink and running water in the kitchen; the lowest positive correlation, 0.23, occurred between ownership of a bathtub and the use of power in the house. Power in the house correlated positively with running water in the kitchen, at 0.62. Running water in the kitchen correlated with an indoor toilet at 0.46. Positive correlation coefficients of 0.41, 0.52, 0.30, and 0.28 occurred between use of electricity and running water in the kitchen, ownership of a sink, bathtub, and toilet respectively. Positive correlation coefficients ranged between 0.30 and 0.51 for size of house and household technology; larger houses being associated with more labour savers. The average size of house in the survey had seven rooms. This size probably represented the ideal of a modest-size home since GGG advertised, through their Farm Building Department, a seven-room house as "a convenient small house." See GGG, 7 February 1917, p. 33.
48. Questionnaire 133.
49. PAM, UFWM, MG10, E1, box 20, "Rural Survey Report," p. 2. See also Hargreaves, "Women in the Agricultural Settlement," 187.
50. PAM, UFWM, MG10, E1, box 20, "Rural Survey Report," p. 3. Also see Donald G. Wetherell, "Some Aspects of Technology and Leisure in Alberta, 1914-1950," *Prairie Forum* 11, no. 1 (Spring 1986):42. Studies in the United States suggest farm women may have preferred the purchase of an automobile over the purchase of home conveniences; see Joseph Interrante, "You Can't Go to Town in a Bathtub: Automobile Movement and the Reorganization of Rural American Space, 1900-1930," *Radical History Review* 21 (Fall 1979): 151-68.
51. Forty-two percent of women in the survey reported they could drive.
52. Negative correlation coefficients ranged between 0.19 and 0.22 for distance from services and having a telephone; the average distance from farm to market reported for the province in 1931 was approximately 5.2 miles. See *Census of Canada 1931*, Vol. 5, Agriculture, Table 35, p. 38.
53. Strange, *With the West in Her Eyes*, 220; Susan Armitage, "Wash on Monday: The Housework of Farm Women in Transition," paper delivered at the Women Historians of the Midwest Conference, St. Paul, MN, 30 April - 2 May 1982, pp. 5-6; Reekie, *Along the Old Melita Trail*, 52.
54. Ibid.
55. Only 1.9 percent of farm homes in Manitoba in 1931 reported running water in the kitchen. This compares to 24 percent of farms in Manitoba with telephones and 45.1 percent with automobiles. See *Census of Canada 1931*, Vol. 5, Agriculture, Table XXIX, p. lxxiv.
56. The most frequently mentioned labour savers, outside of washing machines were churns and gasoline irons (both at 8 percent) and cream separators (7 percent).
57. Nellie McClung, *In Times Like These* (1915; Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972), 114.
58. PAM, UFWM, MG10, E1, box 20, "Rural Survey Report," p. 2.
59. R. Bruce Shepard, "Tractors and Combines in the Second Stage of Agricultural Mechanization on the Canadian Plains," *Prairie Forum* 11, no. 2 (Fall 1986): 258.

60. Twenty-four percent of farms in Manitoba in 1931 reported tractors and 18 percent reported threshing machines compared to 3.7 percent of Manitoba farms that reported electric or gas lights. See *Census of Canada 1931*, Vol. 5, Agriculture, Table XXIX, p. lxxiv.
61. Bush, "'The Barn is His, the House is Mine'," 247.
62. Questionnaire 62.
63. See, for example, *GGG*, 13 June 1917, p. 39 and 20 June 1917, p. 33.
64. Strange, *With the West in Her Eyes*, 220-21.
65. Questionnaire 279.
66. Questionnaire 90.
67. Questionnaire 97.
68. A positive correlation coefficient of 0.70 occurred between farm women who mended for the hired help and those who laundered for the hired help.
69. Questionnaire 141.
70. Less than one-fifth of the women who sold butter reported the use of a power-driven butter churn and only one-seventh of those selling cream utilized a power-driven separator.
71. The survey demonstrated a positive correlation coefficient of 0.29 between owning a churn and owning a separator; but only a correlation of 0.05 between owning a separator and selling cream and owning a churn and selling butter.
72. *GGG*, 4 April 1917, p. 39.
73. A positive correlation of 0.15 occurred between women who canned food and those who gardened.
74. *GGG*, 4 April 1917, p. 39.
75. Questionnaire 92.
76. Eliane Silverman discusses the nature of marriage, including the relationship of marriage to work in "Women's Perceptions of Marriage," 49-64.
77. PAM, UFWM, MG10, E1, box 12, Elizabeth Benson to "Dear Miss Finch," 24 July 1922.
78. For a discussion of fluctuations in farm income during the 1920s and 1930s see Robert E. Ankli, "Farm Income on the Great Plains and Canadian Prairies, 1920-1940," *Agricultural History* 51, no. 1 (January 1977): 92-103.
79. Shepard, "Tractors and Combines," 259.
80. Compiled from Tables L330-336 and P34-38 in M.C. Urquhart and K.A. Buckley, *Historical Statistics of Canada* (Cambridge, England: University Press, 1965), 381, 450.
81. Joann Vanek makes this point in "Time Spent in Housework," *Scientific American* 231 (1974): 116. A farm women's group in Saskatchewan proposed the adoption of cooperative laundries, similar to community creameries, as a means of lessening the burden of washday chores — see *GGG*, 1 August 1917, p. 6. For a related discussion concerning the use of commercial laundries by urban working class families in nineteenth-century United States see Susan M. Strasser, "An Enlarged Human Existence: Technology and Household Work in the Nineteenth-Century," in Sarah Fenstemaker Berk, ed., *Women and Household Labor*, Vol. 5, Sage Yearbooks in Women's Policy Studies (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1980), 41.

82. Elizabeth B. Mitchell, *In Western Canada Before the War: Impressions of Early Twentieth Century Prairie Communities* (1915; Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1981), 52.
83. Vanek, "Time Spent in Housework," 115-17; see also Jellison, "Women and Technology on the Great Plains," 154.
84. Mitchell, *In Western Canada Before the War*, 52.
85. Elsie Beeching, "Farm Women on the Canadian Prairies," in *Women of the Whole World* 1 (1977): 54; also see Bush, "'The Barn is His, the House is Mine'," 248.
86. The boundaries of this female agricultural frontier may extend to older, more settled regions. In 1919 the Extension Department of the New York State Agricultural College in Ithaca published a report summarizing a rural survey of 1,400 New York farm women. The living and working conditions described in the report are strikingly similar to those found in the "Rural Home Survey." See "A Strike for Farm Housewives," in Joan M. Jensen, ed., *With These Hands: Women Working on the Land* (Old Westbury, NY: The Feminist Press, 1981), 161-65.

From Social Credit to Social Conservatism: The Evolution of an Ideology

Thomas Flanagan
and
Martha Lee

ABSTRACT. General knowledge of millenarian movements helps illuminate the special case of Social Credit. Such movements, after a period of initial enthusiasm, face cognitive dissonance as their prophecies, religious or secular, prove short of the mark. In Social Credit's case, their inability to implement monetary reform produced a variety of responses over time. While conspiracy theories and fundamentalism characterized their initial reaction, eventually the movement's ideology was de-eschatologized as Social Credit's leaders sought to enter the Canadian political mainstream.

SOMMAIRE. Une connaissance générale des mouvements millénaristes permet de comprendre le cas spécial du Crédit social. De tels mouvements, qui connaissent au départ une période d'enthousiasme, donnent lieu à une discordance cognitive au fur et à mesure que leurs prophéties, religieuses ou séculaires, ne se concrétisent pas. Dans le cas du Crédit social, son incapacité à implanter une réforme monétaire produit diverses réactions. Alors que des théories de complot et un mouvement de fondamentalisme caractérisèrent la réaction initiale, l'idéologie du mouvement perdit éventuellement son caractère eschatologique du fait que les chefs du file du Crédit social cherchaient à s'intégrer au courant principal de la politique canadienne.

Alberta Social Credit underwent remarkable changes from 1935 to 1967. Beginning as a populist mass movement espousing radical changes in the financial system, it ended as a conservative political party defending free market economics against socialist centralization. This ideological evolution will be analyzed from a new perspective utilizing the literature on millenarian movements and the failure of prophecy. Fifty hours of interviews with Ernest Manning recorded in the years 1979-1982 (hereafter cited as MI)¹ were used extensively as source material.

Earlier interpretations emphasizing pressures on third parties (Mallory, 1976), Alberta's peculiar class structure (Macpherson, 1962), or the leadership transition from William Aberhart to Ernest Manning (Finkel, 1989) are not challenged. While recognizing the value of earlier views, this article will consider aspects of Social Credit history inherent in the situation of radical parties coming to power. Because Social Credit is seen as a secular millenarian movement, the failure of prophecy literature that pertains to the study of millenarianism is relied upon; however, the logic of failed expectations and cognitive dissonance applies to radical parties generally, so readers who may be skeptical about the millenarian character of Social Credit should still be able to follow the evolutionary aspects of the analysis.

Yonina Talmon defined millenarianism as the hope for "imminent, total, ultimate, this-worldly, and collective" salvation (Talmon, 1968:349). This definition applied in the first instance to religious movements, but it is now recognized that the secular ideologies of political movements can also be millenarian in character (Barkun, 1974). That Alberta Social Credit was indeed a secular millenarian movement has been argued elsewhere at length (Flanagan, 1973).

Social Credit viewed all history up to the present as the “Age of Scarcity,” in which human existence had been dominated by the need to work; but technical progress had brought mankind to the verge of the “Age of Potential Plenty,” in which individualism could flower as the necessity of labour was relaxed (Colbourne, 1935). Only an irrational financial system stood in the way, making it impossible to purchase all that could be produced. Taking credit out of the hands of the financiers and putting it into the hands of the public would produce a new age without significant social conflict — the hallmark of all millenarian visions, whether religious or secular.

The “Age of Potential Plenty” was a this-worldly form of secular salvation, to be achieved through political means rather than divine intervention. As the ultimate stage of social evolution, it would resolve all serious social problems. It was collective in the sense that it had to be implemented for society as a whole; individuals could not obtain Social Credit for themselves. And it was imminent to the extent that the system could be adopted almost immediately; there was no need to wait for ages of further evolution.

Social Credit not only conformed to the formal definition of millenarianism, it exhibited many characteristics frequently found in such movements. It depended upon an esoteric ideology invented by an autodidact — Major Clifford Hugh Douglas, a Scottish engineer — operating outside the intellectual establishment. It combined intellectual monism, in which all explanations referred to the financial system, with moral dualism. Douglas divided the world into financial exploiters, particularly Jews, and the exploited masses.

Aberhart transformed the esoteric ideology of Douglas into a mass movement by simplifying it and linking it to the hardship of the Depression. He presented to the people of Alberta a “wondrously simple plan” — the main points were the payment of dividends to all citizens, the continuous flow of credit, and price controls (Aberhart, 1933, 1935). He estimated it would take fifteen to eighteen months after electoral victory to put this plan into effect, including the payment of dividends estimated at \$25 per month for adults. A monthly dividend of \$25 was close to a minimum standard of living at the time (MI, 1:26), but eighteen months was a pure guess taken “out of the air” (MI, 5:8). Aberhart committed himself to a provincial strategy for implementing his plan, despite section 91 of the BNA Act, which gave the federal government control over financial matters (Aberhart, 1934). He argued that, if legal barriers arose, popular pressure would force the federal government to amend the constitution, or at least refrain from enforcing it.²

Aberhart thus put himself in a position where his predictions about the future could be tested. His promise to implement his “wondrously simple plan” within eighteen months makes it possible to deploy the literature on disappointed expectations in millenarian movements.

The Failure of Prophecy

Reluctance to renounce basic convictions is always pronounced in politics and religion, where theories are loose, predictions vague, and evidence inconclusive. Adherents of emotionally charged mass movements do not give up their beliefs at the first sign that the universe is not “unfolding as it should.” Believers cling to their hopes and discover reasons to justify their adherence — at least up to some point of overwhelming negative evidence.

In their seminal work, Festinger, Riecken, and Schachter (1956) studied a small cult known as the Seekers, led by a woman announcing revelations from extraterrestrial beings. They informed her that the earth would soon be destroyed in a great flood, but that she and her followers would be rescued by a flying saucer and transported to a paradisiacal world. She set a specific date for these events, but they never came to pass. While some followers left the group in disappointment, others began to proselytize energetically to attract further adherents to their cult. The researchers’ explanation drew on the theory of cognitive dissonance. The disconfirmation of the prophecy had resulted in psychological stress, exposing the Seekers to internal doubt and external ridicule. One way to relieve the tension was to leave the cult, another was to become a missionary. Recruiting followers willing to accept the Seekers’ rationalization that God had postponed the catastrophe because of their faith would effectively eliminate the cognitive dissonance.

Hardyk and Braden showed in another case study that increased proselytism was not a necessary outcome of the failure of prophesy, even when all the conditions of the Festinger study were present (Hardyk and Braden, 1962:136-41). An outburst of evangelism was one, but not the only, possible response.

Joseph Zygmunt’s analysis of the Jehovah’s Witnesses demonstrated that they did not make a decisive commitment to worldwide proselytism until after suffering no less than five failures of millennial prophecy — 1878, 1881, 1914, 1918, 1925 (Zygmunt, 1970). He found a typical cycle of “disappointment,” “watchful waiting,” “conjectures,” reinterpretation of prophecy, and “issuance of redated predictions.” In each instance of reinterpretation, the Witnesses asserted that their prophecies had been partially fulfilled, or that some event of prophetic significance had transpired on the date in question. Each failure was “thus redefined in retrospect in a manner which provided non-empirical confirmation for the group’s chiliastic outlook” (Zygmunt, 1970: 933-34).

A separate line of work by German theologians on the delay of the Second Coming in early Christianity highlighted a special kind of eschatological reinterpretation, for which Ernst Benz has created the awkward but useful concept of “de-eschatologizing.” It may be considered a special case of Weber’s “routinization of charisma” (Gerth and Mills, 1958:297). For Benz, de-eschatologizing is “the removal of the original basic attitude toward the end

of time in the gospel message'' (Benz, 1968:28). The early Christians, in his account, were forced to deal with persistent delay in the return of Jesus to earth. The problem was finally given a definitive solution by St. Augustine, according to whom the Kingdom of God was not a future event to be expected, but a present condition in which the faithful participated. The church, as the visible aspect of the City of God, could mediate salvation to its members; one did not have to wait for the Parousia. Augustine retained the gospel symbols of eschatological redemption but transformed them from objects of imminent expectation into theological dogmas without pressing temporal significance.

Converging with this line of theological investigation is a new generation of scriptural studies drawing on cognitive dissonance theory and focussing on the disciples' reaction to the Crucifixion. These works interpret Christological dogmas, such as the Resurrection, as the disciples' reaction to the disappointment of their hopes that Jesus would be revealed in His lifetime as the Messiah (Wernik, 1975; Jackson, 1975).

The literature identifies several typical responses to prophetic failure: postponement of the date; reinterpretation of the events suggesting that the prophecy has actually been fulfilled but in an invisible or supernatural manner not subject to empirical testing, or that the faithful have somehow misunderstood God's plan and further fulfillment will occur in the future; membership purges in the belief that the failure of the end to come is God's punishment for the group's moral weakness or lack of faith (Zygmunt, 1972:261); proselytism, especially if a suitable reinterpretation can be achieved and if adherents are able to encourage each other; de-eschatologizing, a specific form of reinterpretation, suggesting that the fulfillment has occurred spiritually, and that orientation to the future is no longer appropriate; resurgence of millenarian expectations, as adherents rediscover the original meaning of the de-eschatologized message; and falling away, especially if the disconfirmation is so severe that no reinterpretation seems to work, and if adherents are relatively isolated from one another.

Although this collective portrait is based on the study of religious movements, it is assumed that the adherents of secular millenarian movements will respond in parallel fashion when confronted with failed expectations of social change, for they face a similar situation of cognitive dissonance. Evidence was found of all seven typical responses outlined above; but in this article stress is placed on the de-eschatologizing of Social Credit ideology carried out tentatively by Aberhart and definitively by Manning. While preserving the symbols and vocabulary of Social Credit doctrine, the leaders reoriented the ideology away from futuristic expectation of sweeping economic change towards the conservative goal of defending the free market.

Aberhart in Power

During the election campaign of 1935, Aberhart had emphasized that "all you have to do about Social Credit is to cast your ballot for it, and we'll get the

experts to put the system in" (Barr, 1974:84). So it was logical for him to telegraph Major Douglas, who already had a contract with the Alberta government as economic reconstruction advisor: "Victorious when could you come?" (Douglas, 1937:125).

Douglas, however, disapproved of Aberhart's appointment of the Newfoundland banker Robert J. Magor as financial adviser, foreseeing that Magor would steer the Alberta government towards orthodox attempts to balance the budget and refinance the provincial debt. Aberhart, on the other hand, refused to enact the confiscatory measures proposed by Douglas, such as exacting an interest-free loan from the banks, and encouraging Alberta residents to exchange their stocks and bonds for provincial securities. Such measures, wrote Aberhart, would "alarm our citizens to a very grave degree, and would give the opponents a splendid opportunity to attack viciously the whole method of procedure" (Douglas, 1937:142). Douglas offered to resign as early as 29 October and cabled in blunt language on 5 December: "Will you announce resignation or shall I?" (Douglas, 1937:158). Aberhart knew by December of 1935 that his expectation of receiving a fully detailed plan from Douglas would not be fulfilled. Douglas seemed to be "so intent on protecting the purity of this theory so it wouldn't be discredited, that he almost seemed to shy away from any all-out attempt at implementation" (MI, 1:34-35).

Aberhart then turned to a plan for a dated stamp scrip proposed in caucus by Lucien Maynard. This idea, invented by the German economist Silvio Gesell, was remote from Social Credit theory, but was at least an attempt at monetary reform. Maynard's proposal was to use provincial scrip to pay the dividends promised to all Alberta citizens (Coe, 1938:62-63). But the cautious Aberhart preferred a much smaller experiment. He used about \$240,000 of provincial scrip, depreciating at the rate of 1 percent per week, to pay unemployed men for highway work in the summer of 1936. Aberhart saw it as a test of whether Albertans would accept a medium other than legal tender and presented it to the public as a step toward Social Credit (MI, 1:70).

The results were discouraging because recipients of scrip converted it into dollars as soon as the government would allow. The government had impaled itself on the horns of a dilemma. Promising to redeem all scrip for dollars had preserved its credibility with the public but had also ensured that "prosperity certificates" would not stay in circulation and thus would not add to the community's purchasing power. The source of the dilemma was the province's constitutional inability to issue legal tender.

The scrip scheme was authorized by orders in council pursuant to the Social Credit Measures Act. The preamble of this act was grandiose, but its provisions were modest. It authorized cabinet to appoint persons to investigate ways of implementing a system of monetary reform based on Social Credit, as long as such measures were within the jurisdiction of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta.

In August, the government began a drive to get Albertans to sign "registration covenants." In order to receive dividends, citizens had to promise "to work whenever possible, and to accept my remuneration in Alberta Credit as far as I can reasonably do so." In return, the government promised "to redeem, when possible, Alberta Credit with Canadian Currency for the purpose of allowing the member to take up residence outside the Province or for other essential requirements" (Elliott and Miller, 1987:242). It seemed an attempt would be made to issue a provincial currency, an impression strengthened by the Alberta Credit House Act of 1 September 1936. The Alberta Credit House would have been a virtual provincial bank dealing in Alberta Credit and exchanging it for other forms of money. As these preparations went forward, Aberhart heightened hopes for early dividends by telling a Calgary crowd: "In spite of the fact that I told you that it would be 18 months after we were in power that the first dividend would be paid, we are making a systematic effort to pay it at an earlier date" (Elliott and Miller, 1987:245).

Aberhart, however, was realistic enough to perceive the basic difficulty in all these schemes. When he met John Hargrave, leader of the British Social Credit Party, in December, he repeatedly asked: "If I issue a dividend, how do I get the money back?" (Social Credit Party of Great Britain and Ireland, 1937:2). The province might issue any amount of Alberta Credit but, without the constitutional power to create legal tender, it would have to back its credit with real money.

In January 1937, Aberhart asked the public for more time; and, when the legislative session opened in February, he admitted his government's inability to issue dividends and said he would consult those who had signed registration covenants (Elliott and Miller, 1987:255). His provincial treasurer introduced another orthodox budget, including an increase in the income tax and the introduction of a retail sales tax.

According to Manning, the cabinet's dedication to the ultimate goal of implementing Social Credit had not wavered, but they considered it irresponsible to bring in legislation before they had solved the practical difficulties. They were still trying to square the circle by issuing Alberta Credit that would be convertible into legal tender, would continue to circulate and thus increase purchasing power, and yet would not encroach upon federal jurisdiction. They were "nowhere near the end of all the exploratory work" (MI, 5:9-23).

The impatience of many caucus members led to the famous "backbenchers' insurgency," which finally forced Aberhart's hand. When it appeared that rebels in his own caucus might combine with the opposition to defeat him in the legislature, he capitulated to their demands for immediate action. The first result was the Alberta Social Credit Act, which set up a Social Credit Board composed of five backbenchers. The board had the power to appoint technical experts in Social Credit policy to examine the legislation and make recommendations for legislative action to implement the program. The act also contained elaborate

provisions for an Alberta Credit House with headquarters and branch offices. Although more detailed than previous legislation, it was still an attempt to mobilize Alberta's constitutional powers within its own sphere and did not trench directly under federal jurisdiction.

Major Douglas complied with the Social Credit Board's request for expert advice by sending G.F. Powell and L.D. Byrne, who helped draft the truly radical legislation passed in the special session of 3-6 August 1937. The Credit of Alberta Regulation Act required all banks to obtain a provincial operating license and put them under the control of local directorates. Companion legislation cut off the banks access to the courts.

However much Aberhart may have hesitated before, he backed this move to the hilt. He fired his attorney general when the latter recommended that the lieutenant governor reserve royal assent, took responsibility for the act itself, and bullied the lieutenant governor into signing. But it was in vain, as the federal cabinet quickly disallowed the legislation.

Aberhart then arranged for another session of the legislature. The essential features of the Credit of Alberta Regulation Act reappeared in another bill — Bill 8. A provincial tax was levied on the capital of banks (Bill 1), which would have raised more than \$2 million a year, solving many of the provincial government's financial difficulties (MI, 6:5). According to Social Credit theory, however, the real purpose of the tax was to encourage the banks to increase the quantity of their loans, thus expanding purchasing power to finance consumption (MI, 6:7). For good measure, the chairman of the Social Credit Board was empowered to compel newspapers to "correct" their reporting (Bill 9). The lieutenant governor reserved royal assent, and the federal cabinet referred the package of three bills to the Supreme Court of Canada. On 4 March 1938, the court held unconstitutional all three bills, as well as the Alberta Social Credit Act, which the former three were supposed to implement (Mallory, 1976:87-90).

This sequence of disallowance, reservation, and judicial review amounted to a strong disconfirmation of the Social Credit program. It was now obvious that no legal means existed to put a provincial Social Credit plan into practice. The disconfirmation, however, was only political and constitutional. One could still plausibly claim that Social Credit economic theory had never been put to the test.

Up to this point, the main failure-of-prophecy reactions had been hesitation and delay by the leaders, punctuated by outbursts of fundamentalism among the followers, but the behavioural repertoire became richer after the setback of 4 March 1938. Rather than admit the whole thing had been a mistake from the start, Social Crediters went off in several directions as is characteristic according to the literature on the failure of prophecy. As Aberhart put it shortly after the Supreme Court's ruling: "a vessel has sometimes to sail against the very

wind that is its only means of propulsion. To do this, the vessel pursues, you know, a zigzag course from side to side. It is called 'tacking in the wind'" (Schultz, 1964:201).

The government immediately reaffirmed its faith in Social Credit ideology by passing the Alberta Social Credit Realization Act to re-establish the Social Credit Board. The reconstituted board had neither regulatory authority over the banks nor the ability to issue Alberta Credit, but it became a tireless source of Social Credit propaganda.

Aberhart also tried to widen the struggle to the national arena. Social Credit entered forty-five candidates in the federal election of 1935 and won all but two of the Alberta seats plus two in western Saskatchewan.

Ten days after the Supreme Court's verdict Aberhart announced, apparently without having consulted anyone in Saskatchewan, that Social Credit would put up candidates in the impending provincial election. He campaigned vigorously, making forty appearances in three weeks (Andrews, 1982:59-66). Although the results in Saskatchewan were disappointing — only 16 percent of the popular vote and two seats — Aberhart continued to widen the struggle. In June 1938, he wrote a congratulatory letter to W.D. Herridge, who had broached the subject of monetary reform at a Conservative convention (Hallett, 1966:302). Although he and Herridge differed on many issues, he supported the latter's New Democracy movement in the federal election of 1940, and for a time the Social Credit caucus in Ottawa claimed to be members of the New Democracy.

After this episode, Aberhart organized another national vehicle, the Democratic Monetary Reform Organization (DMRO). He remained leader of the organization from its founding in Winnipeg in October 1941 until his death in 1943. In spite of his duties as premier of Alberta, he devoted a good deal of effort to the DMRO. He even studied French in the hope of expanding Social Credit's influence in Québec (Elliott and Miller, 1987:302-304).

Although none of these efforts was particularly successful, Aberhart's desire to launch a national movement was a logical response to the federal government veto of the provincial Social Credit program. If the government of Alberta could not obtain control of the credit system, it would be up to Parliament to enact "national monetary reform" and to "[conscript] the money system in the service of the nation" (Aberhart, 1941:23). Moreover, the national strategy helped justify the continued presence of a Social Credit government in Alberta despite its admitted inability to carry out its provincial program.

Another way of rationalizing Social Credit's failure in Alberta was to evoke the world financial conspiracy, a theme present in the thought of Douglas from the outset. The spurious *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* first appeared in English translation in January or February 1920 (Cohn, 1969:152), just as Douglas was beginning to publish. In his book *Credit-Power and Democracy* (1921), Douglas mentioned the possible existence of "an active, conscious conspiracy

to enslave the world” (p. 145). The next year he was more explicit about “the great financial groups, many of which are purely Jewish” (Elliott, 1985:80); and in *Social Credit* (1924), he remarked about the *Protocols*: “The authenticity of this document is a matter of little importance; what is interesting about it, is the fidelity with which the methods by which such enslavements might be brought about, can be reflected in the facts of everyday experience” (Elliott, 1985:80).

With the passing years, Douglas became more paranoid and anti-Semitic. He saw the Jewish financial power everywhere, conspiring to erect a totalitarian world slave state. World War II and the ostensible persecution of the Jews were merely a diversion. “I am convinced,” he wrote, “that the Jewish High Command desires the ultimate victory of Germany, and will fight tooth-and-nail, *not to end the war*, but to see that Germany is not defeated in the peace” (Elliott, 1985:82).

With the outbreak of World War II, the Social Credit Board began to import this demonological anti-Semitism into Alberta.³ The board reprinted Douglas’s publications and incorporated his thinking into their own. A fair example is *The Battle for Freedom* (1943), written by L.D. Byrne, one of the “technicians” sent by Douglas in 1937. In this pamphlet, Byrne refrained from mentioning the word “Jew,” but he wrote of

a deliberate conspiracy by a group of internationalists (comprised for the most part of non-Christian Germans), to poison and pervert the reservoirs of human knowledge, to attack and weaken Christianity, and to discredit and destroy democracy for the purpose of enslaving mankind under a world totalitarian system (Byrne, 1943:9-10).

Aberhart publicly and privately criticized “this foolish spirit of anti-Semitism” and questioned the authenticity of the “notorious *Protocols of Zion*” (Elliott, 1985:83-84). Manning also rejected the *Protocols* (MI, 17:36). But both seemed to accept the conspiracy theory in all relevant details except for the Jewish identity of the conspirators. Aberhart told a radio audience shortly before his death:

The task of defeating the war machine of the Axis powers — that is our first and greatest duty. The second, an equally important task, is that of defeating the machinations of the money powers who would impose upon us an evil totalitarian dictatorship by intrigue and cunning (Aberhart, 1943: broadcast 22, p. 11).

Like the national campaign for Social Credit, the conspiracy theory justified the continuance of the Social Credit government in Alberta. Even if it could not implement a Social Credit plan in one province, it could expose and struggle against the “machinations of the money powers.” The emphasis had now shifted from creation of a secular millennium to defence against a diabolical enemy — an implicit step towards de-eschatologizing the ideology.

As the Social Credit millennium receded over the horizon, Aberhart announced an Interim Program. Central to it were the Treasury Branches, authorized by order in council 29 August 1938, with an initial capital of \$200,000. These branches of the provincial treasury were never called banks, so as to avoid conflict with the federal Bank Act; but they functioned much like retail banks, taking deposits, paying interest, and making small loans. They also issued non-negotiable "transfer vouchers," somewhat like bank cheques, as a means by which depositors could make payments to merchants who participated in the scheme. A "consumer bonus" coupled the transfer vouchers to the government's "Buy Alberta" campaign. The Treasury Branch granted a 3 percent bonus to the depositor computed on three times the amount spent on made-in-Alberta goods purchased with transfer vouchers. Complementing the Treasury Branches were the provincial marketing boards, which retailed items made in Alberta (MI,13:26). The Treasury Branches also participated in a scheme to assist farmers to pay off their tax arrears through work on the highways (Nichols, 1963:85-88). These measures loosely resembled monetary reform and lent a Social Credit flavour to a provincial exercise in mercantilist economics.

Although Aberhart would not have liked the comparison, the Interim Program stood to Social Credit as socialism stands to communism in Soviet ideology — not the ultimate goal but a step towards it, the best that can be done under present circumstances:

The Alberta Interim Program was an extremely restricted effort to demonstrate what could be done in a minor way, within the limitations imposed by monopoly finance. It was a pointer to the vastly greater achievement that could follow in due course: the re-assumption of control over their own financial credit by the people of all Canada, as well as the Province of Alberta (Nichols, 1963:96).

To Social Credit believers, the Interim Program demonstrated that goods could circulate without using legal tender, and that Alberta could eventually emancipate itself from the federal financial system:

It was called an 'Interim' program because there were still high hopes at that time that we would be able to acquire in legislation the power to actually pay dividends and have the credit recognized as a medium of exchange within Alberta (MI, 13:26).

As time went on, Aberhart naturally became involved in many aspects of provincial government that had little to do with Social Credit ideology, and he came to see competent execution of these tasks as a political *raison d'être*. In the provincial election of 1940, the Social Credit platform had twelve headings, only two of which, "True Democracy" and "Finance and Monetary Reform," had much to do with Social Credit. The other items, such as "Education," "Public Works," and "Municipal Administration," represented concerns that

would have been addressed by a government of any stripe (Thomas, 1977:146-50). The general themes of the Social Credit campaign were "good government" and "Honest Abe" (Schultz, 1962:17). Thereafter, Social Credit presented itself as the party of honest and competent administration, further justifying its existence while waiting for the millennium.

By choosing a "zigzag course" and "tacking in the wind," Aberhart arrived at a halfway house of temporary ideological legitimacy. Although he still acknowledged implementation of Social Credit as his long-term goal, he put off the attainment of that end into an indefinite future. To reach the goal would require political struggle in a widened arena, with little prospect of immediate success. He loaded the blame for the delay onto the shadowy conspiracy of the international "money powers." In the meantime, the Alberta government justified itself with the Interim Program and general "good government." Social Credit had been de-eschatologized in practice but not yet in theory.

The Manning Years

When Ernest Manning became premier in May 1943, the CCF, riding high in the Gallup poll, looked like a credible contender for power. Social Credit responded to the challenge with a shift of emphasis in the conspiracy theory. Aberhart, following Douglas, had regarded socialism and communism as part of the international conspiracy; but he had reserved his main fire for the "money powers" and the Nazis. On occasion, the Social Credit League had cooperated with the CCF and even the Communists against the "old line" parties. In the mid-1940s, however, Manning began to emphasize

that the socialistic doctrines of a supreme State are, in principle, identical with the doctrines of financial dictatorship which the rank and file of many socialistic parties claim to be fighting ... the socialistic move is, if anything, a greater threat today to true democracy than the actions of those who continue to champion the already established financial dictatorship (Finkel, 1989:86).

A. V. Bourcier, chairman of the Social Credit Board, said in the legislature, "the Socialist movement and the CCF were connected with a group of men behind the scenes, 'who never are seen in the full light of day,' who control international finance" (Finkel, 1989:87)

Reformulation of the conspiracy theory gave Social Credit an effective weapon against the CCF. It remained a staple of propaganda thereafter, except that socialism gradually became more important in the conspiracy, while international finance became less so.⁴

The success of Social Credit's anti-socialist campaign of 1944, together with the end of World War II, set the stage for a revival of fundamentalism. At the annual convention of December 1945, Social Credit activists expressed fear that the return to peace would let Alberta slip under the control of the financial and socialistic dictatorship of the United Nations, International Monetary Fund, and

similar organizations. A resolution to make one more try for Social Credit passed unanimously (Macpherson, 1962:207-208).

The result was the Alberta Bill of Rights Act, passed in March 1946. "We decided," said Manning many years later, "to make one last, sincere, concerted attempt to implement Social Credit monetary proposals and institute a system that would use what we called Alberta Credit within the Province for the distribution of goods and services in Alberta" (MI, 19:25). The bill required the province to guarantee education, medical care, and the "necessities of life" to those under 19 years of age; the opportunity to work, or a social security pension, to those between 19 and 60; and a retirement pension plus medical benefits to those over 60. Changes in the monetary system would finance this cornucopia of welfare. A Board of Credit Commissioners, empowered to license all banks, would monitor the supply of credit in the province. It would issue Alberta Credit certificates to serve as reserves for the banks to generate new loans, both to private customers and to the government of Alberta. In this way the province could fund the proposed pensions and other benefits for the residents of Alberta. The Board of Credit Commissioners would have functioned much like the central bank of a sovereign state, regulating the money supply and financing the government's deficits when necessary.

At Manning's insistence, the act itself provided that it would not be proclaimed until its validity had been tested by reference to the Supreme Court of Alberta. Not surprisingly, both that court and the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council found it to be *ultra vires*.

Invalidation of the Alberta Bill of Rights Act became the prelude to Manning's purge of the "little faction of 'Douglasites' who think they have some special monopoly on the basic principles of Social Credit" (Macpherson, 1962:211-12). The occasion was the extravagant language of the Social Credit Board's Annual Report for 1946:

In previous Reports we have drawn attention to the existence of a deliberate conspiracy to establish a World slave State to be maintained by overwhelming force concentrated in the hands of a ruthless and closely knit international junta ... The events of the past year provide further evidence of a rapidly developing and preconceived plan for world domination (Palmer, 1989:18).

Publicly condemning all forms of anti-Semitism, Manning dissolved the Social Credit Board and fired several influential defenders of the Jewish conspiracy thesis, including L.D. Byrne, deputy minister of Economic Affairs; A.V. Bourcier, Social Credit whip and chairman of the Social Credit Board; and John Patrick Gillese, editor of *The Canadian Social Crediter*. Other Douglasite ministers and MLAs were either forced out of the caucus or resigned in protest (Macpherson, 1962:211-12; Barr, 1974:128-30). Such purges are familiar from the history of radical regimes in power. They are a sign of the millenarian

movement's increasing entanglement in the evil reality it is supposed to transform.

Most writers have held that, from this point forward, Social Credit in Alberta became a "synonym for right of centre pragmatism" (Young, 1978:108). According to this view, oil revenues allowed the government the luxury of embracing the social welfare policies fashionable throughout the Western world in the postwar period. The "end of ideology" supposedly marked Social Credit in Alberta as much as it did less exotic ideologies in other jurisdictions.

While there is some truth in this account, the story is more complicated. Premier Manning continued to espouse monetary reform as well as other policies not found in most models of conservatism.

In spite of, or perhaps because of, his inability to implement a robust version of Social Credit, Manning continued to preach the necessity of monetary reform at the federal level, as seen in this sample statement from around 1954:

What Social Credit proposes (and this is what they call "funny money") is that we should see to it that the purchasing power available for the purchase of goods always approximates the value, or the total amount of the prices of the goods produced (Manning, ca. 1954:7).

While this may have been little different from Keynesianism, it was rare for a conservative politician to be an avowed Keynesian in the early 1950s.

Another distinguishing mark of Social Credit ideology in these years was its great emphasis on the individual. All ideological pronouncements began with a statement like this: "We believe the individual is the most important unit in organized society" (Manning, ca. 1954:3). Stress on individualism was the other side of the Social Credit doctrine; there was a financial-socialist conspiracy to erect a totalitarian "supreme state." Individualism led Social Crediters to an enthusiastic embrace of "free enterprise," as they called the market system.

The movement, however, never gave up its original "humanitarian" intention of assuring a decent standard of living to all. The result was a demand for the state to supplement, but not supplant, the market:

A major objective of organized society should be to assist each citizen to attain through his own enterprise sufficient financial resources to enable him to obtain for himself and his dependents an acceptable standard of social welfare without dependence on State Welfare services. To the extent this is impossible, society collectively must assume the cost of an acceptable standard of social services, to bring such services within the financial reach of each individual citizen (Manning, n.d.).

This view inclined Social Credit governments towards putting a floor under the living standard of the poor, but not towards equalization for its own sake.

Government policy never arises solely from ideology, but the record of the Manning years seems largely congruent with the ideology described above. In the financial sphere, Manning continued Aberhart's "pay as you go" approach. After defaulting on the provincial debt, the province had been unable to borrow money through normal channels and had had to balance its annual budget. After the war, Manning settled with the province's creditors and ran an annual budgetary surplus, which he used to reduce the provincial debt (Hanson, 1952:326), thus seeking to ensure Alberta's independence from the "money powers." Fiscal responsibility did not stem merely from the good fortune of having found oil; the "pay as you go" policy had originated long before the discovery of oil at Leduc.

Social Credit individualism had other interesting consequences. Labour legislation was generally restrictive, because Social Credit saw unions as collectivistic cartels, at least potentially linked by the CCF and the Communist Party to the "supreme state" conspiracy, and strikes as virtual sabotage of the productive power of the community (Finkel, 1989:108-15). For different but parallel reasons, Manning opposed the bilingual initiatives of the 1960s and criticized the legal entrenchment of collective differences of language and culture (Finkel, 1989:153). Throughout his time in government, Manning also pushed Alberta's cities to exercise their responsibilities and raise their revenues independently. He resisted paying the full cost of municipally administered programs, fearing to encourage fiscal irresponsibility on the part of the cities (Finkel, 1989:123). This was also part of his philosophy of decentralization in opposition to the "supreme state."

Under Manning's leadership, Social Credit adherence to free enterprise was more principled than usual in conservative parties. He consistently opposed public ownership of utilities, and managed to avoid nationalization of Calgary Power when that issue arose (Finkel, 1989:149). He opposed federal regional development subsidies, even when the money might have gone to northern Alberta (Finkel, 1989:151-52). His government spent more lavishly than any other province on services, such as transportation, health care, and education, that were intended to provide opportunities for self-improvement to all members of the public; but it resisted policies whose rationale was egalitarian or redistributive. Welfare payments were means-tested, and health benefits were tied to user fees or co-insurance payments (Finkel, 1989:144, 149-50, 155). Deterrent fees encouraged "recognition by the individual that he had a personal responsibility for these things" (MI, 30:11). Except for the Canada Pension Plan, Manning opposed the universal compulsory welfare programs introduced by the federal government under Lester Pearson. The Social Credit welfare state in Alberta was expensive, but it was based on more individualistic principles than the Canadian welfare state.

After the nullification of the Alberta Bill of Rights Act, Social Credit strategy amounted to pursuing federal monetary reform through the national party,

defending individualism and free enterprise in Alberta, and using the provincial government as a humanitarian supplement to a market economy. While this strategy was perhaps formally consistent with Social Credit ideology, it became unsatisfactory to Manning in his later years. By 1965, he was speaking openly about the need to rethink ideological and partisan alignments in Canada (Manning, 1965). He revealed the full extent of his rethinking in 1967 when he published *A White Paper on Human Resources Development*, directed to Alberta, and *Political Realignment: A Challenge to Thoughtful Canadians*, a short book aimed at the whole country.

The *White Paper* outlined the tasks to be played by the provincial government in future years. The reference to “human resources” emphasized the coming transition from reliance on physical resources, so important in Alberta’s past, to a knowledge-based “society of free and creative individuals” (MI, 38:2). Traditional Social Credit principles of individualism, free enterprise, and humanitarian concern figured prominently in their formulation. “The Government of Alberta,” wrote Manning,

is resolved to destroy, once and for all, the fallacious notion that those who believe in freedom of economic activity, private ownership of property, and individual enterprise and responsibility, are incapable of “social concern” devoid of humanitarian sentiments (Manning, 1967a:97).

Conspicuously absent from the *White Paper* was any mention of monetary reform. The closest reference was a criticism of federal tight money policies for slowing growth in the less well developed peripheral regions of the country (Manning, 1967a:64).

In *Political Realignment*, Manning called upon Canadian federal parties to become less opportunistic and more principled, both in their appeals to voters and in their formulation of policy. He advocated a “social conservative” position to “weld the humanitarian concerns of those with awakened social consciences to the economic persuasions of those with a firm conviction in the value of freedom of economic activity and enlightened private enterprise” (Manning, 1967b:63). He offered to merge the national Social Credit party with the Progressive Conservatives, hoping also to attract some free-enterprise elements from the Liberals.

Manning rushed to get his book into print before the upcoming Conservative leadership convention (MI, 38:20-21). While he did not actively pursue the Conservative leadership, he would have welcomed a draft. His underlying hope was that the united Conservative and Social Credit parties would become a new “populist movement” against the opportunistic politics of the welfare state (MI, 38:47).

Manning admitted that his party had originally been elected to pursue monetary reform, but did not mention the many unsuccessful attempts in that

direction, except to object to "the long and persistent practice of certain news media to consistently misrepresent Social Credit as a party advocating printing press money." He emphasized that for over thirty years Social Credit had governed Alberta in a way "generally compatible with the Social Conservative position." Since the national Social Credit Party faced "almost insurmountable difficulties in becoming a vehicle for national reconstruction in the foreseeable future," merger with the Progressive Conservatives was the most sensible alternative (Manning, 1967b:73-75).

Without repudiating Social Credit ideology, Manning, first in practice and then in theory, had de-eschatologized it into social conservatism. The transformation took place through rearrangement of elements that had always been present. Monetary reform was reduced to Keynesian dimensions, while the international conspiracy theory lingered in the background as part of the indictment of socialism. Individualism and free enterprise expanded to fill the vacant ideological space, while humanitarianism provided a non-collectivist, non-interventionist rationale for government services.

Manning and Social Credit had moved a long way from Aberhart's "wondrously simple plan." Success as a millenarian movement had brought control of a government, but the millenarian vision had proved impossible to implement. Bearing the practical responsibility of government had changed Social Credit from a millenarian protest movement to a mainstream political party.

The ultimate irony is that the final rapprochement with reality was the prelude to political collapse. Social Credit had presided over the economic and political modernization of the province. Encouragement of the oil industry had brought unimagined prosperity, and with it a new urban population, largely managerial and professional, to whom the Social Credit style seemed anachronistic. Peter Lougheed was able to renew the provincial fortunes of the Progressive Conservatives by appealing to this class created by the success of Social Credit policies.

Conclusion

Over the years, the leaders of Alberta Social Credit displayed a variety of responses to the failure of their expectations about the future. Their main frustrations were the refusal of Major Douglas to come to Alberta and present the government with a ready-made plan; the exercise by the federal government of its powers of disallowance, reservation, and judicial review to nullify Social Credit legislation; the failure of Social Credit to gain much ground outside Alberta, either at the federal level or in other provinces; and the judicial rejection of the Alberta Bill of Rights Act of 1946. In connection with these disappointments, the following responses emerged, approximately in the order listed, but with some chronological overlap: procrastination and experimentation with marginally related initiatives, such as prosperity certificates; an outbreak of fundamentalism and acute expectation, followed by an attempt to create the

millennium by legislation; proselytizing outside Alberta as a response to stalemate within the province; creation of the Interim Program to fill the ideological void; preoccupation with other activities of "good government"; elaboration of a conspiracy theory to explain the difficulties of implementing the ideology; a second flare-up of fundamentalism and a second attempt to create the millennium by legislation; a purge of the fundamentalists by the pragmatic leadership; a long period of dissonance between the announced long-term goals of the movement and the perceived short-term possibilities of action; and, a final reinterpretation to de-eschatologize the ideology, accompanied by a desire to re-enter Canadian politics as a mainstream party.

All these actions can be seen as responses to the cognitive dissonance arising from the inability to remake the world as demanded by Social Credit ideology. As Carroll (1979:104) has argued, cognitive dissonance presents an opportunity for creative response, for transcending an apparent stalemate. Alberta Social Credit conformed to this model by transforming itself from a utopian protest movement into a responsible governing party with a distinctive, practical ideology.

General knowledge of millenarian movements helps to illuminate the special case of Alberta Social Credit by rendering its history intelligible; but the special case is also of wider significance because the twentieth century is the epoch *par excellence* of millenarian politics. The Fascist, National Socialist, and Khmer Rouge regimes were short-lived; but the longer-lived Communist regimes of the Soviet Union and its satellites, as well as of Yugoslavia, China, North Korea, Vietnam, and Cuba, are now confronting the failure of their particular prophecies. Numerous radical regimes of the Third World, such as Nicaragua, Mozambique, Angola, Iran, and Libya, also find themselves in varying degrees of the same dialectic. Millenarian theory does not prescribe an invariant course of development, but it predicts the appearance of particular responses as part of an evolutionary tendency towards de-eschatologizing. Alberta Social Credit is an important point of reference for the study of these trends precisely because its ideology was *sui generis*. That patterns found in the history of Alberta Social Credit can be discovered in other radical regimes of the left and right suggest that the logic of failed expectations is a powerful influence on millenarian regimes in power.

NOTES

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1. University of Alberta Archives, E.C. Manning Interviews, 81-32. We are grateful to Senator Manning for permission to consult the transcripts.
2. William Aberhart, lecture in Edmonton, 23 May 1935. Glenbow Alberta Institute, W.J. Bowen Papers.
3. The Social Credit Board's annual reports are in the Sessional Papers of the Alberta

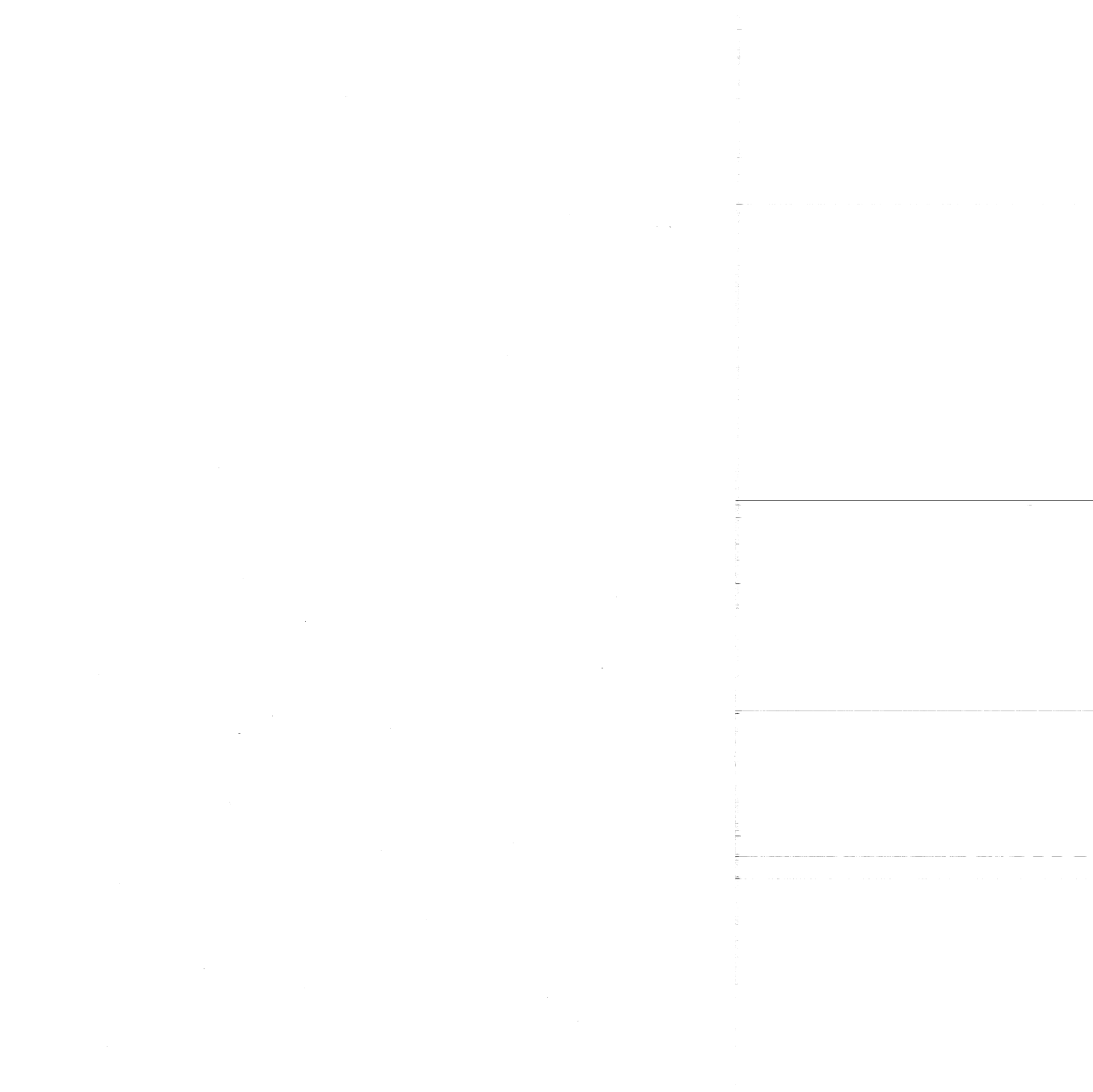
Legislative Assembly, Provincial Archives of Alberta, 70-414. The first mention of an international conspiracy is in the report for 1939 (no. 1936).

4. In the interviews conducted around 1980, Manning's adherence to conspiracy theories seemed highly attenuated. While acknowledging that Communists were dedicated and purposive, he said: "I've never gone along with those people that find a Communist under every bed. I think that's a gross exaggeration" (MI, 33:37). Regarding international finance, he said: "When you carry it to the place where you see a financier hiding under every bed, this is a little extreme! It doesn't work that way. But this doesn't detract from the fact that there's a real problem there" (MI, 17:18-20).

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Impact of the Swift Current Health Region: Experiment or Model?

Joan Feather

ABSTRACT. The regional model of medical services provided by the Swift Current Health Region was thought by its originators to be a trail-blazer for Saskatchewan. However, doctor-controlled alternatives as well as inherent funding problems prevented the spread of the model. When the CCF government decided in the late 1950s to establish a province-wide, prepaid medical insurance program, the debate about the utility of the regional model was rekindled. It soon became caught up in the debate over reorganization of local government. Although the notion of regionalization was kept alive and used as a tactic in attempts to gain support for the medical profession for provincial medicare, centralization was favoured by the province for practical reasons. While the SCHR lingered on within the new medicare program, the latter gradually absorbed its functions.

SOMMAIRE. Quand on mit sur pied la Swift Current Health Region, ses créateurs l'envisageaient comme modèle de service de santé régional pour la Saskatchewan. Toutefois, d'autres projets contrôlés par des médecins ainsi que des problèmes de financement entravèrent sa propagation. Lorsque le gouvernement C.C.F. décida vers la fin des années 1950 d'établir à l'échelle provinciale un programme d'assurance médicale prépayée, le débat concernant l'utilité du modèle régional reprit de plus belle. De plus, il fut mêlé à un débat plus large concernant la réorganisation du gouvernement local. Bien que la notion de régionalisation fut préservée et utilisée comme tactique lorsqu'on tenta d'obtenir l'appui de la profession médicale pour l'assurance médicale provinciale, c'est la centralisation qui fut, pour des raisons pratiques, retenue par la province. La S.C.H.R. continua à exister au sein du programme d'assurance médicale, et fut éventuellement absorbé par ce dernier.

Introduction

My article in the previous issue of *Prairie Forum* outlined the creation of the Swift Current Health Region's (SCHR) comprehensive program of health services. But was it a pioneer, a model for subsequent developments, or merely an isolated, if interesting, "experiment" in health insurance?

As an organizational entity, the SCHR was not unique. Eventually, other regions were formed. Nor were its dental program and hospitalization program exclusive to that region. Its medical care program was unique however, and that has been recognized as its main contribution toward health insurance innovation in Saskatchewan. But did its components become models? The first two warrant only brief examination.

The province's hospitalization insurance program (SHSP) was announced publicly at about the same time the SCHR and one other region declared their own hospitalization schemes. Indeed, Saskatchewan was already planning for province-wide hospital insurance before the SCHR was set up, so for purposes of SHSP the region could be no more than a testing ground for some operational aspects of the provincial plan (e.g. collecting the personal tax, registering beneficiaries) and estimating the costs of the plan. In turn, the region relied on the province's methods for determining how, and how much, hospitals would be paid for their care.¹ It was accepted that personal premiums would be collected to offset most of the cost of the regional plan. In one important aspect the two policies diverged. The region would regard a person as eligible for services by virtue of residence and registration; the province would require payment of the hospital premium as a condition for eligibility. The experience

of the SCHR plan, operating just six months prior to implementation of the provincial program, did provide some basis for estimating costs of the latter. That was a mixed blessing, in that the resulting projected expenditures were too low and the provincial plan had to rely more on general revenues than had been anticipated when the premium was set.² In the matter of having municipal offices collect the premiums and registrations, the region's experience was more positive and practical.

If Swift Current's hospitalization scheme came too late to be a model, its dental services plan came too early. The province did not adopt a similar scheme until 1974. The provincial view was that a restorative or treatment program had little prospect of achieving a significant impact on dental health, given the extreme shortage of dentists. There were continual struggles between region and province over the program's orientation, never sufficiently preventive to satisfy provincial directors. Under these circumstances it would be almost three decades before a program combining preventive and restorative dentistry for children would be adopted by the province, and it was based largely on the services of dental nurses rather than dentists. Although the SCHR dental program of thirty years' running was acknowledged, it was not publicly given credit as a model. Its abortive attempts at mobile dental clinics, mired in the mud of the southwest and soon abandoned, were not acknowledged either, although two modern mobile clinics were used in the provincial plan in suitable weather conditions.³

Prior to the establishment of Saskatchewan's health regions in the mid-1940s there was widespread interest in the concept of regional administration of insured health programs;⁴ but, when hospitalization was introduced province-wide in Saskatchewan, administration was centralized. The major innovation of the SCHR was its medical care plan; but here too, the centralized rather than the regional approach was adopted when Saskatchewan medical care insurance was introduced. It was with respect to medical care that the greatest interest was shown in the experience of the SCHR. This program's scope and operating policies were carefully examined as the larger scheme was put in place. But its regional nature, with policy direction and management coming from local communities through the elected regional board, was not accepted as a model. The rejection of regional administration was a gradual process taking place between 1946 and 1962 as the views of the public, the provincial government and the medical profession changed. Within that sixteen-year period there was a marked shift in perception of regional administration. The critical turning point centred on events in 1955.

1946 - 1955

"On all sides one hears the plan referred to as an experiment, and so it is."⁵ Whether experiment or "successfully operating pilot plan"⁶ or "test case region,"⁷ in its early years the SCHR's medical care program was seen from

within the province and without, from public, professional and political viewpoints, as a first step toward the avowed goal of the newly elected CCF government in Saskatchewan, of establishing its "complete program of social medicine."⁸

A federally funded, comprehensive review of the province's health services in 1951 called the SCHR medical insurance program "an experiment in compulsory prepaid health services" that has "operated successfully and to the satisfaction of the people of the region."⁹ Further, it concluded that the SCHR (along with municipal doctor plans) had demonstrated that "the principle of prepayment has a favourable influence on the number and distribution of physicians."¹⁰ The survey recommended "a comprehensive health insurance program" be undertaken as soon as possible, "integrated with and built upon existing health programs which should be extended, modified and co-ordinated as required" in order to bring to all residents high quality services on the basis of need and without regard to individual ability to pay.¹¹ Since the survey looked directly to the federal government to act on its promises of 1945 to introduce national health insurance, it went no further than to recommend decentralization at the provincial level.¹² Its concept of health regions was purely for public health purposes; it did not say whether medical care insurance for physician services should be centrally or regionally administered, just that this "benefit" should be introduced "on a province-wide basis" as soon as possible.¹³

That the operation of the SCHR medical plan was of immense importance to the provincial government was demonstrated when its continuation was threatened by inability to establish an on-going contract with regional physicians. When matters came to a head in 1950 the minister of Health, Tom Bentley, explained to the board his need to retain power to approve the contract because "failure of a program (in a region) could set back for years the whole cause of better health services for the people of the province."¹⁴ Through 1952 the board struggled to establish an acceptable contract, the minister pressing it to limit its compromises as far as possible, but also insisting that the province "would not wish the scheme to cease operating."¹⁵ When termination of the contract loomed in 1953, Bentley took the issue to cabinet, which approved "whatever deterrents or other factors" might be necessary to "make possible the continuation of the scheme."¹⁶ There was clearly a desire on the part of the province to have this regional scheme survive, even though it was forced to compromise on what some regarded as basic principles (e.g. no deterrent fees and a ceiling on the total medical contract payment to physicians). But it is equally clear that the people and the physicians of the region preferred to accept adjustments and compromises rather than to abandon the program.

Watershed: 1955

Whether the SCHR medical care plan could become a model for the spread of health insurance across the province would depend on its adoption in other

regions. The test came in 1955 when the Regina Rural and Assiniboia-Gravelbourg regions proposed to introduce medical care schemes based on the SCHR plan, and put the proposal before the voters.

The two regional boards saw health insurance as a sufficiently attractive program to warrant development of a plan to place before their constituents. That "plan," exemplified by the Regina Rural proposal, would be based on "principles" of the SCHR model: prepaid coverage of all residents, without exclusions; comprehensive benefits; and administration by the regional board. Technical and professional matters would be left to the physicians, with a medical advisory committee to aid the board, and the program would aim to integrate preventive with curative services under regional administration.¹⁷

There was one important feature of the Regina Rural plan that did not fit the SCHR model as it operated at that time. In the new scheme, a maximum amount, or "ceiling," would be budgeted for physicians' services, with payments pro-rated from the available fund according to each doctor's volume of service. This had been quite unpopular with the SCHR physicians and had been abandoned in their contract several years before. In the view of some provincial officials, that abandonment had been an unfortunate compromise of principles. The proposed plan, developed with the help of provincial officials in the spring of 1955,¹⁸ restored the controversial "ceiling" clause.

The alternative scheme, although not on the ballot, was an extension of the physician-sponsored voluntary insurance plans, Medical Services Incorporated (MSI) and Group Medical Services (GMS). Voluntary coverage under these plans had been spreading since the 1940s, and a group of municipalities around Regina had already contracted with GMS for physician services. Although limited by exclusions for age and pre-existing conditions, these contracts were regarded as better than no coverage at all, and the participating municipalities were sufficiently satisfied with them to have pressed the provincial government for authority to increase the annual family premiums beyond the legislated \$50 limit in order to meet the demands of the physician-sponsored plans.¹⁹ Recognizing an opportunity to expand, GMS and MSI presented a joint proposal to the two regional boards.²⁰ This offered broad coverage of the population through group contracts but insisted on a higher rate of funding and rejected any notion of a ceiling on the fund. It argued that the plans themselves provided sufficient lay representation so that the regional boards need not administer the schemes.

The College of Physicians and Surgeons (CPS)²¹ was not only eager to see the physician-sponsored plans extended, but was also specifically opposed to some features of the regional boards' alternative — a SCHR-type plan that included the offensive "ceiling" clause. Leadership in opposition to that feature was provided by a doctor who practiced in the SCHR and spoke out against the inequities of the old-style contract.²²

It was the hope of some, including Fred Mott, former deputy minister of Public Health, that the "pattern of financing which has proved effective in the SC Region might well be extended to other regions."²³ Others were more cynical about regions ever moving in the desired direction — the SCHR had had its plan for ten years and still no others had taken up the model. The wait was frustrating. Why not go with the doctors' scheme?

Bentley, however, was not prepared to compromise on the principle of regional public medical care. At his urging, cabinet formally endorsed the "principle of the immediate establishment of additional medical care programs on a regional basis."²⁴ It adopted a policy under which only those regional plans which were controlled by the elected representatives of the public (i.e. the regional boards), would be eligible for provincial supporting grants. Going even further, cabinet stated that "The Department of Public Health should be authorized to encourage and assist health regions in the organization of regional plans through educational and technical services. It should be recognized that the government may be faced with certain conflicts with the organized medical profession."²⁵

Conflict was inevitable. The CPS's Central Health Services Committee prepared for the battle by supporting GMS and MSI in their joint scheme and agreeing to work with local district medical societies to promote it. To ensure professional solidarity they resolved that all members should sign a "written undertaking to make no separate agreements without the approval"²⁶ of the CPS. Public relations experts were employed and designated speakers addressed public meetings in the target regions. In the Assiniboia-Gravelbourg region there was no district medical society until it was organized by the CPS that fall, and the fledgling society promptly turned over to the college its bargaining power in relation to any prepaid medical care plan.²⁷

The people of the voting regions had been led by the profession to believe that the GMS/MSI deal would secure the cooperation of the Regina area physicians; the board proposals, backed by the province, would not. After considerable public debate, agitation, and "heartburn,"²⁸ voters went to the polls on 2 November 1955. In both regions, the boards' schemes were defeated overwhelmingly.

Aftermath: Reappraisal

The medical profession was self-congratulatory over its victory, the role of the CPS in the campaign being openly acknowledged. It took immediate steps to provide advice to any other physicians that might face an impending regional plan, and set up a permanent committee to "guide the development of Health Region activities in the field of prepaid medical care along sound grounds."²⁹ The SCHR physician who had actively opposed the spread of the SCHR model was honoured by the CPS which elected him president for the year 1957. With CPS backing, GMS and MSI openly negotiated with the Regina Rural Health

Region to come up with a scheme that would be acceptable to the public and the physicians and that might obtain the blessing of the province.³⁰

For the provincial government, the meaning of the outcome was more complex. There were lessons to be learned from the specific events of that year, as well as insights beginning to emerge from the ten-year experience with regions in general, and the SCHR "experiment" in particular.

Milton I. Roemer, now an internationally recognized health services analyst, was director of the Saskatchewan Medical and Hospital Services Branch of the provincial government in 1955. He produced an interpretation of the two plebescites for the government within a month of the voting.³¹ He thought the voting patterns told more about medical care plans than about politics. They showed that people enjoying the benefits of low-cost municipal doctor plans were inclined to oppose the regional plan, fearing loss of local autonomy and higher costs. By contrast, support for the regional plan was strongest where the more expensive MSI schemes were in effect. Roemer's interpretation was that for local people, the main consideration had been economic. This pointed toward the need for medical care plans to be subsidized by higher levels of government. In the long run the province should adopt a provincial insurance scheme, he concluded. This should be done without recourse to a plebiscite, a mechanism that should be avoided where prepaid medical care insurance involved personal taxation. In the meantime, the province should establish clear standards to govern the municipal and regional medical care plans that existed or might emerge.

Roemer had no quarrel with regional medical care plans in themselves; but, questions about this approach to extending coverage across the province were becoming obvious. For example, the SCHR program had shown that, with the limited provincial fiscal support that had been offered so far to regional health insurance, the program's finances remained precarious. Repeatedly its continuation through bad years had been threatened. This demonstrated the need for provincial, even federal resources to sustain the viability of health insurance; and, since no region could afford to offer the array of specialist services expected by the postwar public, costly referrals to outside specialists became inevitable.

As well, non-economic costs of decentralized health insurance programming were already evident before 1955. Decentralization could be awkward for the politicians. Both Premier T.C. Douglas and Bentley, as members for constituencies associated with active regions, faced the dilemma of wanting to take credit for regional programs as creatures of the province when they worked smoothly, and disavowing responsibility for programs as the products of autonomous regional boards when they did not.³²

Merely organizing the regions had been difficult where there was local opposition.³³ Too often there was local indifference and lack of enthusiasm for

public health.³⁴ To some this was a general reflection on the unpopularity of the regional concept itself. Realistically, public health programs offered little opportunity for public input — staff were professionals hired by the province, and the regional board was only advisory in public health matters. Where a region might exercise some genuine control by operating a medical care plan, the province had been lending little or no active encouragement.

The “pilot” or “experimental” plan in the SCHR had hardly been problem-free. To sustain this unique venture, the province had to inject an increasing amount of money while the plan appeared to be moving further away from the ideal. The board had abandoned the “ceiling” principle of controlling medical expenditures in 1953, surrendering to the medical profession’s strident demands; and, although government had given its approval, some saw deterrent fees as a betrayal of principle, just another avenue through which the doctors received what they demanded. The implication was that a regional board was insufficiently conscientious with its funds, lacked appreciation for economic realities, and was indifferent to the dangers of courting deficits.

Finally, a board of laymen couldn’t stand up to the organized medical profession.³⁵ That was a telling point. Added to the years of somewhat unsettling experience in the SCHR was the sobering perspective offered by the 1955 plebiscites. Clearly, a regional approach to achieving province-wide medical care insurance would present problems.

Sealing the Fate of Regional Medical Care

If the prospects for regional medical care insurance looked dim, by 1957 there were other, more promising signs of hope for a provincial scheme. Federal/provincial talks on health insurance continued. There was increasing conviction that senior governments would have to take a major role if health insurance was to reach all the people. Provincial hospital insurance programs had been proven feasible in Saskatchewan as well as in British Columbia and Alberta; by 1957 federal money was available to support their continuation and spread to other provinces. The principles underlying Saskatchewan’s hospitalization scheme were endorsed at the federal level, and the injection of federal funds to support the hospitalization plan freed up resources to enable Saskatchewan to look seriously at its next step — bringing medical care insurance to the entire province.

Undeniably, the SCHR had demonstrated the popularity of medical care insurance: it provided advantages for both those receiving and those rendering services; and comprehensive service was desired by the people, who appeared willing to pay for it.³⁶ But it had also contributed to a growing appreciation of the weaknesses of a regional approach to initiating medical care insurance on a wide scale.

The tumultuous events leading up to the "medicare" dispute and crisis of 1962 in Saskatchewan have been recounted elsewhere;³⁷ but how and when was the decision finally made that Saskatchewan's provincial plan would be a centralized one, that regions other than SCHR would have no further role to play?

What became of the SCHR's "experiment?" In the aftermath of 1955 the regional approach lost credibility, and some provincial officials became firmly convinced of the desirability of a centralized scheme. But politicians like Douglas kept their options open. There was more at stake than just medicare.

The complex question of the future structure, resources and responsibilities of local government was in the limelight in the mid-1950s. The provincial Royal Commission on Agriculture and Rural Life, appointed in 1952, had concluded that to improve rural prospects in a changing world, Saskatchewan must revitalize its rural government structure by reorganizing the small and inefficient rural municipalities into larger units or counties. These units would be more efficient and democratic and could assume greater fiscal responsibilities either alone or in concert with the provincial government.³⁸ This concept was the subject of a major provincial-local government conference in late 1956 that led to establishment of a Local Government Continuing Committee (LGCC). Staffed by some of the same officials who had served the royal commission (e.g. Meyer Brownstone, Wm. Harding), the LGCC was to examine the county model and make recommendations to the province. The royal commission had organized public hearings and "community forums" for public debate on rural issues on a scale never before seen in this province. The LGCC followed suit with more public hearings in centres large and small. Thus there was much opportunity for public debate and for crystallization of opposing views. The county idea became a very hot issue in rural Saskatchewan. This impinged on the question of regionalizing programs like medical care insurance.

Although roads and education were given much higher priority than health by the royal commission and the LGCC, each investigating group was forced to acknowledge public concerns about health services and touch on them in recommendations. The royal commission registered the widespread public support for comprehensive health insurance along the lines of the 1951 Health Survey Report. But the commission decided not to study rural health in any depth and rationalized that it therefore did not have to study the SCHR either.³⁹

Just after its report was tabled came the defeat of medical care plans in two health regions. Regionalized health insurance receded even further in the continuing debate on local government. But it was clear that reorganization of local government and reassigned responsibilities were sensitive issues. So sensitive that Premier Douglas, in his opening remarks to the provincial-local government conference in December 1956, broke with his long-standing oratory habit and read his speech word for word, because "every word mattered" in that testy assembly.⁴⁰ His government's position was that there

would be no new major resources turned over to local government unless its structure was improved.⁴¹ A brief presented by the Department of Public Health was rather pessimistic. The general trend was to more centralized services, at least in the specialized treatment sector. The regions had been given an advisory role in preventive services but were rather apathetic about it. Granted, regions were showing some interest in medical care, and the province had given them power to initiate in that sphere.⁴² The health regions presented their own case, arguing for a greater role in public health and asserting their preparedness to take on responsibilities in prepaid medical care, if that was the public's wish.⁴³ Judging from the extent of griping at the conference about the ongoing local burden of medical care for the indigent, there was a fairly strong public "wish" for the province to get on with provincial medical care insurance. But it was hardly the focus of attention at the conference. Municipalities, counties, boundaries — those were the main concerns. Out of the conference arose the LGCC, with no clearer mandate to consider regional responsibilities in medical care.

Its mandate might have been unclear on this issue but its philosophy was straightforward. Whether in education, welfare or health services, the committee felt there was a need to "reverse the present trend to centralization of services in this province."⁴⁴ As a vehicle for strengthening local government in relation to central government, regional units made up of several counties would be desirable and could take a much greater share of responsibility for public health and welfare services. They should have a major role in administration of public hospitals and public medical care. Referring specifically to the experience of the SCHR, the committee concluded that a regional structure had the potential to achieve integration of preventive and treatment services, while also furthering the goal of greater decentralization of government functions. Specifically in the field of regional medical care, the committee pointed to the advantages of this approach over the municipal schemes which were too small, and a province-wide scheme which would be too remote from the people. But beyond this general stance, unsupported by detailed analysis, the committee was content to leave final determination of the "possible role of local government in a universal medical care program" to someone else.⁴⁵ By the time the LGCC reported in March 1961, this specific issue of medical care insurance had been placed before another provincially appointed committee of inquiry, the Advisory Planning Committee on Medical Care.

This new committee inherited a fairly well developed position on the regionalization issue. That position was not promising for regional medical care and the reason lay, in part, in the public reception given to the county recommendations of the LGCC. The county and modified county idea for reorganizing local government in Saskatchewan was, by the late 1950s, highly controversial. LGCC teams explaining their conclusions at public meetings around the province were frequently confronted with well organized opposition, "sniping" and "nasty reactions" that made for "a perilous life of day-to-day

crises.’’⁴⁶ Such a public reaction would give politicians second thoughts about adopting the committee’s recommendations on local government reorganization and probably coloured their views of the regional proposition for medical care as well.

The contrast between the practicalities of the centralist perspective and the idealism of the regionalist view (exemplified by the LGCC) is well illustrated in the career of a forerunner of the Advisory Planning Committee. By April 1959 cabinet had committed itself to actively planning a medical care scheme and set up an Interdepartmental Committee to study and develop the broad outline of such a program. The committee was to “leave, so far as practical, a maximum amount of responsibility to the regions.” Cabinet itself embodied the tension between centralist and decentralist points of view — acknowledging the popularity of the SCHR scheme, the advantage of a regional approach lay in “preservation of local creativity and responsiveness to local needs.” Weighed against this was the “lack of assurance that any move would be made toward medical care insurance (by any region other than SCHR) and the possibility that a number of separate and unco-ordinated programs would result.” This ambivalence was reflected in the committee’s terms of reference, which asked members to design a medical care program that would “promote the values of local government” so long as the degree of involvement of local government was “compatible with economy and efficiency.”⁴⁷

The committee worked through the summer of 1959 to design a program, looking carefully at the SCHR program⁴⁸ but apart from that, avoiding direct confrontation with the basic issue of regionalization. Only near the end of its deliberations did the committee come to terms with the issue, and it was clear that major differences within the committee membership had existed all along. Brownstone and Harding, both long-standing members of the LGCC secretariat, brought to the committee a strong inclination toward decentralization. Others were more impressed with the advantages of centralization: easier coping with population mobility and access to specialists; need for province-wide negotiations with the medical profession; difficulties setting up the full array of regional administrations with competent staff; and, the need for assembling centralized statistical data. Against the regionalists’ arguments that regions might help establish group practices and integrate preventive, hospital and home nursing services, centralists pointed out that experience showed regions had done little to raise the quality of care, citing the “unsatisfactory experience” of the SCHR dental program as evidence. “The concept of regionalization was worthwhile if it worked, but there were many examples of where it was not working very well.”⁴⁹

Proponents of regionalism resorted to arguing that maybe the potential of regions should not be judged on current experience — maybe if the provincial government appointed some of the regional board members, then the boards

would be in a better position to “influence favourably the growth of centrally planned services and the organization of new services.”⁵⁰

Such arguments were to no avail. The committee’s final report gave a very limited role to regions: they might help to assure an adequate supply and distribution of physicians, encourage group practices by providing facilities, assist in the integration of public health, hospitals, and medical care, or take some responsibility for interpreting the provincial program to the public.⁵¹ But the committee recommended, and cabinet concurred, that “a strong central agency was necessary in order to develop reasonably uniform patterns according to the provincially established standards in the various regions. Competition between regions in the area of scales of payment, for example, must be avoided.”⁵²

In what was really the opening salvo in the following spring’s provincial election campaign, Premier Douglas on radio in December 1959 announced the government’s intention to proceed with a province-wide medical care plan.⁵³ The plan would be based on five principles: prepayment, universal coverage, high quality service, acceptability to those providing and those receiving service, and government sponsorship “administered by a public body responsible to the Legislature.” The precise form of administration, along with other details, would be determined by the Advisory Planning Committee he was about to appoint.

The premier’s noncommittal stance on decentralization of administration was probably good politics, what with the LGCC still at work on its recommendations, the medical profession keen to promote use of its own voluntary plans as insurance vehicles, and regions still formally expressing interest in following SCHR’s lead — some day. But for men like Brownstone, this vagueness about regionalization was a continuing source of frustration. Still chafing from his failure to swing fellow members of the Interdepartmental Committee to his viewpoint, Brownstone appealed directly to the premier. Not a “dogmatic defender of localism,” Brownstone pointed out not only that decentralization had merits in its own right, but that it might be good politics after all. If the government were to show “a strong interest” in the concept this might help to counteract the opponents of the government-sponsored plan by rallying groups like regional boards, regional hospital councils, and district medical societies; these might become at least passive, if not active, supporters of the scheme. In a veiled reference to the opposing Liberal party’s platform calling for the dreaded plebiscite before a scheme was introduced, Brownstone argued that some assurance of regional responsibility might even help to weaken the case for a vote. The dubious role of the SCHR in all this was again evident in the scant praise he offered — he did not think the “shortcomings of the regional operation at Swift Current” should be construed as failings “necessarily inherent in regional responsibility alone.”⁵⁴

There was no immediate response from Douglas, fully occupied with his government's struggle with the medical profession over as basic a matter as striking the Advisory Planning Committee, and preparations for the upcoming provincial election battle. But it was clear that the SCHR, if not regionalization in general, would be far from a dead issue.

The press within the SCHR was first to draw attention to the local "experiment" as the basis for the "sound principles" the premier had announced in December.⁵⁵ A less sympathetic press in Regina took obvious pleasure in pointing out the "imperfections" in the program, basing their assertions in part on statements prompted by a doctor within the region.⁵⁶ Dr. Dave Berezan, then president of the Swift Current and District Medical Society, criticized the region's scheme for its lack of specialists, lack of medical representation on the board, and the burdensome portion of the region's tax that was based on land.⁵⁷ This mid-winter press coverage was a very mild foreshadowing of what lay ahead in the campaign, when the provincial medical profession entered the debate.

The CPS, with its own publicist and a special levy on members to support the campaign, had generated considerable heat by spring. Their stance and that of Berezan put SCHR doctors in a delicate position. The press found that most local doctors liked the scheme and had few complaints.⁵⁸ In an official statement, SCHR doctors stated that "members of the society believe that good medical care is available in Health Region No. 1" and that "the Region functions reasonably well on a local level." They reiterated the minor complaints Berezan had earlier stated and then went on, in apparent accord with their profession's official stance, to declare themselves "unalterably opposed to government control."⁵⁹ Berezan had gone considerably further in the vehemence of his criticism of the government plan and then claimed he had been "critically and unjustly reprimanded and told to leave the region" on account of his outspokenness. He rejected any charge that he was anti-region and credited not only the doctors of the region but the board members as well for making the regional program work.⁶⁰

By June the CPS was sponsoring full-page newspaper ads denouncing the province's plan of "state controlled medical care" and drawing unflattering cost comparisons between the SCHR model and the college's own voluntary plans.⁶¹ The regional board responded in an effort to clarify and correct the figures,⁶² and the local MLA, E.I. Wood, issued an information bulletin to arm all CCF candidates with facts about the region's program.⁶³ It seemed the SCHR was on many minds as a model for the proposed provincial plan. But there was little mention of it by Douglas and his top provincial campaigners.

If the results of the 8 June election had been more decisive, the next two years might have seen less strife. While the CCF retained power, their popular vote amounted to less than 50 percent. To Douglas and his colleagues their mandate

was secure; to opponents of the government medicare plan, there was ample room for challenge.

Over the next fifteen months the opposing viewpoints contended within the Advisory Planning Committee. Born in controversy between the government and the CPS, given impossibly broad terms of reference, and handed a framework for medical care insurance that predetermined some important conclusions for the committee, W.P. Thompson's polarized task force embarked on its course. How would the SCHR model program fare in this arena?

The committee heard from many groups favouring publicly funded and administered medical care insurance, with a role for the regions in administration. Some, including the combined health regions themselves, thought regions should run comprehensive health and social welfare services, although there needed to be province-wide planning and central control and direction.⁶⁴

The CPS, while pressing for their voluntary physician-sponsored plans as the insurance vehicle, acknowledged that the SCHR doctors were reportedly happy with their lot, and explained this by claiming that the regional board had autonomy from provincial control.⁶⁵ Local doctors were able to negotiate their contractual arrangement with the regional board as equals. (The CPS was conveniently forgetting the central role it had played in those same negotiations and the requirement of ministerial approval of any contract.) But it stopped short of recommending this model elsewhere in the province. The physician-sponsored insurance plans ignored regions in favour of contracts with municipalities because of the greater flexibility in setting rates based on small group experience.

In an appended brief of their own, the SCHR doctors echoed the CPS's view of the autonomy of the regional board, and asserted their desire to have their own program continue. Either through insularity or a desire to distance themselves somewhat from the CPS, these doctors made no reference to the College's official brief, to implications of their regional program for other regions, or for a province-wide program.⁶⁶

In January 1961 the Advisory Planning Committee met with a delegation from the SCHR. With consummate skill Stewart Robertson, regional secretary, presented the region's views and advised the committee on how a provincial plan should be designed based on SCHR's experience.⁶⁷ The province should negotiate annually with the College to strike an overall contract for an acceptable fee schedule. It should establish from the outset a clear definition of the services included and excluded from coverage. It should assign virtually all administrative functions to the regions: tax collection (via municipalities); assessment of accounts from doctors; individual contracts with participating physicians (within an umbrella contract between the province and the CPS); and, payment to physicians. The SCHR's eligibility criteria, based on residence and registration, should be adopted rather than proof of payment of tax, as in the

SHSP program. Utilization fees should be applied to home and office visits and taken into account as part of the negotiated fees. Finally, in a welcome departure from other briefs, the SCHR tabled an estimate of the cost of a provincial program projected from their own experience. The committee had to acknowledge that few presentations were so packed with practical and specific advice drawn from first-hand experience.

The committee's probing questions revealed some of the problems of this regional approach. The patient could see any doctor anywhere in the province, but that doctor's account would be assessed in the region of residence of the patient. This would force many contentious accounts to be referred up to the CPS's mediation committee. And while the patient would be eligible for service anywhere just by virtue of provincial residency, some region would have to assume responsibility for collecting the personal tax; which region would that be if the patient moved from one to another in a tax year? One region might be paying the doctor's account, another collecting the tax that financed the payment. The SCHR proposal would have the personal tax meet about half the cost and the province pick up the balance from general revenues. This would mean the province would set the level of personal tax and pick up the balance of the cost, but leave all other aspects (tax collection, payment, etc.) to the regions to operate independently. How much provincial control should there be on this system? Robertson argued "as little as the provincial government can possibly get by with in order to satisfy themselves that the money is being wisely spent."

After months of study and debate the committee presented its Interim Report to the government in September 1961.⁶⁸ While adopting some of the central principles of the SCHR medical care program (universality, public administration, comprehensive services, etc.), the committee rejected others. Utilization fees were favoured, so long as they were modest and were deducted from the plan's payments to doctors. (This committee recommendation was rejected by government when the plan was introduced a year later.) Eligibility for coverage based on residence and registration would not be sufficient; proof of tax payment, as in the SHSP program, would be required. Overall, the committee acknowledged its debt to the SCHR, on which study documents had been based and valuable lessons drawn.

But it had weighed the advantages claimed for regional administration of its universal, compulsory, prepaid medical care plan and found them insufficient to overcome the disadvantages. Its main arguments against the SCHR proposal were that there would be variations in the costs of operating across regions, which would affect the size of premiums and other taxes, leading to different levels of provincial subsidy. This argument did some disservice to Robertson's concept, assuming even greater regional autonomy than he had advocated. But it was true, as the committee pointed out, that "at the present stage of development of our health regions"⁶⁹ it would be doubtful whether other regions could take on the chore as SCHR had done. The committee also rejected

a model of regional participation that might call for a basic provincial program in all regions, plus regionally initiated additional services; this would compound problems of inequity, portability and coordination with other health services. The committee cautioned that only one region had such experience and demonstrated capability, and it would be "unrealistic to expect the inexperienced areas of the province to develop the techniques and acquire the personnel necessary for a successful operation in the near future."⁷⁰ Besides, there were other uncertainties involved — how much duplication of staff and costs would regional administration entail? What size should regions be? What would be the fate of local government itself with the discussion of reorganization now underway? All in all, regional administration was "not practical in the initial stages."⁷¹ Unprepared to place the final seal on this issue, the committee solemnly advised the Medical Care Insurance Commission (MCIC) to "keep constantly in mind the desirable goal of decentralization."⁷² Being cognizant of the fifteen years of successful operation of the SCHR, the committee recommended that it have special status and administrative responsibilities in a provincial program in recognition of its unique history and "administrative machinery."⁷³

The next ten months were full of turmoil as Saskatchewan fought its way toward medicare. It would be a centralized, province-wide and compulsory program, but somehow the notion of decentralized administration would not die. The provincial government itself kept the notion alive, if not for philosophical reasons, then as a tactic in the long struggle to win the support of the medical profession.

The premier in his December 1959 speech had used the SCHR program to illustrate that there was nothing sinister about public medical care; the government was not threatening to put doctors on salary; a public program paying doctors did not destroy the doctor-patient relationship — nor did it scare doctors away.⁷⁴ Even though the Medical Care Act as it came to the legislature in the fall of 1961 made no reference to regions,⁷⁵ Douglas, speaking during legislative debate, held out hope for regional administration. While he enumerated the reasons for opting for a centralized program, he expressed the "hope and intention" of his government to eventually have a large part of the administration of the plan handled on a regional basis.⁷⁶

The CPS had argued before the Advisory Planning Committee that the SCHR had the kind of fiscal authority and autonomy that earned it grudging approval from the profession. Now, in last minute negotiations in April 1962 there remained that glimmer of hope for settlement, if regions like the SCHR could be recognized, along with MSI and GMS, as insuring agencies eligible for government subsidy as vehicles for extending coverage to the total population.⁷⁷ But the province could not accept the "agency" approach without substantial public controls. Premier Woodrow Lloyd proposed amendments to the act to give regional bodies an expanded role in assessment and review of accounts, and at

some future date, even more involvement in administration.⁷⁸ Would that make medicare palatable to the physicians? No, because government direction would be exercised, whether administration was centralized or decentralized.⁷⁹ The physicians' understanding of the fiscal authority and autonomy of the SCHR had never been consistent with reality and had been nothing more than a red herring during the CPS's attempt to forestall medicare. Did the province seriously propose regionalization in a last ditch attempt to avert a crisis, or was it calling the CPS's bluff?

At any rate it didn't work, and the threat of a doctors' strike grew. There was another setback for the provincial government that spring as well. It proposed to implement the LGCC's recommended changes in local government to create a county system, and had met such strong opposition that the plan had to be abandoned.⁸⁰ With that, prospects dimmed for meaningful decentralization of government functions, including health services. It appeared that regions other than SCHR could forget about a major role in medical care insurance at least for the time being.

What would become of the SCHR "experiment" itself? Throughout the spring of 1962 the region watched anxiously as the province and the medical profession drew battle lines. The board had reason to fear not only the demise of any prospect for a province-wide network of regional medical care, but also the more immediate loss of its own unique contractual relationship with local doctors. If the region's contract was to be preserved, the region would have to strike a deal with the MCIC, set up to oversee the implementation and operation of medicare. That deal would have to be acceptable to the region's physicians as well as the board. The doctors had already declared they would cancel their contract with the region if the act came into force;⁸¹ but there were strong indications that the contract could be salvaged if the region could avoid complete integration within the provincial plan. The region would have to try to retain its own eligibility criteria, utilization fees, and assessment procedures.⁸²

The April breakdown in negotiations between the province and the medical profession signalled a corresponding disruption within the region. The Swift Current and District Medical Society declared that the act interfered with the region's medical care plan; that the province had broken off talks with the CPS which represented the society; and therefore, the regional contract would terminate upon implementation of the act (1 July).⁸³ This announcement caused a minor sensation in the press and was greeted with glee by the CPS; here were the only doctors who had worked under a medicare plan, throwing down the gauntlet.⁸⁴

After years of dealing with the ups and downs of negotiating with medical doctors, the regional board was not inclined to panic. Board secretary Stewart Robertson notified municipalities of the latest development, advocated a wait and see attitude, and expressed the belief that the province was still "anxious

that the Provincial Medical Care Plan be decentralized to a regional basis as soon as possible.”⁸⁵ At a joint meeting in May the other health regions, no doubt more shaken by events than the stalwarts from the southwest, joined the SCHR in a resolution calling for regionalization of the plan “with all possible speed.”⁸⁶ The same day, the MCIC, of which Robertson was a member, and the SCHR arrived at an agreement in principle for a contractual arrangement that enabled the region to continue its medical care plan within the context of the larger provincial scheme.

As the 1 July deadline for a doctors’ strike approached, the positions of the protagonists had hardened and the service disruption appeared inevitable. There did not seem to be any concession the province would be prepared to make that the physicians would find acceptable as a way of averting the strike. Nonetheless, on 22 June, the province resurrected the proposal of a regional administration scheme and offered it to the CPS. Why this sudden return to an idea that seemed dead? Was it influenced by the achieved contract with the SCHR, or the show of support for the idea at the May meeting of representatives, or was it one last desperate attempt at reconciliation? The offer would have warmed the hearts of ardent decentralists:

The Swift Current Regional Medical Care Plan has given good service to the residents of the region upon terms generally satisfactory to patients and physicians alike and has commended itself to many in the Province, including the Government. Agreement in principle with regard to a basis for continued operation of this plan has been reached... We repeat our earlier suggestion that as rapidly as possible a similar pattern be developed in additional regions so as to cover the whole province on the same general basis as in the Swift Current Region ... provincial tax sources ... would be used to raise the bulk of the funds required... The Government feels that the proposal offers the advantages of using provincial tax sources for the raising of funds with the advantages of community participation in administration and in co-ordinating health services in the area. The proposal also provides a basis for experimentation with new programs... We are confident that the regional plans of the Swift Current type covering the province offer one basis for introducing a plan satisfactory to all interested parties.⁸⁷

There were other amendments offered during the three-day meeting, but by this time the CPS’s opposition was adamant and unyielding on all points. The doctors would withdraw services on 1 July.

On 28 June there was one last meeting between the regional board and its physicians. Local doctors would not work under the act unless the CPS and the province reached an agreement. But the board was assured the “unqualified support” of the doctors if the whole plan could be regionalized.⁸⁸ So, again the board approached government, and reportedly received the assurance of cabinet that the province was

prepared and anxious to bring a system of regionalization for medical care into operation over the entire province as soon as it is practical to do so ... such a scheme

would be administered directly by publicly-elected Health Region boards who would ... contract with physicians ... [the] board would negotiate with the providers of service...⁸⁹

As long as a basic level of service was provided in a region, cabinet would be willing to accede to residence as the eligibility criterion (if municipalities would continue to accept liability for unpaid premiums as they had always done in the SCHR). The MCIC would become a mere coordinating body among regions.

How can we interpret this last minute “conversion” by cabinet, even as the hours ticked down toward a full-scale doctor’s strike? It seems hardly credible that government would have proposed that regions negotiate their own contracts with doctors when the provincial government itself had failed to persuade the medical profession to cooperate in anything other than the voluntary insurance plans. In view of the attitude of the profession at that moment, giving regions authority over such important features of the plan would have been to surrender the principles of public administration and compulsory coverage for which the provincial government had fought with such determination.

Was it just a last desperate attempt to break the impasse with the profession? A provincial spokesman later claimed that at the late June meeting, the SCHR board had made “representations in support of autonomous health regions with power to levy their own local personal taxes with provincial support in the form of grants” and cabinet had “expressed its approval in general of this approach as a proposal to be made by the Swift Current board to the Saskatchewan College of Physicians and Surgeons which might provide a basis of settling the dispute at that time...” According to this view the failure of regionalization at that point rested with the region and the CPS, not the province. The whole affair was surrounded by “unaccountable misunderstanding.”⁹⁰

Whatever the interpretation of that last consultation, it had no effect on the inexorable approach of the strike deadline. On 1 July 1962, in the SCHR and across the province, doctors closed their office doors.

The 1962 doctors’ strike was traumatic and disruptive, but mercifully short. By 11 July doctors in the SCHR indicated they would be prepared to sign a contract with the region if MCIC’s funding would come in the form of a grant rather than a contract as proposed. MCIC’s response was that if the region could get the doctors to resume their contract, a grant approach could be considered. It was a standoff. But the strike was already crumbling, and by the end of July it was all over.

The Saskatoon Agreement that ended the walkout called for amendments to the Medical Care Insurance Act such that “approved health agencies” would be recognized which would pay for medical services to “members.” Such agencies could collect premiums to cover administrative expenses or finance additional services. This was mainly a provision that allowed the two voluntary

plans, MSI and GMS, to coexist with the government plan, although they could be little more than channels of communication between doctors and government. But the amendment also referred to the SCHR as an "approved health agency." Both doctors and government, under Lord Taylor's mediation, had agreed that the SCHR program should be allowed to continue, although they felt "the time is not yet ripe to reach decisions" regarding the more general future for regionalized medical care.⁹¹

With doctors back at work and the provincial plan free to begin operation, there was little chance of any other region showing much interest in setting out on an independent course in the health insurance field. Not only was there no need to, but it became clear as the fall wore into winter that coordinating financial and policy relationships between a region and a provincial plan was not going to be easy.

It would have been much simpler had the SCHR withdrawn from the medical care field and faded into the provincial framework. But the annual meeting of the region on 2 August 1962 voted unanimously that the region should continue as a separate entity. Medical care should be administered regionally, financed by a per capita grant from the province and supplemented by a personal premium levied by the region. Local representatives reconfirmed their long-standing policies regarding utilization fees and eligibility, and they wanted to keep their dental plan.⁹²

Discussions in the fall between the region, its doctors, and the government became heated once again. The regional doctors' contract would expire 31 December, and according to the medical society there would be no further contract unless the region's fiscal autonomy was restored.⁹³ The sore point appeared to be the province's levying of its medical care insurance premium during the fall of 1962 — without consultation with the region. Whether eager to avoid a reopening of old wounds or merely anxious to get on with matters on the larger provincial stage, the province agreed to most of what the region and its doctors asked. Although it was too late to allow the region to levy its own tax in 1963, this was promised, and granted, in 1964. The "happy medicare republic"⁹⁴ in the southwest had won its fiscal autonomy and responsibility for the time being.

But it could not last. By 1972 the province had assumed direct responsibility for payment for medical services to those 65 and over as part of a new federal-provincial agreement, and by 1974 the region ceased levying its own personal taxes. After 1981 the province took on the processing of all medical accounts from the regional doctors.

Regional administration of medical care insurance disappeared with the demise of the SCHR plan. But the SCHR "experiment" had left its mark; its provincial successor was compulsory, universal, comprehensive and publicly administered. It operated on a fee-for-service basis, was based at least initially

on prepayment of a premium, and after a rocky start, was acceptable to physicians as well as to patients. In retrospect, when authors extolled the virtues of the provincial scheme some acknowledged what it had inherited from the SCHR program.⁹⁵ Others, looking back, simply described the region's plan as an "experiment" or one step in the long evolution of health insurance in the province.⁹⁶

On the national and international stage, the SCHR program was very quickly overshadowed by the provincial plan as the prototype or model for Canada's national health insurance.⁹⁷ During the troubled times in Saskatchewan in 1962, the Hall Commission toured the country in preparation for its recommendations on Canada's future health program. Hall is said to have found the SCHR one of his most useful sources of information about prepaid medical care.⁹⁸ But this assertion is not substantiated by the final published report in which the region receives positive but infrequent mention. Specifically the SCHR illustrated to the commissioners how a regional administration could support experimentation and might be especially useful in securing physicians to serve in sparsely populated areas.⁹⁹ But a lengthy discussion of the benefits of regional input into health planning and coordination makes no reference to the Saskatchewan experience.¹⁰⁰ The provincial plans, MCIC and especially SHSP, were of much greater significance to the Hall Commission. As Hall told Douglas, "Without your program as a successful one in being, I couldn't have produced the unanimous report for the Canada-wide universal health recommendations in 1964. If the scheme had not been successful in Saskatchewan, it wouldn't have become nation-wide."¹⁰¹

In final tribute to the SCHR and its unique medical care program, it may be said that if the experiment had not been successful, Saskatchewan's path toward medicare would have been longer and even more turbulent. Because the ordinary people of the southwest had created a program to meet their needs, others had the courage to struggle toward a similar goal for all.

NOTES

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Vera Lysenko's Fictions: Engendering Prairie Spaces

Beverly Rasporich

ABSTRACT. Mainstream (or “malestream”) criticism has largely dismissed the novels of Vera Lysenko. But for feminists, this Ukrainian-Canadian woman's depiction of life on the Prairies has considerable relevance. In mainstream prairie literature, larger-than-life men tame a harsh landscape — the men dominate nature and the women are always metaphorically linked to nature. But from Lysenko's feminine point of view, the prairie landscape was meant to be celebrated, not dominated; ethnic traditions, community solidarity, and the efforts of courageous women provided a human counterpart to the beauty of the Prairies.

SOMMAIRE. La critique dominante a en grande partie ignoré les romans de Vera Lysenko. Mais pour les féministes, la façon dont cette Canadienne d'origine ukrainienne décrit la vie dans les Prairies est très pertinente. Dans la littérature des Prairies, des hommes plus grands que nature domptent une nature rude et donc indirectement les femmes qui sont toujours par le biais de métaphores reliées à la nature. Mais selon le point de vue féminin de Lysenko, le paysage des Prairies doit être célébré et non dominé; des traditions ethniques, la solidarité de la communauté et les efforts de femmes courageuses apportent une contrepartie humaine à la beauté des Prairies.

The story of Vera Lysenko reads like a case study of one of the lost female authors that contemporary feminist critics are seeking to reclaim. Relegated to the margins of Canadian literary history,¹ Lysenko invites interpretation as the archetypal silenced female author in the world of patriarchal culture and its literary forms. She seems, in fact, the prototype of the anxious female writer taking up the pen in that uncomfortable act of literary creation, defined in sexual terms by feminist critics as the longstanding tradition “of the pen-penis writing on the virgin page.”² The literary act that extols the author-artist as male and defines the female as his acted-upon creation would seem to have stymied her. Certainly the Vera Lysenko that chooses the autobiographical mode in her unpublished major work, *The Torch: An Autobiographical Novel*, suggests the character of the struggling female-artist-as-isolate, writing privately in a female-favoured genre, one that labours for an active voice, that reaches “towards the possibility of saying ‘I’ and towards a form in which to say it.”³

The absence of Vera Lysenko as an established voice in Canadian prairie fiction, even in a minor way, may not only be related to her gender but quite possibly also to the politics of culture and the state. While Lysenko was writing “west” and “female” in her two published novels, *Yellow Boots* (1954) and *Westerly Wild* (1956), she was also writing out of her own ethnic background. Born Vera Lesik to Stundist Ukrainian parents who emigrated to Canada in 1903, Lysenko was a university-educated second-generation Ukrainian Canadian of split identity and allegiance, whose expressed social mission was to realize a place in Canadian society and culture for her Ukrainian community. In 1947 she published what was the first history of the Ukrainian Canadians by a member of that ethnic group, *Men in Sheepskin Coats: A Study in Assimilation*. Although Lysenko wrote this social history as a labour of love and ethnicity, it did not seem to satisfy either the Ukrainian community she was championing or the mainstream cultural fathers she was challenging. Within her ethnic community the work represented, or was thought to represent, a minority political bias. In historian Frances Swyripa's estimation, Lysenko wrote from a

Ukrainian Communist point of view and "The communist sector of the Ukrainian-Canadian community has been traditionally ostracized by the nationalist majority and as a consequence its historical role in Ukrainian-Canadian development has been largely ignored or detrimentally distorted in the writings of nationalist Ukrainian Canadians."⁴ Although Swyripa does not ignore Lysenko in her historical study, she estimates that Lysenko's political bias compromised her text, while offering valuable insights into the psychology of assimilation. At the same time, Swyripa sees those same stylistic attributes that characterize Lysenko as a fiction-maker, such as dramatic emphasis on individual movements and events and a "pseudo-novelistic style,"⁵ as at odds with the scholarly methodology of the historian.

Lysenko was also criticized on political grounds by at least one scholar within the literary establishment. Although she adhered to the official Canadian policy of cultural hegemony and assimilation by proposing, in *Men in Sheepskin Coats*, a new Canadian nationalism for sons and daughters of all immigrant groups, her book was identified as being "laced with political arsenic"⁶ by Watson Kirkconnell, a distinguished academic who in the 1940s and 1950s was a foremost authority and interpreter of ethnic literature and letters in Canada.

Despite this type of controversy, Lysenko went on to publish two novels of female questing and ethnic assimilation on the Prairies which, to date, have received some critical attention, and which are interesting experiments of female authorship. The first, *Yellow Boots*, set in Manitoba during the 1930s, traces the development of Lilli Landash, the daughter of Ukrainian peasant immigrants, from her childhood on the Prairies through her adventurous escape to the city of Winnipeg, where she progresses from being a domestic and a factory worker to becoming a successful dressmaker and concert singer. The novel ends with Lilli's rejection of the concert circuit and her triumphant return to her country people and prairie place as a folk singer, and her engagement to Matthew Reiner, her mentor in the city, an Austrian choirmaster some fifteen years her senior.

The novel *Yellow Boots* is at once a story of ethnic migration and assimilation, and a fiction about the development of a female and ethnic folk artist. Lilli's artistry is influenced by her Ukrainian peasant heritage and she emerges at the novel's end as the championing female voice of her people. Superficially, Lilli Landash is a practical feminist heroine who, in the male *Bildungsroman* novelistic tradition, is educated and apprenticed into the larger society when she becomes an "assimilated" dressmaker in the city.⁷ On another, more mythical sublevel, she emerges as a striking extension of the prairie landscape, an iconic earth-goddess figure and something of a female agrarian deity:

Everything that she had been, everything she possessed, came to focus on this one moment. Her eyes, skilfully made up to enhance their size and lustre, were almond-shaped, of a curious hazel hue; her mouth, painted a deep carnation, was wide and curved; the high cheekbones, casting a shadow on the hollow of the cheek,

stood out in relief, making each plane of her face as clear-cut as though from the chisel of a sculptor. Her hands, the hands of the soil-tiller and creator, conveyed with a single gesture the idiom of an entire race.⁸

In presenting this vertical heroine on the horizontal plane of the Canadian Prairies, Lysenko was running counter to the literary and largely male-dominated conventions, traditions and mythos of prairie fiction. If patterns of male authority and conquest have influenced the histories of the immigrant and pioneer, the official fictions of the Canadian west have similarly centred on man's struggle, to quote a commonly used phrase, "to make his mark on virgin territory." This traditional perspective is related by writer Henry Kreisel, commenting on Philip Grove's impression of the male pioneer: "He had to prove to himself that he was in some way master of his destiny, that he was fully alive, and that his strength had meaning."⁹

Henry Kreisel's assessment of his own fiction and that of other prairie writers, wherein he describes the dominant images of the giant (male) in the vast landscape, and that concomitant one of the dwarfed man pitted against inhospitable gigantic environs, may be images rooted in the realities of pioneer experience, but the psychology of dominance is that of the collective history of the male psyche and its epic narrative expressions. In the tradition of Canadian prairie fiction, the mythologies of male folklore, of Jack-the-Giant and Jack-the-Giant-Killer, have evolved into more sophisticated literary forms, whether authored as internalized experience by male writers or authored externally as male experience by female writers. Henry Kreisel points to an instance of the latter in *Wild Geese*, where Martha Ostenso outlines Fusi Aronson as the "giant figure" of the great Iclander.¹⁰ This lonely and titanic figure is not exclusive to the Prairies, however; he is a prairie brother to the longstanding cast of epic hero and giant warriors, to Polyphemus, Odysseus and King Lear, in passionate and everlasting combat with the natural elements. This masculinized fictional universe is one that is very different from the prairie world constructed by Vera Lysenko for her readers in *Yellow Boots*; indeed, as Clara Thomas points out, neither does this masculine pattern fit the work of other prairie female writers such as Nellie McClung, Margaret Laurence, Laura Salverson and Adele Wiseman.¹¹

Neither Lysenko nor her heroine are unaware of the reality and myth of the crushing boots of the male giant. Lilli has lost her childhood, in part, by having to wear them, by doing the work of a grown man — milking cows, ploughing the land, clearing out stables. When Matthew Reiner asks, "What does the prairie mean to you?" she replies:

"Do you mean the land?"

"Well, yes."

"The land — I hate the land."

Reiner speculates that

The soil and the tilling of the soil ... were not romanticized by Lilli as they were by those who had no intimate acquaintance with pioneering life. The only escape from a brutish existence, Reiner gathered, was through holiday festivities, and these Lilli delighted to describe — the immigrant carollers, the Pascal night, Fialka dancing in her yellow boots, a whole series of peasant paintings such as would have delighted an artist. (*Yellow Boots*, p. 251)

Yellow Boots is quite clearly a female escape fiction. Lysenko's literary choice is not between the male literary grammars of giant man or dwarfed man battling and overpowering the female principle into generation, but between this very paradigm of male muscle-flexing and the concept of maternal, nurturing woman in celebratory, internalized tune with the rhythms of mother nature, and freed from the masculine ties that bind. This artistic choice is symbolized by the yellow boots and their "exuberant rhythm ... tracing a pattern of joyous colour" (p. 201) and which are the alternative to the boots worn by Anton Landash, Lilli's father who, in the course of the fiction, wishes to "sell" his daughter in marriage to a brutal farmer for a piece of land. Lilli, like her author, will not be "broken" by this "semi-feudal heritage" (p. 200) of those "great tan, peasant," patriarchal boots, symbolic of the "ruthless strides of the pioneer, beating out their harsh rhythms, crushing anything delicate that might come into their path" (p. 201). Lilli's revolt is a stab at feminist independence; it is also an integer of Lysenko's artistic intention to engender prairie space differently. The landscape will not be interpreted as a willing or unwilling recipient of male character but as the regenerative, cyclic, inspirational and positive energy of female character.

The fictional territory of *Yellow Boots* is, in effect, that of female-centred myth-making. In her attempt to realize the growth of a girl-child's identity on the Prairies, Lysenko shapes a genesis legend of heroic possibilities, with Lilli, as a child of nature, assuming the function of the land itself and its status as a female agrarian muse. In the first few pages the reader is introduced to Lilli, literally dying, as she is returned home, after having been sent away to drudge for relatives. Lilli is observed by a male character, even as she lays dying, as a potent life force and extension of the land, and a marked contrast to the well-worked figure of man in the landscape:

Mike considered. "They're still pioneering, when pioneering days are over for most of the other settlers..." He paused as he watched, in the distance, the figure of a young farmer ploughing the land. "But I think they'll get ahead; they've already made their mark on the land."

His companion now turned his head back again to look at the sleeping girl, on whose face the marks of death were only too plain. "You know," he said, "I've never seen the country or the people as I've seen them today, and it's all because of this little girl. The whole land's come to life." (*Yellow Boots*, p. 11)

In the next chapter Lilli is literally and metaphorically, as a face of the land, reborn; she magically revives with the conviction "now the spring has come" (p. 23). Mythically, Lilli is a female avatar of the natural world in tune with its seasonal rhythms of reproduction. Lilli identifies not with her father, who is

sensually possessive, holding in his hand the "rich virgin soil," but with a neighbouring woman who "walked over the earth casting seed with her hand in a circular, primitive, rhythm" (p. 42), a gesture which seems futile to the father, Anton. Later, Lysenko will describe and dramatize a joyful spring childbirth, in the birth of a brother for Lilli. She will assist her mother, through female instinct — ("Generations of women, caught in the rhythm of childbirth had passed on this knowledge to her..." p. 94) — and according to her mother's instructions, bury the afterbirth in the outside earth.

In the connections she draws between land, female and reproductive cycle, Lysenko can be seen to be participating in a primitive way in what modern criticism has called "writing the body" — projecting on to the blank text — the language and literary forms and myths of gender or gender-traditions, including definitions of place/space. French literary critics, such as Julia Kristeva and Hélène Cixous have particularly identified *l'écriture féminine* — a disruptive form of modern writing in which the traditions of Western narrative are undermined. Finding in psychoanalysis the concept of *jouissance* — that sexual pleasure associated with early experience of the maternal body — Kristeva and Cixous have suggested that a typical feminine libidinal gesture in *l'écriture féminine* is that which produces in order to bring about life and pleasure.¹² While Lysenko does not write in the sophisticated avant-garde fashion that characterizes *l'écriture féminine*,¹³ the myth of the feminine underscores all her published works. Hers was a feminine intention in *Men (and women) in Sheepskin Coats*, when she attempted to write into existence, and to beautify, Ukrainian Canadians. In *Yellow Boots* the feminine gesture is even more intense, as Lysenko celebrates both the land itself as maternal body, and Ukrainian festivities and rituals, which are seasonal pagan and Christian markers of this natural world. As the grandmother explains of the designing of Ukrainian Easter eggs: "an egg — that is new life. When spring comes, everything awakes. The egg breaks the shell and brings a new creature to life. Mother Earth is free..." (p. 126). "The most ancient dances of the Ukrainians," which were "reactions of the peasant to seasonal change," such as "the salute to the Sun God, with reverential movements dating back to Sun-worshipping days,"¹⁴ are vividly described. And traditional songs, as ecstatic expressions of a preliterate society in tune with the rhythms of the natural world, are scripted in *Yellow Boots*.

Lysenko's spirit of *jouissance*, of joy and celebration in the birthing of landscape, has also been characteristic of other prairie woman authors. Clara Thomas explains that "neither [Margaret] Laurence nor [Nellie] McClung are blind to the awesome vastness of the prairies or the vicissitudes of nature that destroy men's and women's hopes. ... But in spite of that, both writers stress the beauty of the land far more than its risks and terrors."¹⁵ Thomas points out that "Laurence's work is markedly strong in images of birds and flowers, McClung's in images of animals and flowers," and interprets McClung as being

at "her best in a lively, sensuous, appreciation of colour and form when she writes of the natural bounty of the prairie."¹⁶ Lysenko, who also favours images of birds and flowers,¹⁷ evokes particularly striking images of strongly felt feminine *jouissance* in prairie nature:

The girl stood by the road awaiting the arrival of her schoolmates. She felt the spring, like a peasant, with her body; her kinship with the earth was renewed. Smoothing down the folds of her red calico dress, she tossed her braids, tied with red satin hair bows. Her bare brown feet pounded to the rhythm of awakening life as she whistled through a blade of grass held between her thumb and forefinger. Like a robin moistly emerged out of an egg, she had had to make some adjustments to a new self which had begun to emerge in the weeks since her recovery...

The prairie spring, with high exuberance, had rushed across the Manitoba prairie, blotting up the moisture and transforming the countryside with a haze of shimmering air, an enamelling of wild flowers. Tassels of the Manitoba maple tinkled like earrings with tiny beads of red, green and gold. (*Yellow Boots*, p. 28)

Writing from her own gender, Lysenko rhapsodizes on metamorphosis, on transformation,¹⁸ in female generative images of egg and moistness, and feminine ones of decorative dress and object.

In mainstream criticism, this kind of engendered version of the prairie, not surprisingly, has been largely unrecognized. In *Vertical Man/Horizontal World: Man and Landscape in Prairie Fiction*, Laurence Ricou identifies "recent" prairie fiction in which "man finds himself 'sticking out'" in an "uninterrupted empty horizontal" as an "ideal expression of the situation of existential man" and goes on to dismiss Vera Lysenko's landscape descriptions of the countryside, as for example, in "a haze of shimmering air, an enamelling of wild-flowers" as harmonizing with "the glib, excessive emotions which are Lysenko's staple in fiction."¹⁹ Although Ricou makes a point about Lysenko's unsophisticated, emotive fictionalizing, sentimentality itself can be viewed as a convention of gender, of femininity. Moreover if, as Aritha Van Herk argues, the "kingdom of the West" is the "kingdom of the male virgin," that "this, the promised land, still regrets Eden... denying the pastoral fiction that has been imposed upon it from the outside," and that the west "is a kingdom of male virgins who have never forgiven Eve for seducing them,"²⁰ then it is conceivable that the mythology of the cowboy-puritan in his virgin land invites interpretation of Lysenko's prairie garden as a female seduction replayed, a fictional siren song that is better ignored.

Like Nellie McClung, Margaret Laurence and Laura Salverson, the image that is as central to Lysenko's prairie as the land is that of the house which, as with these other writers, "has a wide range of connotation: shelter, security, maternal warmth, pride of possession, woman's kingdom and achievement and aesthetic satisfaction."²¹ In Lysenko's fiction, the house is most importantly the repository of Ukrainian folklore and peasant female customs and rites of passage. The section of *Yellow Boots* which creates a rich folkloristic texture is that entitled "The Wreath Plaiting," which includes wonderfully evocative,

visual portraits of Ukrainian female domesticity and community in chapters entitled "Birth of a Brother," "The Pickling," "The Matchmaking," "The Wreath Plaiters" and "The Marriage Rites."

The shapes, tastes and smells of food, the colour, texture and designs of female fashions, and the loving delight in objects ("She caressed each garment, for she loved the feel of clean, starched linen and soft silk" [p. 83]), which feminist critics have identified as peculiar to female writers, that is "the ability to perceive and represent them [objects] in a nurturing rather than dominating way,"²² suggests a prairie far removed from "man alone against an awesome sky,"²³

The women had been working for days to prepare the wedding feast, and now a great table was spread along the entire length of the house, where the food was laid as it came from the pots and oven: pastries, tarts, rolls, strudel stuffed with cherries or figs, honey cake, cookies in animal shapes, prunes, cottage cheese, pickled herrings, nuts, rolls with poppy seed and honey, jars of preserves, garlic sausage, dumplings, cabbage rolls, and three fancy kolaches for the bride's table. The previous night Zenobia had made preparations for the chicken and pork stew by cutting the meat in small pieces and salting them overnight, then cooking them in the oven until brown with onions, fat, garlic and parsley. With this she served dooshanina, made of roasted cornmeal which had been mixed with fat, fried onions, hot milk, eggs, salt and pepper to form a thin batter which was baked in a dish until brown. As an appetizer, she had small pickled mushrooms which she had put up a few weeks before in vinegar, spices and cinnamon sticks. (*Yellow Boots*, p. 111)

For Lysenko, such descriptions are also inherited from the Ukrainian proximity and attitude to the natural world and a part of a cultural value system expressed in the tradition of Ukrainian literature itself:

The Ukrainian lives deeply by his senses — the basis of his life in the old country stemmed back to pagan times when the Ukrainian was a nature worshipper, a child of the sun. He is a sensualist, delighting in anything that appeals to the senses, whether colour, sound or food. Descriptions of food abound in Ukrainian literature: the blood-red banquets of Schevchenko's revolutionaries, the mouth-watering dainties of Gogol's village folk.²⁴

When Lilli Landash as female adventurer and burgeoning artist leaves this sensual world of her Ukrainian heritage for the city, Lysenko continues to build a beautified, poetic world of prairie folk life and the development of the female artist within it. As folk artist, Lilli also makes a positive transition from rural to urban landscape. As a singer, she not only brings to her art everything that was inherited from her people but she imbibes from her factory work the rhythms of the factory itself: "She began to imitate these sounds, weaving melodies, shrugging her shoulders, pounding her feet, whistling, stitching, humming. She found she had created a rhythmic pattern which absorbed and revealed the life of the factory worker" (*Yellow Boots*, p. 263). If Lysenko's positive myth-making included a socialist intention of realizing the people and their art within the technological complex, it was also an extension of her attempt to create in

literature an inspirational folk story of poesy and legend and music of/for the female artist.

Yellow Boots, in total, is a grandiloquent attempt to write into being the "songs from the childhood of the human race" (p. 181) in a New World lyric. As folk historian and myth-maker of the Ukrainian peasant, as preserver of the collective tradition, Lysenko emerges from an oral/aural culture and shapes a myth of the past into present and future possibility for her female protagonist: "For these people, song is part of their daily existence, their unwritten record and history. And it's only against her own racial background that you can understand the personality of the girl" (p. 181). *Yellow Boots* is "novel" as female New World legend and song on the prairie rural and urban landscape. In Canada, Lysenko believed, women can fight free from the patriarchal social structures of Ukrainian culture, and if the old country was "the mother-lode of folk-lore and art for all Russia, where even the lowliest peasant was an artist, a composer, a creator,"²⁵ Lysenko also makes it clear that on the Prairies the female voice is the most natural and positive artistic interpreter of the "nostalgia of the human soul for its ancestral home" (*Yellow Boots*, p. 314), for mother earth, mother culture, and for the maternal body as landscape.

In the history of prairie and Canadian literature *Yellow Boots*, in postmodernist parlance, is an ex-centric fiction. In *The Wacousta Syndrome: Explorations in the Canadian Landscape*, Gaile McGregor argues that in "most non-Canadian Western literature ... nature is generally presented in feminine terms ... [which] is part cause, part consequence of the fact that, as Gloria Onley points out 'in the patriarchy ... women have been the "ground" against which the "figures" of men have emerged," while in Canadian literature nature has often had specifically masculine associations, "portrayed in terms of qualities like coldness and hardness, which are traditionally imputed to masculinity."²⁶ Writing out of a Ukrainian peasant tradition, Lysenko wrote herself out of the mainstream of western Canadian prairie literature. In the mainstream masculinization of prairie space, the archetypal frontier hero of western Canadian fiction, dreams of origins and of ancestral roots, yet in fear of the colonial past he actively engages in "demythologizing the systems that threaten to define [you]."²⁷ He is wary of the landscape as pastoral because such an interpretation diminishes heroic possibilities and reintroduces the genesis myth of man thrown out of the landscape because of the seductive Old Eve. In a "brave" New World, the repeated ancestral dream can rob the male hero of his independence and his own originating. Kroetsch explains this masculine anxiety:

This is a new country. Here on the plains we confront the hopeless and necessary hope of originality: constantly, we experience the need to begin. And we do — by initiating beginnings. We contrive authentic origins...

Here, the bride, so often, without being wife, turns into mother. The male cannot enter into what is traditionally thought of as marriage — and possibly nor can the female. The male, certainly, to made his radical beginning, takes on the role of

orphan or cowboy or outlaw. He approaches the female. He approaches the garden. He approaches the house. ...

And only then does he realize he has defined himself out of all entering. If he enters into this marriage — and into this place — it will be he — contrary to the tradition of the past — who must make the radical change. It will be he — already self-christened — and not the woman this time — who must give up the precious and treacherous *name*.²⁸

As a female writer on the western literary frontier, Vera Lysenko was also striving to originate, but by reseeding the female principle in new ground, by assimilating rather than by deconstructing. As an early second-generation ethnic author on the Canadian prairie, Lysenko's ethnicity complicated her definition of cultural source. The far-off voice of the Ukraine vied with the voice of the Anglo-Canadian cultural centre, both of which mingled with the heard polyglot voices of ethnic differences on the Prairies. For Lysenko however, the voice of the Ukraine did not separate her from the Canadian world; rather, it enunciated possibilities for positive transformation. Unlike male "ethnic" prairie authors, such as F. Philip Grove, Rudy Wiebe, Eli Mandel and Robert Kroetsch — who author male protagonists in an Out-of-Eden landscape, who resist or fight to de-mythologize the old stories and cultural directives and who strive to become their own cultural mothers in a northern masculinized space — for Lysenko no such polarized tensions or gender inversion were necessary. As a female of Ukrainian peasant understanding Lysenko assumed continuity and authority, through the pagan mythos of nature worship of the maternal principle.

In *Yellow Boots* the female figure stands on female ground and transplanting is the natural process. The fertility myth of *Yellow Boots* is that of replanting oneself in the New World and, with feminine accommodation, assimilating into the new mother culture, accepting all of its hybrid children in all of their ethnic diversity, and becoming their female artist. In the final pages of *Yellow Boots*, Lilli Landash is the folk singer not only for Ukrainians, but for all ethnic groups:

Aroused by this re-creation of their own vanished past, the people in the audience knew that this artist had sprung from them, and that her art was the art of the people. They acclaimed in many languages, as they stood up and cheered, shouted, stamped, "She is ours! She is ours!" (*Yellow Boots*, p. 314)

The spirit of accommodation that suffuses this fiction may sound sentimental and overblown to modern ears but it does not negate Lysenko's pioneering effort at engendering a new democratic art; like contemporary prairie authors, she was reinventing herself in the artistic act of writing, but not in total deconstruction of the past. Like her heroine Lilli Landash, Lysenko was constructing variations on a folk theme, singing new versions of an old melody. Writing from the borders of femininity and ethnicity, Lysenko was attempting to originate out of a pre-literate, folk-telling context, a scripted folk-fiction of the female as ethnic artist in a New World space. In *Yellow Boots*, Lysenko's artist and her artistry can be compared to that of William Kurelek who painted the Ukrainian community on the prairies — naively, with spontaneity and

directness — in visions of child-like joy and fantasy, creating folk dreams out of folk material, and confounding his art-literate critics.²⁹ Not surprisingly, the naming of Lysenko's fiction, like Kurelek's art, is not easy. The descriptions which perhaps come closest are female folk legend, fantasy, even fairy-tale, all of which suggest inferior paraliterary forms. None of these seem particularly fair representations however, given that pre-literate folk tales have almost always been the province of male questers who, like the literary giants in prairie fiction, are notable for banishing wives and maidens from their kingdoms. A more appropriate labelling of *Yellow Boots* might be that of literary folk artifact in which the central iconic image of the dancing, adventuring woman in the yellow boots emerges to deserve, at the very least, a recognized moment of place in that mythic space that seems fully occupied by those contemporary literary emblems of the masculine west, the studhorse man, and the stone hammer.³⁰

In the past, the valuing of Vera Lysenko's fiction has largely depended on mainstream, and masculine, aesthetic and cultural norms. Edward McCourt in his classic literary study, *The Canadian West in Fiction*, makes what appears to be an honest and fair assessment of *Yellow Boots*, but the biases of his criticism are covertly masculine. The fiction is given short shrift in the comment

Yellow Boots is devoted mainly to descriptions of various aspects of Ukrainian culture as they find expression in a prairie community; and the pallid love story which provides a thread of a plot is much of the time buried out of sight beneath a welter of folkways embroidery.³¹

The implication here is that an unappreciated "folkways embroidery" should recede in the interest of a traditional plot and love story. The love story is indeed pallid in *Yellow Boots*, even incongruous in the "engagement" of the heroine Lilli to her artistic mentor, given that the heroine's fight is for economic independence and artistic self-expression. Although Lysenko is careful to have Lilli's mentor, Matthew, consider a friend's advice — "don't use your influence to form her life. Let her develop of her own self" (*Yellow Boots*, p. 266) — Lilli's author capitulates to the societal ideal of romantic love, of passive female and dominant male, by having her heroine succumb in a melodramatic moment, albeit with the feminist qualification of "equal passion," (*Yellow Boots*, p. 310) to Prince Charming and romance. This romantic resolution is both contradictory and unconvincing — and not surprisingly so.

Feminist critics well understand that the passionate female in the history of Western narrative is a contradiction in terms. The sense of female "otherness" that Simone de Beauvoir elucidated a generation ago is also understood to express itself in the Judaeo-Christian tradition as a bi-polar concept of female sexuality, as Eve the insatiate sexual seductress and whore (bad) and Mary, virgin and mother (good), both of which are products of the masculine mind. In the role of Eve, passion is assigned to the female, but the impact of "otherness" divorces her from her own natural desires and instincts. Consequently, the female artist-author, writing within a patriarchal literary tradition, develops

secret, coded and allusive strategies in an attempt to realize her own sexual and artistic identity and her own myths of creation. Very often, she chooses marginal literary forms that are expressive of her female subculture, the Gothic novel being a case in point. Although the history of the Gothic, as in Monk Lewis's *The Monk* and Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, is shaped by the patriarchal paradigm of hostility towards female sexuality as it threatens the male,³² it has become, in the hands of women writers, a subversive genre of psychological projection and a female questing fantasy that superficially affirms patriarchal conventions, while simultaneously questioning them.

The landscapes in *The Female Gothic* are largely landscapes of mind, as they are for Vera Lysenko in both a segment of *Yellow Boots* and her prairie novel *Westerly Wild*, a fiction which is worrisome to literary critic McCourt because of "Lysenko's seeming inability to tell a convincing story."³³ McCourt identifies the Gothic elements of *Westerly Wild* but prefers what he sees as Lysenko's "advance in technique" from *Yellow Boots*, that is, her realistic description of a masculinized dead natural world; significantly, he focusses in on the image of man and his horse, applauding the death of the male protagonist in epic terms:

Here the impact of the great depression and drought of the 1930's on a polyglot rural Saskatchewan community is at times effectively realized... The basic plot situation in *Westerly Wild* appears to owe more to *Jane Eyre* (including the mad wife in the attic) than to anything the author could have experienced or observed in life. But there is some good writing in individual scenes, and most notably, in the conclusion when the hero-villain (Heathcliff crossed with Rochester) is crushed to death beneath the hooves of the great horses over whom he has for so long exercised ruthless mastery.³⁴

If Lysenko fails to tell a convincing story to Edward McCourt, it is partly because what the female author experiences or observes in real life is denial of herself as a passionate creator. If she assumes this position, she is sorceress, hysteric; she is the "witch" Tamara of excess passion, talent and suffering, who, in the interleaved story "Swamp Fire," within the story of *Yellow Boots*, the girl Lilli knows to be a heroine, twisted by and from community attitudes:

Lilli was shocked to see how her face had been stripped of pride, leaving it like a wilted rag. Witches in all time, thought Lilli, might have been superior women such as Tamara, amateur doctors or poets, who, denied natural outlets, turned to perverted hatred of the community. (*Yellow Boots*, p. 148)

Ultimately Tamara, who lives as a mysterious independent on the borders of society in a prairie swamp is driven to her death by the witch-hunting Ukrainian community. Tamara, nonetheless, remains for Lilli a positive "alter ego," a passionate self who inhabits the symbolic prairie ground "known as the Dead Land, because it was packed with huge holes like craters, half-filled with water and black ashy remains of forests" (*Yellow Boots*, p. 145). Although Lilli "gets lost" in the stormy, chaotic and disordered Gothic landscape that Tamara inhabits, she finds herself in tune here with the "excitement of nature" that

"swept her along like thunderous music ... she was one with the wind and rain and lightning, she was part of nature itself" (*Yellow Boots*, p. 146).

The Gothic landscape is a projection of female passion, at once frightening and attractive for the heroine-poet Lilli, as it is for the young schoolteacher Julie Lacoste in *Westerly Wild*. The love interest in this novel is between Julie and a potent male, semi-demonic lover in the person of Marcus Haugen, a prairie farmer who is identified with the "wild forces of nature."³⁵ He brings storm into the prairie landscape, and water and life back into the dry earth through his irrigation scheme. In *Westerly Wild* the landscape is very much a projection of a female Gothic mind that symbolizes the possibility of a passionate unleashing for the woman, but within the Gothic paradigm is frustrated. The demon-lover is also the authoritarian father, symbol of patriarchy, who makes the rules and gender conventions. A marriage with Haugen, a matching of passionate equals, is not possible, for within the patriarchy the heroine will be subsumed by his passions and his expectations. She will become the "other," the disordered and displaced mad woman in the attic, the superficial and empty "dolly," the first wife and crazy woman that Haugen has hidden away in his Gothic house. The desire to be the desiring female, not the object of desire or the desirer as objectified by masculine imagining, is strong in *Westerly Wild*, but the conventions of patriarchy mitigate against it. Thus, desire is sacrificed, in the symbolic crucifixion of the Gothic villain, himself an ambivalent symbol, whose passion to some extent mirrors, or is an extension of, the heroine's own. He is a feminized and feminist-inspired villain, a brute lover who springs passionately from the earth he loves and returns to it, who loses his masculine control and mythically dies:

For two hours, the horses raced thus, while the roaring of the wind poured over the fields, like the desolate passion of Haugen rising from the earth itself, as if the violence of his emotions, now finally released from his tortured spirit, had added itself to the wind, to fly unhampered over the rolling country. (*Westerly Wild*, p. 284)

In *Westerly Wild*, the Gothic mode is "a psychological form whose subjective vision is the crucial event... The individual female vision, in contrast to the social one is one of nightmare, and that nightmare is created by the individual in conflict with the values of her society and her prescribed role."³⁶

Vera Lysenko's prairie spaces, in the final analysis, are those of feminine mindscape, coupled in *Yellow Boots* with ethnofantasy — a jubilant legendizing of Ukrainian folklore and the female as ethnic, earth mother, artist. And while the myth of the feminine which Lysenko authors in these fictions is a valiant attempt at self-authoring, the myth itself betrays her. In the light of feminist criticism the kind of *feminine* definition Lysenko assumes has been revealed to be an ongoing expression of the patriarchy and its bi-polar tropes: male/female, masculine/feminine, head/heart dominant/passive, logical/ instinctive, ordering/nurturing, sun god/mother earth. As Hélène Cixous argues, the female

author cannot escape the philosophical and literary tautologies of the phallocentric system:

Organization by hierarchy makes all conceptual organization subject to man. Male privilege, shown in the opposition between *activity* and *passivity*, which he uses to sustain himself. Traditionally, the question of sexual difference is treated by coupling it with the opposition: activity/passivity...

Moreover, woman is always associated with passivity in philosophy... Intention: desire, authority — examine them and you are led right back ... to the father. It is even possible not to notice that there is no place whatsoever for woman in the calculations. Ultimately the world of "being" can function while precluding the mother. No need for a mother, as long as there is some motherliness: and it is the father, then, who acts the part, who is the mother. Either woman is passive or she does not exist. ...

And if we consult literary history, it is the same story. It all comes back to man — to *his* torment, his desire to be (at) the origin. Back to the father.³⁷

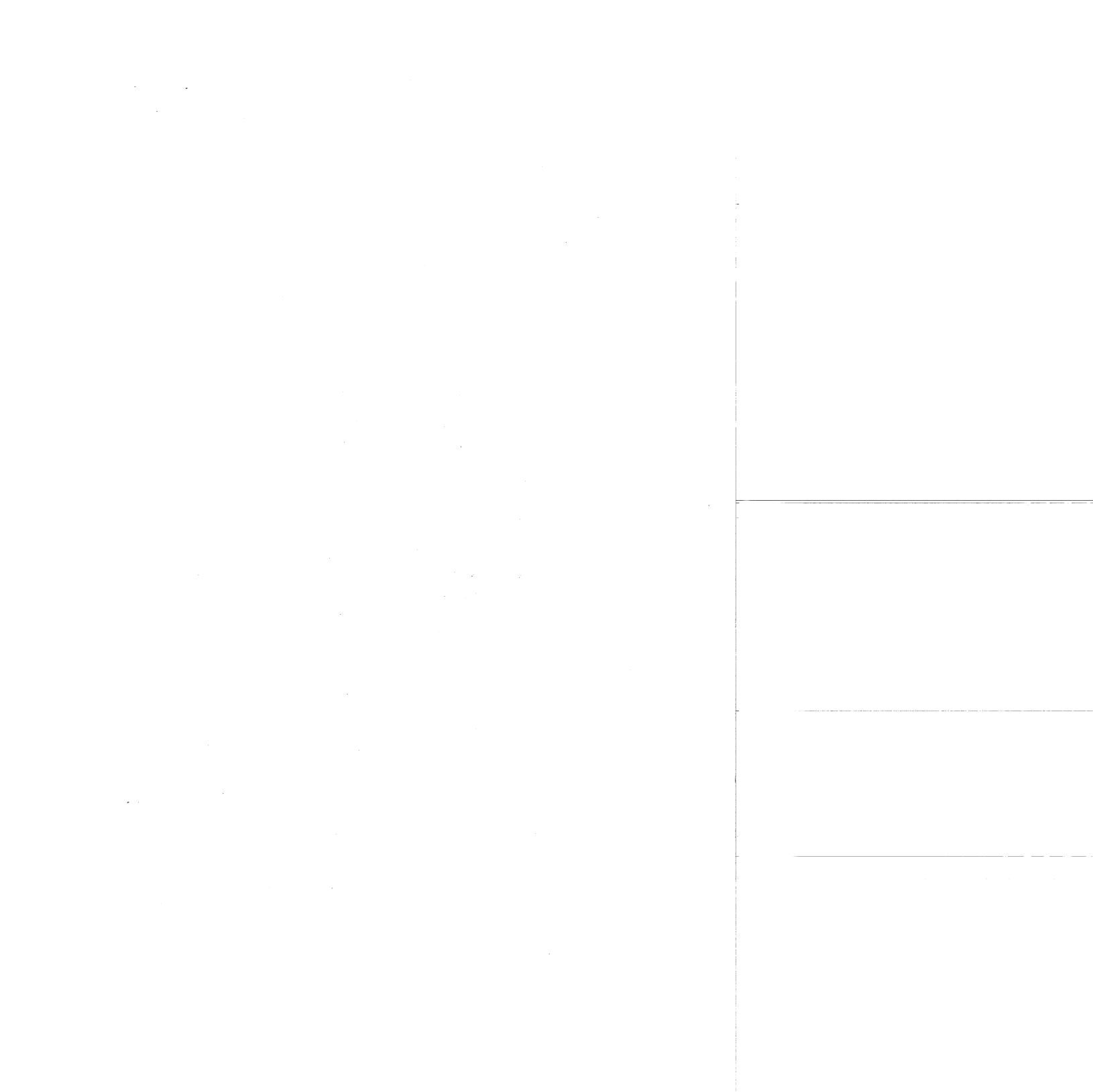
Not only is the female author faced with literary structures and modes of perceiving that make her the "other," as the "other" — the feminine — she and her authorship are easily dismissed. Her fiction, like Lysenko's, is very often relegated to outside the literary mainstream, characterized as sentimental, extravagant, overly emotional; clearly, these fictional characteristics which are frequently identified as inferior by virtue of being feminine are not inherently so. Clearly, as well, the interpretation of them as weakness illustrates an implicit, self-defining male code of valuing, as well as blindness to the realities of feminine experience, and the possibilities of female genre. And if Vera Lysenko found herself riding sidesaddle in her fictions of the Canadian west, she also struggled to push her heroines outwards and beyond, into taking charge. Both Lilli Landash, of gypsy spirit (Gypsy is her first name), and Julie Lacoste, as a travelling heroine, portend future power. Julie Lacoste's exit, when she leaves Marcus Haugen "with the terror of being alone" in a dead landscape — "All that had lit up the landscape for him, Julie's laughter and warmth, had gone and the land was dead, sand and soil only" (*Westerly Wild*, p. 282) — can be read, on one level, as abnegation from feminine responsibilities. These women, cast out of the new wilderness, are attempting to leave the house, leave the garden, leave the family, leave the community and leave the man in a solitary "climax of [female] resurrection" (*Yellow Boots*, p. 314).

NOTES

1. For biographical information and citation of unpublished manuscripts see Jars Balan and Yuri Klynov, eds., *Yarmarok* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1987), 323 and D. Enns, *Lysenko, Vera*, Finding Aid No. 1579 (Ottawa: Public Archives of Canada, 1985), ii. Lysenko's unpublished manuscripts are housed in the Manuscript Division, National Archives of Canada. Vera Lysenko is briefly mentioned in Jars Balan, "Ukrainian Writing," in William Toye, ed., *The Oxford Companion to Canadian Literature* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1983), 810. See also Natalia Aponiuk, "The Problem of Identity:

- The Depictions of Ukrainians in Canadian Literature," *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 14, no. 1 (1982): 53-54; Terrence Craig, *Racial Attitudes in English-Canadian Fiction 1905-1980* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1987); Tamara Palmer, "Ethnic Character and Social Themes in Novels About Prairie Canada and the Period from 1900 to 1940" (M.A. thesis, York University, 1972); Tamara Palmer, "Ethnic Responses to the Canadian Prairies, 1900-1950," *Prairie Forum* 12, no. 1 (Spring 1987): 66. Passages from Lysenko's *Yellow Boots* have been republished in *Yarmarok*.
2. See Susan Gubar, "'The Blank Page' and the Issues of Female Creativity," in Elaine Showalter, ed., *The New Feminist Criticism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985), 295.
 3. Linda Anderson, "At the Threshold of the Self: Women and Autobiography" in Moira Monteith, ed., *Women's Writing: A Challenge to Theory* (Brighton, Sussex: Harvester's Press, 1986), 65.
 4. Frances Swyripa, *Ukrainian Canadians: A Survey of Their Portrayal in English-Language Works* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1978), 66.
 5. Ibid.
 6. Watson Kirkconnell, "New Canadian Letters," *The University of Toronto Quarterly* 17 (1947): 428.
 7. See Beverly Rasporich, "Retelling Vera Lysenko: A Feminist and Ethnic Writer," *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 21, no. 2 (1989): 38-52.
 8. Vera Lysenko, *Yellow Boots* (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1954), 313.
 9. Henry Kreisel, "The Prairie: A State of Mind (1968)," in Birk Sproxtton, ed., *Trace: Prairie Writers on Writing* (Winnipeg: Turnstone Press, 1986), 10.
 10. Ibid., 5.
 11. Clara Thomas, "Women Writers and the New Land," in Richard Chadbourne and Hallvard Dahlie, eds., *The New Land: Studies in a Literary Theme* (Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier Press, 1978), 53.
 12. See Ann Rosalind Jones, "Writing the Body: Towards an Understanding of *L'écriture féminine*," in Elaine Showalter, ed., *The New Feminist Criticism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985) 364-65.
 13. See Elaine Showalter, "Introduction," *The New Feminist Criticism*, 9. *L'écriture féminine* which makes use, says Showalter, of "puns, neologisms, coded allusions, typographical breaks, and other devices of surrealist and avant-garde writing" is not typical of Lysenko, but as Robert Klymasz explained in a paper entitled "From Folklore to Literature: Trends in Ukrainian Canadian Writing," delivered at the conference "History of the Literary Institution of Canada" (University of Alberta, April 1988), she is fond of macaronic word play, as, for example, in the name of Jenny Kapusta (which means cabbage in Ukrainian) as a coded form of communication in *Westerly Wild*. See Robert B. Klymasz, "Art of Intrusion: Macaronicism in Ukrainian-Canadian Literature," in Joseph Pivato, ed., *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature* (September-December 1989): 764.
 14. Vera Lysenko, *Men in Sheepskin Coats* (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1947), 177.
 15. Thomas, "Women Writers," 53.
 16. Ibid.
 17. Ellen Moers points out that women authors use flowers and birds as metaphors of their own sex. See Ellen Moers, *Literary Women* (New York: Doubleday, 1972), 245.

18. There is a great deal of feminist literature on the concept of metamorphosis and transformation as a natural conceptualization of female writers, given their biological nature. See for example, Lorna Irvine on Alice Munro's fiction, "Women's Desire: Women's Power: The Moons of Jupiter," in Lorna Irvine, ed., *Sub/Version* (Toronto: ECW Press, 1986) 91-110.
19. Laurence Ricou, *Vertical Man/Horizontal World: Man and Landscape in Canadian Prairie Fiction* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1973), 112.
20. Aritha Van Herk, "A Gentle Circumcision," in Sproxtton, *Trace*, 257.
21. Thomas, "Women Writers," 54.
22. Hélène Cixous cited in "Writing the Body" 365.
23. Henry Kreisels cited in Thomas, "Women Writers," 53.
24. Vera Lysenko, *Men in Sheepskin Coats*, 196.
25. *Ibid.*, 242.
26. Gaile McGregor, *The Wacousta Syndrome: Explorations in the Canadian Landscape* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985), 133.
27. Robert Kroetsch cited in Rosemary Sullivan, "Summing Up," in Dick Harrison, ed., *Crossing Frontiers* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1979), 154.
28. Robert Kroetsch, "The Fear of Women in Prairie Fiction: An Erotics of Space," in Sullivan, *Crossing Frontiers*, 82.
29. See Charlotte Townsend-Gault's puzzled assessment of Kurelek's work in R. Bringhurst, G. James, R. Keziore and D. Shadbolt, eds., *Visions: Contemporary Art in Canada* (Vancouver/Toronto: Douglas and McIntyre, 1983), 135. Lysenko's art does demonstrate a gender difference from Kurelek. His paintings very often have dark undertones and as P. Morley has explained — while Kurelek painted Ukrainian females and their folk customs, his was an Old Testament conception of ideal womanhood. This attitude was often expressed in textual explications of his paintings. See Patricia Morley, *Kurelek* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1986), 217.
30. These images, drawn from the fiction of Robert Kroetsch, are often referred to in contemporary literary criticism as icons of the prairie west.
31. Edward McCourt, *The Canadian West in Fiction* (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1949), 79.
32. Juliann E. Fleenor, ed., *The Female Gothic* (London: Eden Press, 1983), 14.
33. McCourt, *Canadian West in Fiction*, 79.
34. *Ibid.*
35. Vera Lysenko, *Westerly Wild* (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1956), 82.
36. Fleenor, *The Female Gothic*, 10.
37. Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clement, *The Newly Born Woman, Theory and History of Literature*, Volume 24 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 64-65.



Elements Of Jewish Culture in Adele Wiseman's *Crackpot*: A Subversive Ethnic Fiction Female Style

Tamara J. Palmer

ABSTRACT. Adele Wiseman's *Crackpot* is a complex novel which postmodernist ideas can help to unravel. But a postmodernist reading must be combined with an understanding of a variety of Jewish traditions which inform Wiseman's portrayal of the main characters. On one level, the novel can be read as a comic burlesque of the Jewish immigrant experience; but this comic tone exists alongside one of plaintive yearning for people and places lost — for home.

SOMMAIRE. *Crackpot* d'Adele Wiseman est un roman complexe que des idées postmodernistes peuvent aider à éclaircir. Mais une lecture postmoderniste ne suffit pas. Il faut aussi connaître une variété de traditions juives qui sous-tendent le portrait que trace Wiseman des personnages principaux. On peut certainement lire le roman comme une parodie comique de l'expérience du juif immigrant. Mais ce ton comique va de pair avec une nostalgie plaintive des gens et des lieux perdus — une nostalgie du pays.

In ethnic writing, there is often an attempt at healing by the rewriting of myths.
(Robert Kroetsch)

In a time like *now*, art is subversive when it points to a holistic, holographic and spiral interpretation of time, space, and reality ... when it promotes erotic, sensual, and nurturing possibilities; when it directs us to look at human instead of economic needs; when it argues that matter is merely the extension of what we call spirit or soul ... when it articulates that power is what arises from the *inside*, not from the outside. (k.o. kanne)¹

Although Winnipeg writer Adele Wiseman is well known in Canadian literary circles, particularly for her two novels, *The Sacrifice* and *Crackpot*, her work, especially the latter novel, has not received the attention it deserves. This may be partly because, as a Jewish-Canadian writer of what might be called ethnic fiction, Wiseman has been regarded as outside what has until recently been seen as the Canadian literary mainstream. This neglect may also stem from *Crackpot*'s complex and profoundly radical nature. However, with the growing popularity of postmodern criticism in Canada, critics may well begin to take a second look at *Crackpot*, since the very qualities which may have made it seem eccentric when it was published in 1974 make it particularly accessible to a postmodernist reading. Indeed, *Crackpot* can be read as a postmodern novel *par excellence*, since it explores, with the literary tools of ex-centricity, not only female immigrant and ethnic experience in Canada, but also the relationship between that experience and the polarities of perfection and imperfection, art and life, unity and fragmentation; in so doing it profoundly subverts conventional wisdom regarding both ethnicity and gender, and ultimately the nature of reality.

However, any such postmodern reading of the novel would miss much of its rich complexity if it did not place *Crackpot* within the context of Jewish culture. This article will explore some of the ways in which Wiseman incorporates elements from a variety of Jewish traditions into the novel, creating an illuminating synthesis out of seemingly disparate ingredients. Clearly, each element is an immense subject in itself, and it could be argued that such an exploration should be limited to one, simply to do justice to its complexity.

Nevertheless, discussing them together is also useful since this highlights their synthesis, and what is most striking about the novel is its synthetic power — the way in which strands from various contexts (including Canadian fictions of immigration and ethnicity, the literary tradition of the picaresque, and a number of Jewish traditions) have been interwoven into all of its aspects.

With a view to illuminating the ways in which elements of Jewish culture are synthesized in the novel, each will be discussed in turn, focussing on those features which seem most significant in *Crackpot*. The disadvantage of this overview approach is that none of the traditions can be explored in great depth. Another problem may be that discussing them individually might suggest their separateness rather than their interrelatedness. However, it is hoped that pointing out the ways in which they overlap in the novel will be a way of overcoming the fragmentation that is the great weakness of linear analysis. Wiseman is both wary of, and intrigued by, this complex relationship between the part and the whole, and the related difficulty for the writer of translating experience into language; indeed, *Crackpot* is an attempt to transcend the limitations of the novel form (perhaps even of language itself), particularly its linearity and its power to distance both the writer and the reader from the subject, while at the same time celebrating the particular, the eccentric and the power and beauty of the word.

In a short monograph on Adele Wiseman's life and work, Michael Greenstein points out that "despite her insistence on individual creativity, Wiseman may be placed in the mainstream of Jewish-Canadian literature beginning with A.M. Klein, who also, out of ghetto streets, dreamed pavement into Bible land..."² Like Klein, Mordecai Richler, Miriam Waddington (with whom she shares north-end Winnipeg roots) and other Canadian-Jewish writers, Wiseman is heir to a rich religious and cultural memory, one that encompasses thousands of years, many countries and several languages.³ Not surprisingly Wiseman draws heavily on her cultural background; *Crackpot* is imbued with several distinct yet overlapping layers of Jewish tradition. Greenstein uses an historical schema to clarify these elements, analyzing *The Sacrifice* and *Crackpot* in terms of "four historical stages: (1) biblical background; (2) eastern Europe; (3) immigrant transition... [and] (4) North American acculturation."⁴ Influences from each of these historical stages are apparent in *Crackpot*, via a variety of allusions to other texts. Michael Foucault's insight that the "frontiers of a book are never clear-cut: beyond the title, the first lines, and the last full stop, beyond its internal configuration and its autonomous form, it is caught up in a system of references to other books, other texts, other sentences: it is a node within a network" seems particularly apropos to *Crackpot*, as does Harold Bloom's assertion that "reading a text is necessarily the reading of a whole system of texts."⁵

The biblical connection, while more apparent in *The Sacrifice*, is present both directly and indirectly in *Crackpot*. The novel begins with a form and cadence that is unmistakably biblical:

Out of Shem Berl and Golda came Rahel. Out of Malka and Benyamin came Danile.
 Out of Danile and Rahel came Hoda. Out of Hoda, Pipick came, Pipick born in
 secrecy and mystery and terror, for what did Hoda know?⁶

However, using parody, as she often does throughout the novel, Wiseman subverts the grand form by injecting it with names of the unknown and the humble. This intertextual beginning not only establishes the novel's quasi-comic tone, but also begins the weaving of the complex cultural web that constitutes the many-layered context in which her characters move. The biblical genealogical reference places Rahel, Danile and Hoda in the long line of inheritors of the patriarchal Judaic tradition; the parodic treatment of biblical form, which mocks elitism, adds to that complex web the tradition of egalitarian radicalism which these characters, as Eastern European, working-class Jews, influenced by the socialist movements of the nineteenth century, have inherited along with the Torah. The biblical form is also subverted by the focus on Hoda, altering the usual emphasis on patriarchy and action to maternity, knowledge and feeling.⁷ This emphasis on female perception and experience, apparent in the novel's first allusive lines and developed repeatedly through various modes, including structure, characterization, themes, tone and style, is central to the novel's power as a critique and a re-shaper of the various texts with which it intersects.⁸

In addition, the Bible pervades the novel indirectly, in the preoccupation of the major characters, especially Danile and Hoda, with origins generally, and with stories or myths of origin particularly. Danile, Hoda's blind father, spends much of his time preoccupied, almost to the point of obsession, with telling and retelling the story of the origins of his family. Although the story, a bizarre one that casts Danile and his wife, Rahel, as the unfortunates who are chosen by "the beautiful ones" of the Jewish village to save the community from the plague and a pogrom by marrying in the graveyard, is drawn more directly from the second historical stage — Eastern Europe — than the first, Danile's preoccupation with it, his use of motifs of exile, wandering and regeneration to tell it, and his imbuing it with a mystical, mythic quality also connect Wiseman's text, and the lives of her characters, with the Bible. The orphan, David — Hoda's unacknowledged illegitimate son — whose seemingly special "piety and sense of responsibility" make him for a time a sought after stand-in for daily rituals in the "dying congregations" (pp. 224-25) of the north-end ghetto, is a connection to the biblical David, and even to the notion of a coming messiah. Again, Wiseman's treatment of David is ambivalent, both parodic, as evidenced by the play on his being a "prince," as suggested in Hoda's enigmatic note to the orphanage the night of his birth, and serious — his disappearance and unknown fate, symbolic of unrealized potential, remains as a loose, suggestive strand at the novel's end.

Danile's approach to his experience and his story also connects Wiseman's text with the long tradition of Jewish talmudic scholarship, which reads and

rereads the words of the Torah and their various interpretations over the ages as a means of knowing God and the significance and application of His laws.⁹ Danile, the blind man, embodies this devotion to looking behind surfaces (words, symbols) for a deeper meaning in a larger design.¹⁰ For example, despite the apparently grim circumstances of immigrant poverty and abandonment by their rich uncle, Danile insists to his wife and daughter that

"You wouldn't believe our luck, for on the surface aren't we the unluckiest people in the world? But study things, study and you'll see. God only seems to punish... God blinded me for reasons of His own, and the loss is nothing to the gain. For if I had not been blind and your mother had not been a little crooked many wonderful things would not have happened and you would probably never have been born. Shouldn't I call that luck?" (pp. 9-10)

Danile's embodiment of this scholarly tradition is paradoxical, since on the surface he is not only blind but at times seems a simpleton. His old friends at the synagogue even debate the question of whether or not he is a wise man or a fool. (p. 173) In addition, Danile is not, in the formal sense, a learned man. He is in fact illiterate; his only connection with the written word is the physical one of holding in his hands the "holy book" his father gave him, saying "if you can't see the Holy Work you can hold it at least, feel it, keep it close to you, live with it. Even so you can be blessed." (p. 11) Wiseman subverts the tradition of reverence for the written word and for the scholar by parodying it. Danile is a caricature of the scholar; his phoniness is made both obvious and humorous in his description for Hoda of the family's entry into the new world, which he and Rahel had hoped to facilitate by disguising him as a learned man. " 'Danile, you must grow a beard. When our turn comes for the immigration examinations you must look like a serious scholar', " Rahel admonishes her husband. He is also to hold his book "as if you can't be pulled away from it for such trifling things as examinations and interrogations." (p. 12) When the time comes, however, Danile, due to the difficulty of holding the heavy and squirming infant, Hoda, loses his grip on the book, and passes across the border into the new world holding the book upside down. Wiseman's parody of the scholar is also apparent when, after Hoda has become a prostitute, the blind Danile, thinking that her customers are students, calls out to them to "study, study."

Though this comic depiction deflates the traditional reverence for the scholar, it also works from within that tradition to suggest that something may be topsy-turvy in the new world which, while purporting to be a haven for the oppressed, demands that those who enter be, at least on the surface, perfect. As a supposedly knowledgeable friend tells Rahel and Danile while they prepare for their journey:

"They want only whole people in America. An ordinary man ... travelling with a child and a woman with a slight hump, well maybe. But a blind man too? No. You see ... the new world is almost like heaven. They want you to be perfect before you get there, at least on the outside. In heaven of course they are more interested in what you are inside." (p. 12)¹¹

Danile's portrayal is also sufficiently ambiguous to allow him to be seen as a positive embodiment of the notion that traditional talmudic scholarship may be too narrow to recognize ways of knowing other than through rationality and the written word; or, through the lens of the pastoral tradition, as well as that of Shakespearean and Greek tragedy, as the simple wiseman, the blind seer. And, as is clear by the end of the novel, both Danile and Hoda have indeed acquired considerable wisdom.

The young Hoda is endlessly fascinated with Danile's stories of their origins and subsequent wanderings that ultimately lead them to north-end Winnipeg. "When night came and Hoda was put to bed her blind father told her the good stories. These were real life, not yes and no and hush and shame shame say sorry. Daddy told her who she was and where she came from and what had happened. Real things." (p. 9) Though her interest in the stories waxes and wanes throughout the novel, Hoda always returns to them for comfort and guidance at critical points in her life, endowing them with a kind of scriptural power. For example, after she gives birth to Pipick, she turns to her father and his stories for comfort, as she does years later after her horrific incestuous encounter with her teenaged son:

If she had hoped to hear those stories once again as a child hears, she was disappointed. But she was not aware of such a hope, nor of the disappointment of being barred from a return to innocence. She simply felt the old stories, felt her emptiness filled with resonance, transformed to resonance. She saw the old stories, saw through the old stories, saw beyond the old stories to what the man her father was and what the woman her mother must have been; she heard the stories and knew them all, and gathered them back into herself and knew herself as well, not as she had once known herself, in a sudden, comprehensive flash of revelation, a simultaneity of multiple Hodas, but as she flowed in the sequence of her days. And when she returned to the contemplation of her immediate existence, that restless human impulse which will not hold still any more than time holds still, conceived for her the notion that somehow the boy, protected though he must be from personal knowledge, must learn what was important in the stories still. (p. 256)

It is apparent that for Hoda her family's story, and her father's telling of it, is a kind of sacred text, a personal holy scripture of origins that she can use to guide her, to infuse her life with meaning, to heal her sorrow and fragmentation, and as such it must somehow be passed on to her son, just as the stories and traditions in the Old Testament, having sustained her larger tribal family for thousands of years, must be told and retold to a younger generation which will shape them into its own mythology for its own time. Thus Hoda's preoccupation with her myths of origin not only connects her with the biblical tradition but also subverts it in the sense that the personal nature of her connection with the mythic mode de-universalizes it, while paradoxically making it more accessible.¹² The dynamics of this process are clearly stated by Linda Hutcheon, though she is not discussing Wiseman, but rather the parodic use of myths as a characteristic feature of postmodernism in general, and in the writing of Robert Kroetsch in particular:

These parodies of the familiar and seemingly “universal” do not so much destroy myth as de-myth-ify and demystify it into stories, fictions. These, in turn, are less “universal” than recognizable and reusable, and the difference is crucial. They can be used and abused. Much of the mythic material is presented ambivalently... Anecdote counteracts the organizing principles of myth. There is a paradoxical desire to show the temptation of the “single” vision as seen in mythic “universality”, sameness, and system and yet to contest it by “the allure of multiplicity”.¹³

The intertextuality of the mythic background of the novel, with elements of Greek tragedy as well as biblical allusions — as in Hoda’s seemingly fated sexual encounter with her son — is also part of the subversive power of *Crackpot*. It opens the way for multiple interpretations, including positive ones, of this and other events, and reinforces the theme of the deceptive nature of surfaces suggested by the paradox of Danile, the seeing blind man, the wise fool.

Hoda’s fascination with, and uses of, her personal myths of origin and destiny are matched by her related interest in words. While this interest is clearly central to the exploration of the nature and significance of the storyteller’s art¹⁴ — one of the major motifs in the novel — it is also another significant connection to Jewish culture, a vehicle for imbuing the novel with yet another layer of intertextuality. A fascination with words can, of course, be seen as the legacy of the tradition surrounding Jewish scripture and scholarship. The notion of the nature of God as well as his sacred commandments being expressed through the Word is part of that legacy, as is the significance of the Talmud as a focal point of Jewish culture and a key to its very survival:

The Talmud became for Jews the only homeland. After the Roman conquest of Jerusalem, they were scattered throughout the Near East countries and Europe... In Christian Europe they too often lived as despised strangers, and persecution kept welling up... The world came to personalize the Talmud which again and again was put on trial by the Church... It was believed that there was some magic in it that ensured Jewish survival. In a sense there was. The Talmud was a world in which Jews could escape from the reality of the ghetto, a world in whose regulations the Temple still stood and the fields of Israel were still under the plow.¹⁵

But Wiseman also connects the text of *Crackpot* with another strand of Jewish tradition, that of Jewish mysticism, or kabbala.

Jewish mysticism, having emerged before the twelfth century and having been shaped by many thinkers from a variety of times and places, is extremely complex and cannot be explored in any depth here. However, since certain elements of kabbala permeate *Crackpot*, an appreciation of its intertextuality can be enhanced by a rudimentary awareness of these elements. Like other forms of mysticism, kabbala “attempts to go beyond or behind traditional and established dogma, in order to satisfy the needs which certain individuals have to experience the Divine directly, without the intercession of an appointed body of ‘fathers’.”¹⁶ Wiseman incorporates this tradition in several ways that are basic to the novel, including structure, theme and style, especially as these three

elements are related to and realized through the natures and preoccupations of the characters, particularly Hoda. Hoda's obsession with words, her paradoxical goodness, and nurturant, elementally female, almost earth-goddess nature, along with the movement of her life's journey toward a heightened, holistic consciousness, make her a kind of embodiment, albeit parodic, of certain kabbalistic ideas. The most obvious link between *Crackpot* and Jewish mysticism is the inscription, on the novel's frontispiece, from kabbalistic legends of creation:

He stored the Divine Light in a Vessel,
but the Vessel, unable to contain the
Holy Radiance, burst, and its shards,
permeated with sparks of the Divine,
scattered through the Universe.

Since, as Wiseman herself has said,¹⁷ these lines provide the metaphor upon which the novel's entire structure is based, they deserve further attention. Wiseman attributes them to Ari, also known as Rabbi Isaac Luria, a sixteenth-century thinker "whose speculations gave birth to modern Kabbalism."¹⁸ Although Luria expanded upon and developed a number of kabbalistic theories, the idea embodied in the above inscription — which is related to a complex set of speculations about the nature of God and the way in which the universe was created — is known as Luria's second principle, "the doctrine of the breaking of the vessels":

The idea has its roots ... in an *Aggadatic* saying that before the creation of this world God had created and destroyed many others which had not been to his liking ... In this doctrine, ... Luria equates the bursting of the vessels with the death of the primordial kings of Edom. This death, Luria adds, came about because of a lack of harmony between the masculine and feminine elements ... With the breaking of the vessels everything suddenly fell into a state of chaos ... Instead of the original plan, therefore, according to which the whole of creation would have been illuminated by the light ..., now only certain portions are lit by the sparks and other portions are left in total darkness. This darkness is the realm of the shells, the evil in creation which would have been redeemed if all had gone as planned. Instead, the sparks which fell into the darkness became ensnared by the shells. This mingling of the sparks led to the present reality where there is no evil which does not contain some good, no good which does not contain some evil.¹⁹

Thus, by connecting her text with Luria's, Wiseman taps into an enormous network of kabbalistic ideas, parodying them on one level by embodying them in characters and situations that are at times comic or grotesque, but simultaneously using them to reinforce her central paradoxical themes. Luria's notion of the inseparability of good and evil, and the related theory that the basic law of the universe is that of opposites,²⁰ reverberate throughout *Crackpot*. The title itself suggests a crazy person, a broken, useless piece of pottery, as well as a vessel that broke only because the light it held — the essence of God — was too powerful for it to contain; in breaking, it "renders outside and inside meaningless"²¹ and allows even the most twisted or evil elements of the universe to be

touched by divine light. In the grotesque characters of Rahel and Danile (the “craziest and most helpless” in the village), deformity and misfortune become the vehicle for creating life out of death. Danile’s stories constantly emphasize that “God only seems to punish” and that “even the plague can be good for somebody,” (p. 14) since it paved the way for the birth of Hoda and their eventual journey to the new world. Uncle Nate’s selfish philanthropy has an ironic outcome. Lazar, like his biblical namesake, literally arises from the dead as a survivor of the holocaust. Finally, there is the paradox of Hoda who, though a prostitute who runs her business out of her home unbeknownst to her father and ultimately has an incestuous relationship with her son, is also in many ways the ideal devoted Jewish daughter, ever mindful of her “daddy’s” welfare, a good cook and frugal housekeeper, kind to the old men at the synagogue. Ever guided by the ethics of “right feeling” she is empathetic to the suffering of others to the point of being capable of achieving a kind of mystical identification with them — “sudden spasms of comprehension of simultaneous worlds.” (p. 194) She constantly pursues deeper meanings and a larger social vision, vowing that “if she were a queen, she’d improve everything for everyone.” (p. 127)

This kind of non-dichotomous metaphysics, drawn from kabbalistic thought and also suggestive of Taoist notions, is profoundly subversive of the dualistic world view so fundamental to the notions of good and evil that pervade Western culture. Closely related to this indirect critique of dichotomous thinking and the exclusivity it fosters, and also present in *Crackpot* through the intertextual references it contains to Jewish mysticism, is a critique of the patriarchal emphasis of that dichotomous vision that sees the creative power of God in exclusively masculine terms. In kabbalistic thought, God contains a feminine principle.²² In certain kabbalistic writings this feminine principle “is presently in a state of exile in the world.” Harmony can only be achieved when there is a union and balance of the opposites, presumably of masculine and feminine as well as of other polarities.²³ Viewing the character and struggles of Hoda in this context gives particular significance to Wiseman’s portrayal of her as a kind of mother-earth figure.

Hoda’s interest in love and harmony, and her giving, nurturing qualities, are apparent in her childhood when, like many second-generation characters in fictions of ethnicity, troubled by both poverty at home and rejection at school, she “just wanted everyone to be nice to everyone else and the lovetime to hurry up and people to come and buy Daddy’s baskets.” When Mrs. Boltholmesup (the teacher whose very name suggests a topsy-turvy imbalance) rejects Hoda’s telling of her life story, Hoda maintains her desire to tell the story to her classmates, despite her initial resentment and hurt, in order to “give it to them as a gift when she didn’t even have to.” (p. 60) Later, as a prostitute, the amply proportioned Hoda is equally generous with her sexual favours, not just to make money but to give a gift of herself in hopes that she will be loved in return, and

because she is (quite literally) an enormously sexual being, capable of enjoying sexual activity to the full.

As one whose ethics are based on "right feeling" rather than pure rationality, Hoda wonders "why ... they say it [sex] was bad when it made you feel so good? Maybe because they weren't as fat as she was they didn't have room for as many good feelings all over them." (p. 77) Hoda's special connection to the earth, sexual pleasure and fertility is particularly apparent soon after she has begun her life of precocious, though somehow innocent, sexual activity.²⁴ Significantly the scene occurs in the autumn, the time of harvest as well as of death and reckoning, near a graveyard (a paradoxical symbol of life since the metaphysical vision presented in *Crackpot* is a cyclical one that unites opposites):

Between the public park and the Anglican graveyard, down toward the river, there was a quiet road with deep ditches beside it and high bushes and old trees. No one had bothered to clear away the autumn leaves here. Here ... Hoda ate the charred black spuds, smelling them deeply, tossing them from hand to hand till they cooled off, smelling and licking her fingers afterwards. And then she lay on her back on a pile of leaves in the ditch with her dress rolled up and the leaves crunching as she squirmed and sank deeper, as boy after boy rolled on her while his buddies raked the embers for the last few spuds, and in between boys she lay watching the early evening stars and smelling the smoking leaves and sucking the black burnt potato peel-leavings off her lower lip and resting and then she took the boys again and she couldn't help it, she laughed and laughed... If only Indian summer would last forever... (p. 114)

Hoda's connection with the sexual elements of the life force is also emphasized in her obsession with attending weddings. Though almost never officially invited she eventually comes to be expected, becoming almost a part of the ritual, projecting a kind of beauty and energy when after the ceremony, "with dance enough in her for two," (p. 124) she moves gracefully and seductively around the room, attracting customers who are rejuvenated by their encounters with her outside the hall. Hoda too, at times, sees herself as a kind of love goddess, rationalizing that

There was nothing wrong with being a whore and being on hand when they wanted you; for your allotted moments you were most precious, like a secret idol in a religious rite, yeh, a private ritual men performed to insure their public well being. That was Hoda all right, one of those big, fat idols, all smiles and warm tummy rolls. (p. 218)

However, Hoda's connection with the life force is also a maternal one; indeed, she unites sexuality and maternity in a way that is strikingly different from the way these subjects are commonly treated by the Western (male?) literary imagination.²⁵ Though once again Wiseman's portrayal of Hoda, as an earth goddess who unites sexuality and maternity, is parodic, it also draws on the kabbalistic tradition that includes a female principle of creativity at the centre of its cosmology. The parodic treatment of Jewish motherhood, which also draws on stereotypes from Yiddish literature and popular culture, is

apparent in Hoda's maternal manner with the teenaged boys that she initiates into the world of sexuality, and particularly in her encounter with her son. When she suddenly realizes who he is, Hoda is instantly maternal:

"why should a kid like you, a nice clean kid, come to a ... to someone like me?" I suddenly thought, "He shouldn't be here. This kid's not like the rest of them ... I know class when I see it. I could tell even by the way you acted that something inside of you was against it all the time, because deep down you knew there was something better in store for you in life." It came pouring out of her, a passion of argument, logical, earnest, desperate, and made more effective by the fact that she was still kneeling on the mattress, her robe tightly bound about her massiveness, her face distraught, contrite... "You see," said Hoda, encouraged, "I'm way too old for you ... David." She said the name tentatively. "I'm old enough to be your mother ... your mother wouldn't like it if you..." (pp. 244-45)²⁶

Finally realizing that she cannot rebuff David's advances without telling him the truth, and understanding that to do so could be irreparably damaging, Hoda, bizarrely maternal, gives him the only gift she can, though she suffers great agony in doing so.

Wiseman connects Hoda's act both with Luria's image of the cracked vessel and with earth mother imagery:

Hoda had spread herself out before him like the whole world in miniature... Into how many pieces does one break and still bother to count the pieces?... Enough that he was fragile and she held him tenderly, and tried in the only way she knew how to make up for all the harm she had done. (p. 249)

But Hoda refuses to allow her agony over this incident to break her and drive her into madness, turning her into a "crackpot" in that sense. Paradoxically, it is her maternal nature — the very thing that motivated her acquiescence to the unsuspecting David — that saves her, turning her into a "survivor" on whom others can count for nurturance:

That was her greatest fear, that she might become like one of those mad ones in the stories, who wander the streets, objects of stones and hoots and barking dogs, or get locked behind big red brick walls... What of Daddy then? And the boy?... Oh no! you don't catch me going bugs! And she guarded herself against the living presence of madness. (p. 256)

Similarly, Hoda's maternal qualities are highlighted, as well as joined with her sexuality, in her relationship with Lazar, also a survivor, whom she eventually marries:

She nuzzled into him with elephantine coyness. What would it [marriage] be like? Would she be able to please him? Would she be able to mediate between him and his dead?... 'I will help you, I will,' she vowed silently, fervently, and felt her spirit gather itself up, her soul preparing to heave itself into the task. (p. 298)

The other secrets to Hoda's survival, again closely related to the kabbalistic notion that good and evil are inseparable, and to the related portrayal of Hoda as an elemental and holistic mother earth figure, are her acceptance of imperfection and her connection with, and eventual insight into, the centrality of process in

the universal scheme of things. Even as a child, Hoda is accepting of imperfections in herself and others, in striking contrast to another fictional child of Winnipeg's north-end immigrant ghetto, the self-absorbed and driven Sandor Hunyadi in John Marlyn's *Under the Ribs of Death*. She is devoted to her blind father and hunchbacked mother, unembarrassed by their deformities and their poverty. She is similarly forgiving of her teachers, and later of her many customers. Indeed, as she matures in her profession, she becomes a kind of mother confessor, a balm of comfort to her world-weary and imperfect clients:

"Oh God, something else," when yet another revealed to her his private source of anguish and shame. Sometimes they were indeed horrible deformities of the human vessel, and only her overwhelming awareness of suffering and need had prevented her repulsion. But the strange thing was, so often they were such little things, such minor cracks and chips and variations in the human design on which her clients concentrated as much unhappiness as did the real possessors of the grossest deformities. In the minutest flaw men divined perfection withheld, and saw themselves cast down. (p. 288)

Hoda also learns something about the role of nurturer and comforter in these encounters — that it often precludes her from receiving such sustenance herself:

At first Hoda had tried to point out to them that they weren't nearly as badly off as she was. Look how fat she was and she'd been that way all her life and she couldn't help it, and people laughing at her, and them being poor, and her mother dying and her daddy being blind; but that was not what they wanted. They knew all that, and they didn't come to hear her troubles. So she had gradually learned never to draw attention while she was paying attention, never to demand comfort while she was giving comfort. (p. 288)

Hoda learns to live without this sustenance, eventually, after the early pain of realization that nobody really wanted to know her,

taking ... pride that nobody did know her, not really, not who she was, underneath, not nearly as well as she knew them, even though they talked about her and laughed at her and looked down on her. She wouldn't give them away, either. She didn't have to live off their weaknesses. (p. 288)

This growing self-knowledge and self-sufficiency eventually enable her to mature into an independent and capable businesswoman, albeit in a field of endeavour that violates propriety. However, her socially deviant sexual behaviour combines with and enhances her acceptance of imperfection, paradoxically enhancing her power as a nurturing, comforting earth mother. But this power of empathy and self-restraint, and her marginality — as immigrant Jew and prostitute — prevent her from being fully known in any sense but the sexual.

That Hoda is not wholly known is central to the novel's structure which, informed by the kabbalistic metaphor of the broken vessel, is also built on Hoda's journey toward being known and appreciated, as well as her related evolution toward a full, circular self-knowledge of who she is, and a reconciliation of her past, present and future. When a child in school, though "knowing

herself to be lovable, but in this place unloved and misjudged" (p.33) Hoda, as a Jew and as a somewhat unkempt fat girl is seen, from the middle-class Anglo-Canadian perspective, as disturbing and uncouth, one of a growing number of "fat presences with loud voices and demanding eyes." (p. 96) On one level this scene has much in common with similar depictions of culture clash in other fictions of ethnicity, but it also differs significantly, since most of the latter, such as Marlyn's *Under the Ribs of Death*, Fredelle Maynard's *Raisins and Almonds*, or Luigi Barzini's *The Italians*,²⁷ are mimetic, in the tradition of social realism. *Crackpot*, imbued as it is with many layers of mythical, mystical and literary allusion, occupies a literary space that is unabashedly larger than life, thereby infusing the familiar stresses of immigrant experience with heightened significance. For example, employing the mythic mode, Wiseman uses the kabbalistic metaphor of scattered divine light, projected through the eyes,²⁸ to suggest Hoda's goodness and the intensity of her desire to "reveal herself at last" (p. 92) by telling her family's story to her class, and to suggest Miss Boltholmsup's failure (ironic, since she represents the *apparent* forces of good) to recognize Hoda's nature:

She [Hoda] addressed herself directly to Miss Boltholmsup now, eyes on her eyes, words aimed at her ears, watching for the circuit to be completed that would tell her that teacher heard and truly understood, searching for the light that would go on in her eyes, and stay on, shooting rays of sympathy and wonder. It was hard, though, to be sure if those were lights in somebody's eyes when you were staring at them... She lost the connection with Miss Boltholmsup's eyes ... [who] heard these assertions with hardly more astonishment than she already felt. Her momentary weakness, the paralysis of will which had locked her eyes in baffling parody of communication with those of the fat girl ... had alerted her to danger... She risked a quick glance at the speaker, who had paused briefly, and experienced a sinking sensation as her eyes were snared once again in Hoda's ardent orbs of light. Captured. But no longer helpless, no; ... Miss Boltholmsup steeled her eyes and stared hard, trying to will a warning. (pp. 95-97)

As a promiscuous adolescent, Hoda continues to "[watch] for the circuit" of communication "to be completed," to hope to be able to tell her own story and to be seen for what she is. This twofold desire, another common theme in fictions of ethnicity²⁹ — though again its significance is heightened by *Crackpot*'s mythic mode — is behind her fascination with her father's stories, with words and their relationship to various versions of reality ("Why was it that words never told you exactly what was being said?") (p. 292), and with her fantasy of someday being recognized by the Prince of Wales as the queen he has been looking for:

The Prince of Wales would know who was born to become his Queen. And he wasn't the only one who would know what she was really like, under the spell of fat she couldn't escape and sloppiness she couldn't control, like the Frog Princess and Beauty and the Beast and the Ugly Duckling and Cinderella too. All kinds of girls who thought they were the fairest of them all would get a surprise some day, when the young prince who was ripening in his long-chinned, pale-eyed, nondescript, special kind of noble beauty would come from over the seas and not even notice them at all. (p. 36)

Hoda feels she is connected to the larger, positive life forces in the universe, and though she cannot express this in rational terms, she is conscious "of the boundless good will that was ready to flow in the universe, and of herself as a direct tap to the source, just waiting to be turned on."³⁰ She sees the mistaken judgements of others as the obstacle to "become[ing] her true self." (p. 89) And, although Hoda outgrows the adolescent sensibility expressed in her fantasies about the Prince of Wales, even as a seasoned prostitute she continues to project, in a variety of ways, the desire to become fully herself by understanding the meaning, and reconciling the events of her life. It is this movement toward becoming fully herself that provides, in conjunction with Luria's metaphor, the structural framework of the novel:

though now she had a proper contempt for silly, impractical, childish fantasies, Hoda still believed that in the endless folds of time that were yet to unwrinkle before her, were hidden all the correct solutions to all her problems, and she promised herself that she would make good all her errors, the minute the proper shape of her destiny was revealed to her. (p. 166)

Despite her faith in a positive evolutionary process, as evidenced, for example, by her firm but humanized commitment to radical politics and to "the revolution," Hoda at times experiences painful periods of disequilibrium, as when after the birth of Pipick she becomes obsessed with moving backward: "She, who had experienced at times an electrifying sense of the unity of beings, now felt the jagged child of dislocation, of separation even of herself from herself." (p. 220) It is only her special affinity with, and growing insight into, the cosmological centrality of process that ultimately prevents her from being drawn backward into a guilt-ridden, one-dimensional past, and enables her to both understand and avoid the fate of Lot's wife who, looking back, "simply became what she had been, concentrated essence, pillar of tears" (p. 246), or the fate of her double, Mrs. Limprig, who commits suicide.

Similarly, the apparently bizarre and unbalanced obsession with funerals and graveyards she develops in middle age (an appropriate parallel to her youthful obsession with weddings), rather than leading her into a dead end becomes a vehicle for uniting the opposite elements within her, drawing on her own personal mythology as well as on universal human experience. In a graveyard scene, set in the spring, which Wiseman constructs as a kind of mirror image of the fall scene in which the youthful Hoda had made love to an entire gang of boys, Hoda sees no contradiction between her self-appointed role of crying at every graveside and her cheerful, spangled presence at the *kibitzarnia*, as Limpy Letz's hostess/madame/business partner:

Time was when she had danced at every wedding. Limpy could still remember those days. Now she followed the funerals... Standing there, trying to conjure up the dead, she remembered all kinds of things, old sorrows and old grievances, and old pleasures too, strands of her unravelled self inextricably intertwined in the strands of those dead selves, and the way she thought of them now, yearning them back into existence, it hardly seemed as if there was any difference between old

pleasure and old sorrow, so perfect were the proportions of grief and pleasure in the embalming fluid of her nostalgia... Morbid? How could she explain to Limpy that what she sought and sometimes found out there was the feeling of her own aliveness, an in-spite-of-herself accountable aliveness that the spangled dresses and the black market chocolate bars and the plaudits of her admirers and the knowledge that she was a woman of taste and sophistication and something of a success in the world at last had not, somehow been able to make her feel. (pp. 277-80)

In the last pages of the novel this process, though never complete, has enabled Hoda to at last become who she is, through being truly seen and appreciated by Lazar and through her own full apprehension of the shape and meaning — the unity — of the disparate elements of her nature and her experience, which enable her, like Lazar, to move beyond being merely a victim of the forces and events that have shaped her life. The words spoken by David in Hoda's dream vision at the end of the novel, "Backwards ... she occupies her past; she inhabits her life" (p. 300) is not so much a testimony to Hoda's traditionalism³¹ as to her having at last fused the events of her past and present into a process that has given her life shape and meaning. She "occupies her past" from the present, which at last enables her to see her future clearly, a future that includes the child of her past and the yet unborn child of her future who may bear her father's name. The novel's last paragraph, which clearly shows her taking credit for what she has become, expresses the vigour and optimism Hoda draws from this syncretic vision, one that at last brings her inside the circle of her own life, her own family, her own community:

Hoda curtseyed deep, arose. With a magnanimous gesture she drew the magic circle around them, showing all she knew. Soon, she promised extravagantly, in the ardour of her vision, they would all be stirring the muddy waters in the brimming pot together. (p. 300)

Wiseman's vision is too complex, her artistry too subtle to enable one to read *Crackpot* as a kabbalistic allegory. One can nevertheless see in Hoda's journey a concrete embodiment of certain kabbalistic notions of cosmic process — particularly the ultimate union of opposites, which is dependent on the redemption of all souls, a redemption that is a human, not a divine responsibility:

The work of redemption is the sole responsibility of man. To achieve it he must not only accept the reality of evil, but must penetrate it for meaning... The thing to be transformed is man himself. What is to be achieved by this act is the raising and illumination of the aboriginal and instinctual sphere of his nature, a solidification of his emotional and instinctual range into a diamond-body formed by the marriage of all opposites contained within him.³²

Interestingly, these notions also connect Hoda with a "female aesthetic"³³ — together they present a powerful alternative vision to the assumptions that underlie the social world, particularly outside the Jewish ghetto, in which Hoda must find her place.

This idea of process, and its relation to Hoda's becoming who she is infuses not only the novel's structure, but also its imagery. Reinforcing the primary

image of the breaking of the vessels from the kabbalistic legends of creation are the recurring images of craft and artistry, which shift the focus from divine to human creativity and suggest an interplay between the two. The images that emerge from blind Danile's basket weaving provide an intertextual connection, not only to Jewish mysticism, but also to Greek mythology and to other literary texts, such as Dickens's *A Tale of Two Cities*, which suggest a connection between the act of weaving (or knitting) and human fate, and endow the weaver with a kind of mystical power.

When he first considers the possibilities of becoming a basket weaver, Danile, with his characteristic flare for telling a story, predicts that his

baskets will be so finely made, so strong, so perfectly woven that people will speak of them with wonder ... they'll say 'There's something magical about them. They are the first authentic bottomless baskets. Why, they could contain the entire universe without straining a fibre. Not only that, they'll even hold water.' (p. 41)

Although Wiseman presents Danile parodically, and injects her caricature of classic weaving figures with Yiddish humour, the images of his artistry are clearly connected with cosmic process and with Hoda's movement toward a unifying vision of the shape and meaning of her life. The most striking example of this connection occurs when the young Hoda asks her father when their life will improve. Danile, who has begun to find himself through his artistry and "was not surprised that the inner pattern of things was revealing itself to him now that he had found his own place again," responds with an analogy:

"Where is the shape of a basket hidden before it is completed? In its maker's fingers? In his head? In the straw? To know the shape of a basket one must wait till it is completed." (p. 88)

Later, Hoda uses the same image when she talks about redeeming her mistakes, "the minute the proper shape of her destiny was revealed to her." (p. 166)

Through Hoda's fascination with both the power and limitations of words, Wiseman also links the art of weaving to that of storytelling, again suggesting the relationship between the latter and destiny, both individual and collective. The link is made explicit when Hoda, disturbed by a discrepancy between her own and her father's version of past events, describes how the limitations of words, and one's skill with them, puts one at their mercy in any attempt to see or express the shape of one's life through them:

Word to word, sentence to sentence, whether you knew them to be false or felt them to be true, spun out across an abyss, with you swinging helplessly from them, blindly spinning and patching and criss-crossing the net that was to catch and hold the shape of the darkness in which your life was forming, but instead was itself contained by the chasm. (p. 175)

Although Hoda repeatedly returns to her father's stories — her myths of origin — for insight and comfort, and is herself a storyteller, infamous at city hall for the tales she weaves to pass the time while she waits to be tested for venereal

disease, she questions the ability of words to encapsulate reality precisely because they are materials used by an artisan to conceal as well as to reveal. The story they create is an artifice reflecting the limitations of its maker:

Every person you talked to hauled out his own favourite strands and snippets of experience, even where they weren't even relevant, and was passionately faithful to whatever his own personal blend of knowledge and misinformation was, that felt to him like the truth... (p. 214)

She had always enjoyed fooling around with sayings and slogans; you could camouflage enormous distances with words. In fact, if you fooled around with them long enough, you got so you couldn't believe a thing they said. (p. 270)

While the postmodernist critic would undoubtedly find Wiseman's vision of the storyteller's art particularly congenial, and it could indeed be read as a postmodern vision, it is also drawn from Jewish culture — from the talmudic tradition of biblical scholarship discussed earlier, and from Jewish mysticism. Although the mystical significance of words and letters in certain Jewish traditions is far too complex to discuss in detail here, one's appreciation for Wiseman's complex treatment of the language and storytelling motif in *Crackpot* can be enhanced by understanding that there are strands of Jewish tradition that connect the Hebrew alphabet — the letters contained in the Talmud — with creation. Baal Shem Tov, founder of the Hasidic movement in Poland and Russia, "proposed that the *Torah* existed originally as an incoherent jumble of letters and that the phrases, sentences, words, sections and chapters which now exist came into existence at the time that the events described took place." Baal Shem Tov's assertion that "if any of the events which took place had been different, the written account would be different"³⁴ suggests a profound reverence for the power of words, one that is also forcefully expressed in the related kabbalistic notion that the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet comprise the foundation of all things, and that "the creation of the cosmos is the result of the creation of language. The alphabet is the instrument of creation itself."³⁵

Wiseman's text incorporates such conjectures, through images related to artistry, language and storytelling, suggesting that a precarious blend of fatalism and free will — itself a kind of union of opposites — underlies the process at work in the *essential* world (that is, the world *behind* appearances) that Hoda, through her special insight, inhabits. Has the story of Hoda's life already been written, is its shape already determined? Does she merely discover it or does she create it? The novel suggests a mystical relationship between fate and action and provides textual links to a variety of interpretations, but, not surprisingly, no clearcut answer.

Images of natural process, particularly images of birth and growth, intertwined with those of artistry, are central to this exploration. For example, Hoda's being wedged beneath her bed the night her mother dies, and her having to be pulled out, is suggestive of her being born into a new phase of her life; the

gestation and birth of Pipick, in which Hoda participates only passively, is also another rebirth for her; she is "borne" along on the tide of a process she literally does not understand and cannot control. Uncontrollable processes of growth also infuse *Crackpot*, such as the growth of the tumour that eventually kills Rahel, and the growth of the tree at the front of their house, whose roots set the verandah askew. That Hoda and her family have a special affinity with such seemingly negative natural processes is suggested by their choosing the run-down house, and by Danile's observation about creative forces:

To Rahel and Danile the very decrepit condition of the house was a positive virtue. Rent was cheap for a place where the tree roots had grown under the verandah and were year by year heaving it more eccentrically askew... 'You understand, Hodaleh,' he told his daughter, 'how living things must stand before secondary creation. A porch is a very fine thing, but can it gainsay a tree?' (p. 25)

Indeed, the house is another image that echoes and reinforces the novel's central metaphor of the cracked vessel and the scattering of good among evil, and also symbolizes Hoda.³⁶ Both brothel and home, made pleasant by Hoda's nurturance and Danile's basket artistry, the house, like Hoda, cannot escape cosmological processes and is perpetually "under repair." (p. 215) Nevertheless, also like Hoda, in this process the house unites opposites, providing yet another image that connects Wiseman's text with several strands of Jewish tradition, at whose core is the evolving relationship between unity and diversity, continuity and change.³⁷

Another tradition upon which Wiseman draws in *Crackpot* is modern Yiddish literature. Emerging in Europe in the second half of the nineteenth century, both as a reaction to and a shaper of the changes in Jewish identity that were occurring as Jews emerged from isolation into the modern world,³⁸ Yiddish literature is a natural, perhaps inevitable source for the Canadian Jewish writer exploring the immigrant experience, since the latter inevitably generates a crisis of identity and was, indeed, a central feature of the social changes to which Yiddish writers were responding. Although the subject of Yiddish literature and its influence on Adele Wiseman is far too complex to explore fully here, noting its presence in *Crackpot* is important since it clearly illustrates the novel's many-layered texture and its synthetic power.

Perhaps the most striking connection to the Yiddish literary tradition in Wiseman's text is the characterization of Danile and Rahel who, as well as embodying certain kabbalistic notions, are parodic variations on Sholom Aleichem's comic portrayal of the marriage between a practical woman and an impractical man.³⁹ Indeed, one could see their deformities as symbols of these qualities: Rahel's back humped from carrying the mundane burdens of the world; Danile's eyes blind to the world of burdens she shoulders. Perhaps the best example of Wiseman's tapping of these character types occurs when Rahel, weary from supporting her family by "crawling on her knees" to clean other

women's houses, asks Danile what price he is asking for the baskets he has just learned to make:

"You say you have orders for baskets from every one of them?" asked Rahel. "How much are you going to charge them?" "How do you mean, charge them?" said Danile, puzzled. "For the baskets you're going to make for them." "I can't charge them," Danile explained. "They're presents. For my friends. When could I ever afford to give gifts to my friends before? And ... and ... besides, it was right in the synagogue. They were admiring my work. I can't do business on holy ground." "But Danile ... what about making a living?" Rahel interrupted.

The Yiddish literary tradition is also present in *Crackpot* in its comic tone, which incorporates elements of irony and the burlesque, as when Danile infuses ironic, self-effacing humour into his sensitive rendering of the story of his marriage to Rahel:

"It was a time for desperate measures... So the beautiful ones decided that now was the time to marry off such a pair and lift the curse of the plague and the threat of the pogrom from our heads. But whom to chose? There was a shortage of idiots in our village that year." (p. 17)

On one level, the entire novel could be read as a comic burlesque of the Jewish immigrant experience, its characters grotesque caricatures, their origins and current circumstances absurd and overdrawn. But also connecting *Crackpot* to the Yiddish literary tradition is the way in which this comic tone exists alongside one of plaintive yearning for people and places lost, for home. This quality is evident in the intensity of Danile's combined joy and sadness in coming to the new world and the energy he devotes to pondering the meaning of their journey; in the young Hoda's yearning to be accepted by her classmates and teachers, in her lifelong obsession with her story of origins, and with finding a psychic space where she is *within* the circle and where the contradictions of her life can be reconciled.

It is this underlying search for a home and for a reconciliation of polarities which, as well as linking the novel with specifically Jewish traditions, also connects it with other Canadian fictions of immigration and ethnicity, whose central fantasy, like the one developed in *Crackpot*, though through various other cultural vehicles and literary techniques, is one that, like the shattering of vessels, renders inside and outside meaningless, and illuminates a mystical balance that affirms the universal while celebrating the unique. In telling Hoda's story, Wiseman provides not only a profound critique of the assumptions that work against achieving this balance, but also the vision required to create it.

NOTES

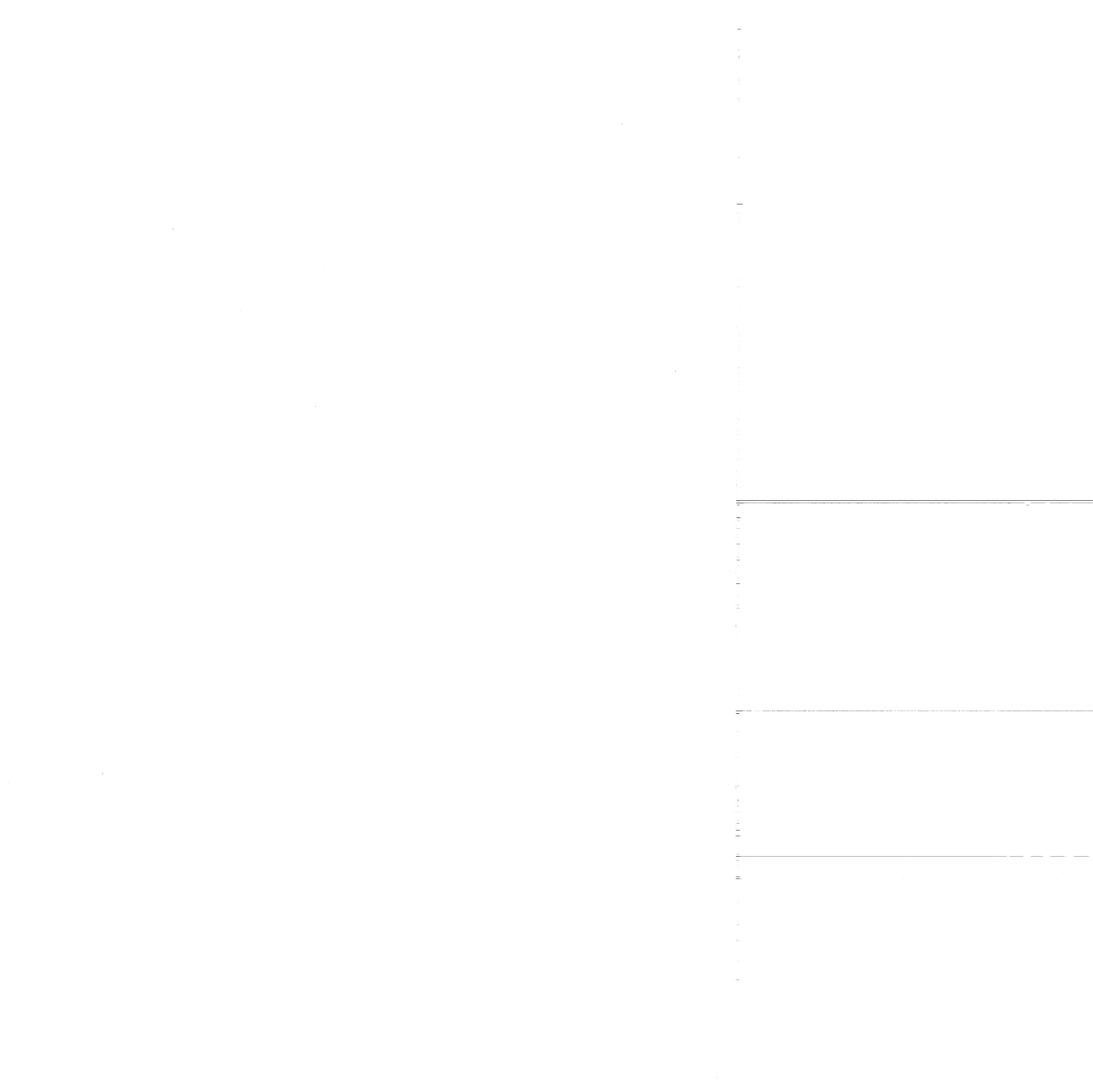
The author is particularly grateful to Dr. R.T. Harrison of the University of Alberta for his helpful discussion of an earlier draft of this article.

1. See Robert Kroetsch, "The Grammar of Silence: Narrative Patterns in Ethnic Writing," *Canadian Literature* 106 (Fall 1985): 65; and k.o. kanne, "When is Art Subversive? When

- Does Politics Subvert Art?," in Ann Dybikowski, et. al., eds., *In the Feminine: Women and Words* (Edmonton: Longspoon Press, 1983), 47.
2. Michael Greenstein, *Adele Wiseman and Her Works* (Toronto: ECW Press, 1984), 4.
 3. For an interesting discussion of the complex influences of Jewish culture on A.M. Klein's artistic consciousness, see Miriam Waddington, *A.M. Klein: Studies in Canadian Literature* (Toronto: Copp Clark, 1970).
 4. Greenstein, *Adele Wiseman*, 5.
 5. As quoted in Linda Hutcheon, *The Canadian Postmodern: A Study of Contemporary English-Canadian Fiction* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1988), 87. Bloom is also quoted in Annette Kolodney, "A Map for Rereading, Gender and the Interpretation of Literary Texts," in Elaine Showalter, ed., *The New Feminist Criticism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985), 46.
 6. Adele Wiseman, *Crackpot* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd., 1974), 7. All further references will appear in parentheses in the text.
 7. See Elaine Showalter, *A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists from Bronte to Lessing* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1977), particularly chapter 11, "Beyond the Female Aesthetic," for an interesting discussion of the problem inevitably raised by such a focus, i.e. on "an aesthetic that champion(s) the feminine consciousness and assert(s) its superiority to the public, rationalist masculine world. At the same time that it promised women an alternative source of experience and self-esteem, however, the female aesthetic uncannily legitimized all the old stereotypes..." (p. 298). My reading of *Crackpot* sees Wiseman not as having "legitimized ... old stereotypes," about the nature of women but as having seriously challenged them, as well as masculine hegemony by asserting the positive power and legitimacy of what might be called the female vision or "female aesthetic" at a profound, metaphysical level.
 8. See Linda Hutcheon, "'Shape Shifters': Canadian Women Writers and the Tradition," in *The Canadian Postmodern* for an interesting discussion of the ways in which feminist and post modernist literature and theory have influenced one another, and the ways in which Canadian women writers have "re-shaped" genre and tradition.
 9. See, for example, the brief yet lucid overview of this tradition in "The Law of Judaism," *The World's Great Religions* (New York: Time Life Books, 1963), 147-78.
 10. See Michael A. Fishbane, *Judaism* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987), for a scholarly yet accessible discussion of the major features of Jewish tradition. Particularly interesting in this context is the relationship he points out between the Torah and the continual study and reinterpretation of it: "every student of the Law renews through interpretation the first giving of the Torah at Sinai and extends that revelation into new historical circumstances." (p. 15)
 11. For an insightful discussion of the nature of parody, and the way in which it is both within and without the tradition it taps into, "as compromised as it is potentially revolutionary," see Hutcheon, "'Shape Shifters,'" 110-11.
 12. Smaro Kamboureli, in "Dialogue with the Other: The Use of Myth in Canadian Women's Poetry," in Dybikowski, *In the Feminine*, argues that one of the striking commonalities among Canadian women poets is "their evocative and connotative use of myth," a use that often "deconstructs" myths that "have concealed at the expense of the feminine self," 107-8. This comment could also be applied to Adele Wiseman's use of myth.

13. Hutcheon, "'Shape Shifters'," 164-65. Although Hutcheon is discussing the work of Robert Kroetsch as particularly representative of postmodernism, her comments seem to me particularly relevant to Wiseman's use of myth in *Crackpot*. The author being quoted in the last line is Robert Lecker, *Robert Kroetsch* (Boston: Twayne, 1986).
14. Greenstein, *Adele Wiseman*, 22, correctly points out that *Crackpot* is very much a novel about the writer's craft.
15. *The World's Great Religions*, 158-59.
16. Charles Ponce, *Kabbalah* (San Francisco: Straight Arrow Books, 1973), 13; also see Fishbane, *Judaism*, 72-73.
17. For an interesting interview with Wiseman about her work, in which she discusses the structural significance of the metaphor in this kabbalistic inscription, see Roslyn Belkin, "The Consciousness of a Jewish Artist: An Interview with Adele Wiseman," *Journal of Canadian Fiction* (1981): 148-76.
18. Ponce, *Kabbalah*, 79.
19. *Ibid.*, 81-82.
20. *Ibid.*, 227; see also Fishbane, *Judaism*, 72.
21. See Greenstein, *Adele Wiseman*, 24. I have quoted his phrase, though the point he is making is not the same as mine.
22. Ponce, *Kabbalah*, 28.
23. *Ibid.*, 228; Fishbane, *Judaism*, 72.
24. Though I was struck by Hoda's essential innocence as a promiscuous adolescent before reading an interview with the author, it is interesting that Wiseman makes the same point. See Belkin, "The Consciousness of a Jewish Artist," 163.
25. For the classic discussions of literary treatment of elemental female qualities, see Robert Graves, *Mammon and the Black Goddess* (New York: Doubleday, 1965), and *The White Goddess* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1966).
26. Another excellent example of the way Wiseman parodies stereotypes about Jewish motherhood occurs on p. 263 when Hoda, dreaming that maybe someday she and her father and David could become friends, hits upon the idea that "It would be ideal for David to become a doctor because then Daddy could become his patient and he could take care of Daddy's bronchial attacks, and they could get to know each other... Perhaps she could even steer him on to becoming Uncle's doctor and taking care of his strokes." Again, the parody, while making something of a comic figure of Hoda, also shows her values to be more sound than many "legitimate" mothers who might push their sons into becoming doctors simply to enhance their own status.
27. John Marlyn, *Under the Ribs of Death* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1971); Fredelle Maynard, *Raisins and Almonds* (Toronto: Doubleday, 1972); Luigi Barzini, *The Italians* (1964; New York: Atheneum, 1981).
28. The image of divine energy or light being passed through the eyes of is a recurring one in Kabbalistic legends of creation. See, for example, Ponce, *Kabbalah*, 80, which, in the context of explaining the writings of Luria, discusses the story of Adam Kadmon, the primordial man through whose eyes passed the divine light that broke the vessels.
29. For a discussion of the theme of "breaking the silence," in Italian-Canadian writing, see

- Joseph Pivato, "Italian-Canadian Women Writers Recall History," *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 18, no. 1 (1986); also Pivato's *Contrasts, Comparative Essays in Italian Canadian Writing* (Montréal: Guernica, 1985). See also T. Palmer "Mythologizing the Journey to and from Otherness," in Valeria Lerda, ed., *From Melting Pot to Multiculturalism: The Evolution of Ethnic Relations in the United States and Canada* (Rome: Bulzoni editore, 1990), 91-113.
30. Although the sexual pun here seems part of Wiseman's parodic, comic treatment of Hoda, it also has a serious significance, suggesting once again ways of knowing other than the purely rational, once again connecting Wiseman's text to kabbalism, which emphasizes the value of mystical, orgiastic experience and asserts that "it is emotional intensity, the heat of passion, which welds the opposites together." (Ponce, *Kabbalah*, 231)
 31. See Greenstein, *Adele Wiseman*, 19.
 32. Ponce, *Kabbalah*, 230-31.
 33. Showalter, *A Literature of Their Own*, 298.
 34. Ponce, *Kabbalah*, 28.
 35. *Ibid.*, 41.
 36. See Dick Harrison, *Unnamed Country: The Struggle for a Canadian Prairie Fiction* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1977), particularly chapter 5, "Archetypes of Ruin," for an interesting discussion of the significance of houses in prairie fiction.
 37. Fishbane, *Judaism*, 12.
 38. For an interesting discussion of Yiddish writers in Canada, and the tradition to which they belong, see Seymour Levitan, "Canadian Yiddish Writers," in Jars Balan, ed., *Identifications, Ethnicity and the Writer in Canada* (Edmonton: The Canadian Institute for Ukrainian Studies, 1982), 116-34; and also for a discussion of the theme of wandering and loss in the poetry of Yiddish writers, particularly Melech Ravitch and Rochl Korn.
 39. *Ibid.*, 117.



Book Reviews

Telecommunications in Canada, by Robert E. Babe. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990. Pp. 360.

In 1988 one of Bell Canada's vice-presidents gave a speech which might have been titled "Why Big is Beautiful." If Canada wanted to compete in the emerging global economy, he argued, it had to encourage size, diversification, and financial strength. Bell Canada had done its part for the national interest by creating a corporate empire spanning the globe. Most familiar to Canadians as Canada's largest telephone utility, Bell Canada – Enterprises (BCE) was, in 1988, the country's largest and most profitable corporation. It is the owner of the largest pipeline company and the largest printing conglomerate in the country. It controls Northern Telecom, a telecommunications equipment manufacturer which supplies over 70 percent of the switches used by all telephone companies in Canada and has used its domestic base (including its special relationship with the parent company, Bell Canada) to launch a successful foray into the turbulent and competitive international telecommunications equipment market. This global empire was established by a company which has been under government regulation since 1906. Contrary to the popular wisdom that regulation represents a government constraint on corporate freedom designed to protect "the public interest," Bell Canada has been successful in using (and some would say abusing) regulation to achieve its expansionary aims and telephone subscribers have in some sense been transformed into the involuntary underwriters of its corporate ambitions.

There are other historical studies of Canada's telephone industry available, but none is as thorough and richly documented as this book. In a highly perceptive manner Babe shows how technology, economics, business policy, and politics have interacted to produce telecommunications policies that have oscillated between competition and monopoly. Ten chapters deal directly with the telephone sector. Other chapters deal with the converging, and sometimes reconverging, technologies of telegraphs, broadcasting, cable television, satellites, computers, and electronic publishing.

Too much of current policy thinking in telecommunications is shrouded in misconceptions, even myths, Babe argues. Five such myths are identified. The first is that Canada exists as a country because of the communications revolution. While there are examples of the purposeful use of communications for nation building, these should not divert attention from the fact that in terms of ownership and content the various sectors have been mainly foreign dominated. As a cable consultant quipped, "I am just the plumber who puts the pipes together, I don't care what people flush down them." Despite nationalist

rhetoric, the tendency has been to deploy communication media in the direction of continental integration.

Somewhat paradoxically, the second myth involves the ideas of technological dependence and technological determinism. In this view, Canada cannot avoid being swept along by wider technological forces, regardless of the cultural, economic, and political consequences. Babe argues that these twin doctrines have slipped into official policy discourse and have been used as a "mythic cover up" for the controllers of technology to exercise power over others. Instead of technological inevitability we should look for more human forces and value choices which lie beneath the technical veneer of telecommunications debates.

The third myth holds that emerging technologies are blurring the boundaries among industries and in the process are breaking down the so-called natural monopoly established through government ownership in some provinces and regulation in others. Babe agrees that some convergence among the communications industries is taking place and that it is challenging existing policy and regulatory frameworks but, just as corporate power and government policy combined in the past to produce deliberate segregation, the two forces can work in the future to encourage reconvergence and the perpetuation of monopoly power.

The fourth myth involves the faith that regulation serves to protect consumers against the potential abuses of monopoly power. The author does not say outright that Bell Canada successfully "captured" the regulatory body set up to control it; instead he concludes more cautiously that "Canada's major telephone company has had quite an easy time of it, being subjected only sporadically to effective regulation." (p. 19) If Babe had started from the assumption that all along regulation was intended more to serve corporate development goals than to be a policing operation, he might well have concluded that it was highly successful.

A final myth maintains that natural economic forces and emerging technologies will break up monopolies and usher in a new era of free-wheeling competition and consumer choice. Not likely, argues Babe. It is more likely that new forms of regulation and other types of government intervention will be crucial in determining the roles of different players in the communications game.

Babe is right to challenge the conventional assumption that "invention is the mother of necessity," that policy makers have no choice but to go with the technological flow. However, it would have been helpful for the reader to know more precisely, both in the past and in the present, what options were open to policy makers in light of changing technology. For example, is there any way that governments today could preserve the existing regulatory framework when technology empowers large corporations to establish their own private telecom-

munications networks or route their traffic through the United States? What are the policy choices open to governments over the next ten years when the arrival of fibre optics in the home will potentially allow broadcasters to become telephone companies and vice versa? Emerging technologies have the power to create winners and losers and this means that governments cannot abdicate their responsibilities, but the most desirable policy directions are far from clear.

The bulk of the book deals with the historical development of the telephone industry. Looking at the huge and lucrative business it is today, one is struck by its humble origins. The historical account helps the reader understand how the present hodgepodge of both public and private ownership and geographically split regulatory jurisdiction over telephones emerged. More numerous in the past, there remain only about sixty small independent telephone companies, including a few municipally owned systems. The number of independents has been steadily declining, in part because Bell Canada has cannibalistically gobbled them up, sometimes with the complicity of the regulatory body. On the prairies, telephones fell under provincial ownership early in this century, mainly due to Bell Canada's failure to provide adequate rural service. As provincial crown corporations, they were regulated by provincially appointed public utility boards rather than the national regulatory body which supervised Bell Canada in Ontario and Québec.

Since the book went to print a Supreme Court ruling, involving Alberta Government Telephones (AGT), has cleared the way for a complete federal takeover of jurisdiction in the telecommunications field. All that is required to achieve federal control is an amendment to the Railway Act (itself a reminder of the historical origins of telecommunications regulation) to declare that immunity for provincial crown corporations does not apply. Based on the court decision, the Bell-controlled companies in the Atlantic region have already been brought under the rules of the national regulatory body, the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC). Ottawa is trying to work out a regulatory sharing arrangement with the prairie provinces, and Manitoba has already agreed to a plan.

Longer term, the real question facing the three prairie governments is whether they should privatize their telephone companies. Owning a telephone company will look less attractive if the CRTC approves, as it almost certainly will within the next two years, the introduction of competition into the interprovincial long-distance market. Somewhere between 60 to 70 cents on every dollar earned from the long-distance market has been used to cross-subsidize local and intraprovincial long-distance rates. According to one official study, 90 percent of the telephone subscribers will pay more for telephone service, depending on how long-distance competition is introduced. There will probably be few provincial ministers who wish to answer for a crown corporation which is forced to announce regular, and perhaps steep, local rate increases.

Historically, three arguments were advanced to support a monopoly arrangement for telephone service: economies of scale; cost-averaging and cross-subsidization to ensure affordable and universal service; and systemic integrity, which refers to the protection of service standards. All three pillars of the natural monopoly doctrine are questionable, according to Babe. Moreover, creation of a natural monopoly through public ownership and/or government regulation presumed effective regulation to prevent price gouging and to ensure quality services. Predatory pricing, protective restrictions on entry into the industry, and the manipulation of its corporate structure have all been used by Bell Canada to maximize its corporate freedom and to avoid the possible negative impacts of regulation. Throughout the account, there are numerous examples of the political clout wielded by the Bell organization.

Whatever coordination has taken place within Canada's fragmented telephone industry has come through the dominant presence of Bell Canada which has tended to set the direction and pace for the rest of the industry, including within the phantom-like organization called Telecom Canada, a loose association of the ten largest telephone companies which arranged national services and engaged in what can only be called price fixing, although the rates were subject to regulatory approval.

Babe succeeds in demythologizing telecommunications debates by analyzing them for what they really are — a struggle for power and wealth. As Canadians embark on a debate over the merits of long-distance competition, this book and its author will be read and quoted frequently.

Paul G. Thomas
Department of Political Studies
University of Manitoba

Fool for Christ: The Political Thought of J.S. Woodsworth by Allen Mills.
Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991. Pp. 301.

It would be reasonable to wonder at the motive for another study of J.S. Woodsworth in view of the works of Grace MacInnis and Kenneth McNaught. Allen Mills, in contrast to his forerunners, has undertaken a painstaking construction of Woodsworth's social, economic and political thought from a rigorously critical, yet philosophically sympathetic, perspective. So well does Mills do his work and so well does he write that he wins the appreciation of doubters and critics. The very title poses an intriguing mystery which compels us to delve into his investigation with him. His approach is the careful, sympathetic, critical scholarship of traditional, liberal, intellectual biography combined with an interesting, polished presentation.

The book is divided into five theme chapters which are also roughly chronological. Mills begins with the religious motivation and social gospel Methodism between 1874 and 1909. He then traces the social and labour

activism, including the Winnipeg General Strike up to Woodsworth's election to Parliament in 1921. Next he examines Woodsworth's maturing ideas about politics, the sanctity of Parliament and the place of revolution in his outlook. He explores Woodsworth's economic doctrines, his concept of cooperation and his notion of socialism during the interwar years. Finally he describes Woodsworth's views of Canadian society, immigration, constitution, nationalism and militarism in the same era.

In 1921, at 47 years of age, when Woodsworth committed himself to a socialist political career, the foundations of his social and political thought were well established. Mills identifies and explores the main features of Woodsworth's thought. Five in particular stand out. First was a Methodist Christian social gospel moral and ethical system which, by 1921, was freed from institutional sectarian bounds but provided a fundamental philosophic foundation. The second was a pacifism which, though profound and ultimately politically debilitating, was nevertheless subject to pragmatic interpretation during his parliamentary life. A third feature was an exceptionalist view of Canada which required that there be homemade solutions to uniquely Canadian problems. Fourth was what Mills calls a frontier-bred nativism which today we call chauvinism and racism. This Anglo-centrism was, by 1921, modified considerably but never radically expunged. The more explicit form of racism and pseudo-scientific interest led him to embrace social Darwinian eugenics. Indeed, these streams of attitude and thought fed into a social engineering conception of the state and of socialism with the following characteristics: strong central, planning government; a strictly parliamentary view of democracy (albeit reformed along more populist lines); and, a technological determinist positivism regarding the development of Canadian history. Finally, he was an elitist who, like the Fabians he so admired, had a mission to do good.

While never shrinking from the evidence, Mills tries his best to give Woodsworth the benefit of the doubt in examining his reasoning and behaviour. For example, he looks carefully at Woodsworth's early nativism as expressed in his book *Strangers Within Our Gates*. He describes the changes wrought by his education at Oxford, his discovery of some of the realities of British imperialism, his work with immigrants at the All People's Mission in Winnipeg, his experiences as a worker in British Columbia, and the trauma of World War I. Nevertheless, as Mills concludes, Woodsworth never entirely lost his Anglo-centrism.

Mills is similarly explicit about Woodsworth's embrace of Darwinian natural selection, his attribution of mental illness to genetic deficiency, and his belief in eugenics. Woodsworth was not alone on the left in this respect. Angus McLaren's study of Canadian eugenics, *Our Own Master Race*, shows that T.C. Douglas, Agnes MacPhail, Nellie McClung and others shared such ideas. Woodsworth's position however was particularly stark. Thus, in 1916 he bluntly claimed that "any policy that will accomplish this [preventing more of

the unfit from coming into existence] is in the end economic.' In Mills's view, "he had no difficulty, in principle, with the policy of sterilisation." (p. 55)

As an idealist and an increasingly secular Christian, Woodsworth's socialism was elitist. "Change occurred principally through the efforts of 'idealists', such as prophets, poets, and religious leaders. Examples were John the Baptist, St. Francis of Assisi, Wycliffe, Savonarola, Knox, Cromwell, Tennyson, and, of course, Jesus Christ." (p. 59)

Woodsworth's socialism was not grounded in any idea of class struggle as an historic determinant. As Mills says, "association with a historic [religious] denomination or sect was inferior to association with an ecumenical ideal, so aligning oneself with 'humanity' was preferable to a life immersed in the 'artificial' narrowness of race, group, region, and, indeed as Woodsworth would argue, class." (p. 70) In the dominant liberal tradition of North American exceptionalism

Canada, for him, was not a class system necessarily patterned after Europe's. It lacked a landed aristocracy; its agricultural development had been in the hands of a large class of freeholders; it did not have a long-established bourgeoisie and it was not yet a generation removed from frontier simplicity; and, until recently, there had been extensive individual mobility. Forged in a different world from Europe, Canada's distinctive class system had produced its own special kind of politics. (p. 74)

Exceptionalism of course informed his opposition to Marxist analysis and politics; but, as was so often the case in Woodsworth's thought, this did not prevent his embrace of British ideas and policies. In the cauldron of post World War I western Canadian politics he battles against Marxist forces in British Columbia and Winnipeg. As Mills points out, "If, then, Marxism and Bolshevism were deficient, how should the Left in British Columbia proceed? Ironically, given his early preference for an indigenous, Canadian socialism, Woodsworth's prescribed model for the FLP [Federated Labour Party] was the British Labour Party (BLP)." (p. 80) What this meant for Woodsworth, however, was not rejection of revolutionary goals, but violent means. Mills makes a point that Ralph Miliband and others have stressed about the link between revisionism and bolshevism — they both espoused revolutionary transformation of capitalist society. "A careful reading of the sources will reveal that, in espousing the 'British way,' Woodsworth was certainly being anti-Marxist but he was also consciously turning away from the sort of gradualism and reformism that [Kenneth] McNaught imputes to him. To Woodsworth there was a third way, a 'bloodless,' democratic revolution." (p. 81). One must assume the quotation marks acknowledge the double entendre.

Consistent with Woodsworth's respect for peaceful and legal methods in politics was his role in the Winnipeg General Strike. "In the General Strike, Woodsworth attempted to ride two horses: sympathy for the strikers and a cooperative attitude towards business. In the end the final repressive measures

of the authorities made impossible his search for bipartisan ground. It would not, however be the end of his penchant for accommodation and reconciliation.” (p. 89) That penchant is what characterized his role in Parliament ever after and likely made him so acceptable to Mackenzie King.

In 1919, Woodsworth wrote a series of articles which summarized his thought on the program of the non-Marxist left. In addition to attention to issues of women in society and politics he catalogued the reforms necessary for the lower classes generally, as well as institutional changes.

Starting from what he believed was the indisputable premise that Parliament was not representative of the people, first, because certain groups were dis- or un-enfranchised and, secondly, because economic interests financed and therefore controlled both established political parties, Woodsworth recommended a mixture of universal adult suffrage, proportional representation, and the initiative and recall. An intriguing addition to the list was political syndicalism. He referred to the possibility of an occupational basis of election to some mysterious ‘administrative body.’ It is unclear whether he meant the cabinet, the bureaucracy, or central-planning agencies. What was unambiguous was his view that one of the houses in a bicameral system might be elected by occupation. (p. 91)

Some of these political reforms have been advocated throughout the history of Canadian populism and social democracy, but seldom with much seriousness and commitment. Since Mills does not mention it, one is left to speculate on the source of his political syndicalism. Guild socialism was being advocated in Britain by G.D.H. Cole and others during this period. Mussolini would introduce the idea of a legislature composed of occupational groups in his version of corporatism which fascinated George Bernard Shaw and other Fabians.

Once in Parliament, and in concert with progressives from Alberta, Woodsworth embraced many of the anti-party ideas of group government. “The theory ... was a complex, many-sided idea. With the exception of the principle of the initiative and recall, Woodsworth advocated all of its many parts throughout his long parliamentary career.” (p. 110) Mills’s own view is that

Woodsworth at bottom was an old-fashioned nineteenth-century reformer of Parliament, a sort of Jeremy Bentham or a John Stuart Mill. In spite of its defects, in spite of the intensity of the economic powers ranged against it, a fairly traditional parliamentary system with the support of a transfigured electorate could undertake the transformation of society. (p. 113-14)

Mills draws attention to the intellectual deficiency in the outlook of the mature man about to embark upon a socialist political career. “In not making the effort [to resolve chimerical contradictions] he entered on a course of socialist politics with a personal political calculus that was often little more than an attitude of ‘on the one hand ... and on the other.’” Certainly not the requirement for penetrating socialist theory, but appropriate for what Mills calls his principled opportunism. “A constant perplexity of Woodsworth’s thought ... is that he never satisfactorily explained the dividing line between compromises that were affirmative of principle and those that were not.” (p. 111)

The conclusion is not sentimental but Mills is moving in his description of Woodsworth's final defeat — personally over the CCF's rejection of his pacifism and historically over the mission of the CCF itself. Despite eminent fairness and balance in his judgements and in his choice of words I cannot believe that those who revere Woodsworth will find the analysis and assessment of his thought (for it is too haphazard and incomplete to treat as theory) satisfying or reassuring. Mills says, for example, "His metier was as a provider of new meanings and new truths. In most respects he was not just unimpressed by tradition and the past, he positively disliked them." And, in the same paragraph he concludes that Woodsworth "lost his Christian faith but throughout his political life he saw himself as a pilgrim and crusader albeit on behalf of a churchless 'Christian' progressivism." (p. 253) Just how these two positions can be reconciled is strictly idiosyncratic.

Mills cites Ramsey Cook's judgement about the role of social gospel in the history of Canadian ideas in giving "legitimacy to ideas that grew up outside the Christian world view" and that were eventually subversive of it. Woodsworth "helped promote the secularization of his world," but neither he nor his supporters understood that. (p. 254) Is this not a penetrating criticism of one who holds a distinguished place among Canadian social and political activists for whom ideas were paramount? Especially when one considers the criticisms of social gospel levelled by orthodox religion at that time.

In respect to Woodsworth's view of socialism Mills reveals a technological determinism. "The dominant shape of his idea of socialism was conveyed by his notion of cooperation, which emphasized centralization, hierarchy, and planning — in a word, it was statist." (p. 255) He goes on to describe Woodsworth's thinking about corporate monopoly which he both admired for its efficiency and hated because of its private power. "A theory of 'giantism' emerged from such thinking. If larger was better, then the largest was the best." Further, "the greatest end of the human race was to create a universal monopoly, a monopoly of monopolies, a unitary world order, politically, economically, and socially." (p. 255)

In his conclusion, Mills does not point out the paradox in this kind of thinking for someone like Woodsworth. In his view of monopoly/cooperation Woodsworth exempted agricultural production, reserving that to the family farm — pluralistic and decentralized. This is consistent with the populism of his lifelong experience; but, North American populism, right or left, has been resolutely anti-monopoly. Woodsworth's position was more like Kautsky's theory of imperialism in which capitalist monopolies would eventually organize the entire world in a rationally managed market. He is also like Lenin and the bolsheviks in imagining that a completely monopolized Canadian industrial society could be administered centrally by the state. What Mills does explore provides an insight into an authoritarian dimension to Woodsworth's own socialism: "his profound misgivings about intermediate, regional and local

identities ... for example, provinces in his constitutional prescriptions, and participatory and voluntaristic groups in his version of cooperation and planning. His ideal society offered little room for pluralism." (p. 255)

What then was Woodsworth's distinctive contribution to Canadian political thought? "In part Woodsworth had helped educate a generation of English-Canadian socialists; in part he had simply expressed their natural inclinations." (p. 256) While there is surely truth to this generalization it also obscures Woodsworth's conscious struggle against a far more radical, non-English version of socialism that was present in Canada before, during, and after World War I. Not that Mills neglects Woodsworth's resolute crusade against Marxism, revolutionary strategy and practice or the Communist Party of Canada; indeed, he is careful to stress that aspect of Woodsworth's political career. However, one might reflect that if the Canadian Liberal and Conservative parties were, on the whole, less virulently anti-Communist than those of the United States in the 1920s and during the Cold War, it may be because the battle against domestic versions of revolutionary socialism in all its forms was conducted by Woodsworth and the CCF/NDP in the interest of parliamentary gradualism; ultimately of the status quo.

But in his attempt to bring about socialism through such a strategy, Mills concludes, Woodsworth failed. "he was torn and buffeted between competing intellectual and moral constraints, from the utopian to the practical, from the long-term to the immediate, from the absolutely right to the lesser of two evils, from what his conscience dictated to what his constraints demanded." (p. 257) Mills correctly refrains from ascribing a tragic interpretation to Woodsworth. "He was, we may say, for good or ill, predominately a hard-nosed gradualist and realist." And some may say, like Mackenzie King with whom he shared so much.

Bringing his interpretation into the present, Mills finds continuity between Woodsworth and subsequent leaders of the NDP.

Purged of his theoretical ideals, which in his own political practice he was often willing to set aside anyway, Woodsworth would not have been out of place in the NDP of David Lewis, Ed Broadbent, or Audrey McLaughlin. His gradualism blends agreeably with the NDP's later penchant for revisionist liberalism and social democracy. The problem is that this is not enough to distinguish it from the Liberal Party, at least when the latter is on its best behaviour. A logical national party system might postulate the pressing necessity of an inclusive, national, social-democratic party, an amalgam perhaps of the NDP and the Liberals." (p. 259)

Despite the author's splendid effort to make sense of this man, his project must in some degree be judged according to the magnitude of the subject. Is Woodsworth worthy of such intense magnification? Mills's own evidence of the jumble of his thought casts considerable doubt. He was not a great, or in the end, influential thinker. That he reflected many of the beliefs and prejudices of

those he represented, as social democrats continue to do, may be granted. But does that make him worth such a considerable effort?

What seems missing here, and this is often a failing of intellectual biography, is the collective aspect of intellect. Mills does try to show where some of Woodsworth's more systematic economic ideas came from — Liberal Hobson and the less liberal Americans Taussig and Fisher. He also identifies the important conflicts in which Woodsworth's consolidated thoughts are expressed — the Winnipeg General Strike, conflict with the Communist Party, support for the League of Nations, support for Liberal isolation of the Spanish Republicans and the like. But because the focus on Woodsworth's own thought is so particular, perhaps of necessity, what is lost is the sense of who is ranged with and who is ranged against his views, within his party, within Canada and in the international socialist community. We do not get a social sense of the struggle of ideas. The fact is, he never achieved the status of David Lewis as a socialist leader. G.D.H. Cole's *History of Socialist Thought* never mentions him.

So how are we to understand the enigmatic title? Is it simply a metaphor for the powerful religious content of Woodsworth's thought? Is it a reference to an apostolic mission? Or are we justified in the belief that, having examined Woodsworth's political thought in the context of his time and opportunities, Mills comes to the conclusion that Woodsworth was a bit of a fool? Whatever the explanation, the myth of a saintly, high-minded prophet in politics is deflated. Mills reveals a contradictory, limited and incomplete system of ideas which Woodsworth prized above all else. That mythic figure has been revered by generations of CCF followers, by many academic writers on the period, and by public figures. Now, with this scrupulous and exhaustive effort to make sense of J.S. Woodsworth's thought, surely the last word on the man has been written.

Joseph K. Roberts
Political Science
University of Regina

Forum

Prairie Forum welcomes readers' comments on articles and reviews which appear in the journal. Our "Forum" section offers an opportunity for scholarly debate and discussion kindled by earlier issues of *Prairie Forum*.

457 Main Street
Winnipeg, Manitoba R3M 0A1

8 April 1991

The Editor

Prairie Forum

Canadian Plains Research Center

University of Regina

Regina, Saskatchewan S4S 0A2

Dear Sir:

We write to express our deep concern with the tone and content of Frits Pannekoek's review of Michael Payne's book *The Most Respectable Place in the Territory*, which appeared in the Spring issue of *Prairie Forum*.

We have no problem with a reviewer's right to raise legitimate criticisms, but this review goes beyond the boundaries of fair comment. Particularly offensive is the statement that "Payne has set back historiography several decades." As these hyper-critical comments are not backed up, it would be more accurate to state that such reviews threaten to set back the professional status of book reviewing.

The reviewer acknowledges that Dr. Payne's book is well written, but resorts to innuendo, sweeping generalizations, and academic snobbery in raising assorted petty criticisms about its contents.

Dr. Pannekoek appears to fault Dr. Payne for not writing the book he would have written. He devotes almost a third of the review to discussing Moose Factory in the 1740s, a topic with which the reviewer is familiar, but which does not assist the prospective book purchaser. Moreover, the dismissal of the author's approach as "blinkered" should be grounded in extensive evidence to the contrary, rather than the familiar solitary exception drawn from the reviewer's note cards.

The broad-brush dismissal of National Historic Sites interpretation as "family entertainment" is not only off the mark, it shows that the reviewer is completely out of touch with the innovative developments at many of these sites over the past 10 years. As an administrator of historic sites programs (and the former Chief of Historical Research for the prairie region of the Canadian Parks Service), Dr. Pannekoek should know better.

To preserve its reputation as an important scholarly journal, we suggest that in future *Prairie Forum* would be well served by initiating the outside vetting of submitted reviews as well as articles.

Yours truly,

R. Stuart
M. Burnip
R. Coutts

L. Dick
W. Hildebrandt

Contributors

SARA BROOKS SUNDBERG is a doctoral student at Tulane University, New Orleans, Louisiana. She is co-author with Carol Fairbanks of *Farm Women on the Prairie Frontier: A Sourcebook for Canada and the United States* (Scarecrow Press, 1983).

SARAH CARTER is an assistant professor and Canada Research fellow with the Department of History and Rupert's Land Research Centre at the University of Winnipeg. She recently published *Lost Harvests: Prairie Indian Reserve Farmers and Government Policy* (Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990).

JOAN FEATHER is a Research Scientist in the Department of Community Health and Epidemiology at the University of Saskatchewan, with a Master of Arts in Sociology and additional studies in History, presently involved in studies of health status, health promotion and program evaluation. She grew up in the southwestern part of the Swift Current Health Region.

THOMAS FLANAGAN is a professor of Political Science at the University of Calgary. His research interests include Alberta politics and history as well as the study of millenarian movements.

MARTHA LEE received her Master of Arts in Political Science from the University of Calgary and is now a doctoral candidate at the University of Syracuse. She is the author of *The Nations of Islam: An American Millenarian Movement*.

TAMARA J. PALMER is an assistant professor with the Faculty of General Studies, University of Calgary, where she teaches courses in Canadian Studies. A specialist in ethnic and western Canadian studies, she has authored numerous articles and two books, the most recent being *Alberta: A New History* which she co-wrote with her late husband, historian Howard Palmer.

BEVERLY RASPORICH is an associate professor in the Faculty of General Studies at the University of Calgary, teaching in the Canadian Studies and Womens' Studies programs. A recent publication is *Dance of the Sexes: Art and Gender in the Fiction of Alice Munro*.

D.N. SPRAGUE is a professor of History at the University of Manitoba. His current projects include a book about the adversarial role of the Canadian Department of Justice in the administration of the rights and claims of Canada's aboriginal peoples.

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