

Romantic Nationalism and the Child in Canadian Writing

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For Charles G.D. Roberts, the link between the child and the nation made in his unfortunate and much-mocked patriotic ode "Canada" (1886) was a natural, even stereotyped one. Although the giant limbs of his "Child of Nations" may now seem ludicrous, even monstrous,¹ the connection between child and nation is still used by modern Canadian writers wishing to make a nationalist point. The concept of the child found in modern literature, indeed the modern child himself, is widely accepted as an invention of Rousseau's Romanticism.² Little consideration, however, has been given to the possibility of a relationship between Romantic theories of nation and national literature, theories which dominated Canadian literary criticism until recently, and the use of the child figure in Canadian writing. That there is such a connection seems indisputable; its nature remains to be explored.

Jean Jacques Rousseau's *Emile* (1762) affected the use of the child figure in all Western literature. As Peter Coveney points out in his *Poor Monkey. The Child in Literature*,³ after Rousseau the child was commonly used as a symbol of nature, imagination, sensibility and innocence, and frequently, by the best writers, as a "symbol of the greatest significance for the subjective investigation of the Self" (xi-xii).⁴ Although many Canadian writers use the child in precisely these ways, it is hardly surprising that many more of them link an image so suitable to a discussion of individual identity with that great Canadian obsession, the search for national identity. Certainly Rousseau felt that if one's goal was to inculcate patriotism one began with the child; he wrote in his *Considérations sur le gouvernement de Pologne* that "un enfant en ouvrant les yeux doit voir la patrie, et jusqu'à la mort ne doit plus voir qu'elle. Tout vrai républicain suçà avec le lait de sa mère l'amour de sa patrie."⁵

The child seems a natural symbol to represent the land, or the nation, for several common-sense reasons: children inherit land from their parents, parents buy property, work farms, fight wars, and emigrate to strange, far-off places in order to leave land, and a nation, to their children. Romantic theories, however, make the connection between child and birthplace,

citizen and nation, far more powerful and more spiritual (or in some cases, more "scientific") than common sense can explain. As Susanna Moodie points out in her introduction to *Roughing it in the Bush* in 1852, emigrants "sacrifice . . . those local attachments which stamp the scenes amid which [their] childhood grew, in imperishable characters upon the heart" in order to "exult in the prospect of their children being free and the land of their adoption great." Moodie, although feeling herself a "stranger in a strange land", exhorted "British Mothers of Canadian sons . . . learn to feel for their country the same enthusiasm which fills your hearts when thinking of the glory of your own. Teach them to love Canada."⁶

In making this firm distinction between *British* mothers and their *Canadian* sons, *her* country and *their* country, Moodie is simply repeating a widely-held tenet of Romanticism which insists that the scenes of childhood, the soil of one's birthplace, leave an indelible impression in "imperishable characters" on the native heart. Samuel Taylor Coleridge's "Sonnet to the River Otter," written in the 1790's, is a typical expression of this belief. Despite the many "various-fated" years which have passed since he has last seen the Otter, "so deep impressed" are the "sweet scenes of childhood" that he can recall them in exquisite detail.

Modern English-Canadian criticism and English-Canadian literature both testify to the vitality of this belief. Northrop Frye, in his introduction to *The Bush Garden*, explains that the difference between the painting of a Ghanaian and those of some Canadians was caused by the African's spending his "impressionable years in a world where colour was a constant datum."⁷ Wallace Stegner, in his *Wolf Willow* strengthens the force of this idea by connecting it with scientific theories of animal imprinting popularized by Konrad Lorenz.⁸ Stegner writes: "Expose a child to a particular environment at his susceptible time and he will perceive in the shapes of that environment until he dies."⁹ Although no one has ever precisely demarcated the length of the "impressionable period," and although Stegner never convincingly explains what it means to "perceive in the shapes of . . . [an] environment," the learning seems to be both irresistible and unconscious, and to occur separately from formal education.

Because the origin of the modern literary child figure is so closely related to the origins of Romanticism as a whole, it is simpler to examine the context in which ideas concerning childhood like those of Moodie, Coleridge, Frye, and Stegner arose, rather than to try to trace the child figure in isolation. Perhaps because England and France had fairly secure national identities, the most important theoretical development of Romantic nationalism occurred in Germany, in the writing of, among others, J.G. Herder (1744-1803), August (1767-1845) and Friedrich von Schlegel (1772-1829), and Madame de Staël (1766-1817). In Germany,

which had an ancient culture but no unified national state until 1871, and where the culture of the élite was French, rather than German, the national culture was used to justify the creation of a geographically united state whose borders would follow the cultural borders of language and race. Thus “nation” became as much a cultural as a political concept. Since the best evidence, according to these theorists, for the existence of a nation is the existence of a great national literature, Romantic political and literary theories are often inextricably related. Friedrich von Schlegel writes in his *Lectures on the History of Literature* in 1815:

If literature be considered as the quintessence of the most distinguished and peculiar productions by which the spirit of an age and the character of a nation express themselves, . . . it must be admitted that an artistic and highly finished literature is undoubtedly one of the greatest advantages any nation can possess.¹⁰

This belief was widely held in Canada — both English and French — and still is. Edward Hartley Dewart in his introduction to *Selections from Canadian Poets*, published in 1864, three years before Confederation makes the common assumption that a nation can, indeed should, exist prior to the formation of a national state:

A national literature is an essential element in the formation of a national character It may be fairly questioned whether the whole range of history presents the spectacle of a people firmly united politically, without the subtle but powerful cement of a national literature.¹¹

Camille Roy, in his “French-Canadian Literature” (1913) writes that “nothing expresses better, or stimulates more effectively, the forces of national consciousness than literature” and notes that fortunately, many of the works written in Quebec “breathe the perfume of the soil, and are the expression — original, sincere and profound — of the Canadian spirit.”¹² In short, the insistence that there was such an *indelible, imperishable* impression, stamped by the land on the people, was essential in making that people’s political claim to that land good. Since existence of a link between people and land cannot be proven scientifically, a great literature is taken as evidence that such a link does indeed exist. This link has to be asserted as an *a priori* of any discussion of national literature, and has, until recently, most often been presented as natural, organic, and determined, like the genetic link between parent and child — hence, “fatherland” and “motherland.”

No one would seriously dispute the idea that the region where we spend our “impressionable years” has an impact on our imaginations. But why insist on such an overwhelming, inevitable, and permanent imprint — one, it seems, that cannot be changed? Because if one does *not*, one’s claim to

the land is drastically weakened. If there is no inevitable link between a people and the place they live, then they have at best squatter's rights. If a foreigner can write as powerfully about a nation as a native, this puts the legitimacy of the native claim to that nation into question. This is why we persist in seeing Louis Hémon (who spent only two years in Quebec) and Frederick Philip Grove (who was definitely past his impressionable prime when he hit the prairies) as "exceptions," even though they have as integral a place in the literary tradition as any writers who passed those vital "impressionable years" here. If foreign writers write well about us, they are quietly naturalized; if they write badly the reason is simple; spiritual dual citizenship is impossible. Edward McCourt in his *The Canadian West in Fiction* accounts for Frederick Niven's "comparative failure to write of the Canadian West in a manner worthy of his very great talents" by asking rhetorically "Does a native of one country ever write really well of another? Can a writer whose roots are deep in the soil of his native land . . . ever be transplanted with complete success?"¹³ Of course the answer he expected and the answer I would give are opposed. If we consider the writers who have bothered to write about countries other than those of their birth, a surprisingly large number of them have done so successfully.

If the link between the land and the child is so vital for the establishment of the national identity, then the link between the land and the artist obviously will be seen as even more vital. The authenticity and nationality of art produced by a child artist, while still free of all foreign influence, is, in Romantic terms, indisputable. This may well explain the prevalence of Canadian works written not only about children, but also from the point of view of an imaginative child, like W.O. Mitchell's Brian, or of a child-artist, like L.M. Montgomery's Anne, several of Margaret Laurence's child characters, Marie-Claire Blais' Pauline Archange and Jean-le-Maigre, and Gabrielle Roy's Christine.

At this point it seems essential to wonder why Paul Hiebert's account of that "unspoiled child of the soil," Sarah Binks (1906-1929), which parodies this and many of the other cherished tenets of Romantic nationalism, did not deter more critics and writers from unthinkingly trotting out the same old implausible geographical determinism again and again. Hiebert follows a well-worn path when he tells us that "Sarah Binks was the product of her soil and her roots go deep . . . No other poet has so expressed the Saskatchewan soul. No other poet has caught in deathless line so much of its elusive spirit, the baldness of its prairies, the alkalinity of its soil, the richness of its insect life."¹⁴ Perhaps this parody is the best evidence that Romantic nationalism had reached saturation level in English-Canadian literary criticism when *Sarah Binks* was published in 1947 — New Criticism must have arrived as a blessed relief.

Anyway, at this point in the discussion it seems safe enough to assert that

an examination of Canadian literature might reveal many child figures being used to establish not only some connection with the land, but also a secure title to it. I say "land" rather than "nation" because "nation" is a word particularly fraught with tension and ambiguity in Canada. Brian in W.O. Mitchell's *Who has Seen the Wind* (1947) and Wallace Stegner's "sensuous little savage" are establishing the title to a region — the West — (and for Stegner the region subsumes the national border); the land that the Emmanuels "ont toujours cultivé . . . avec soin" in Marie-Claire Blais' *Une Saison dans la Vie d'Emmanuel*¹⁵ is clearly Quebec, while Howard O'Hagan, Margaret Laurence, and Robert Kroetsch, among others, seem to be attempting to fuse all of Canada together in their use of the child image. (The attempt results in some pretty unusual genealogies, as we shall see.)

To this point, what has been argued is valid for both English Canada and Quebec. Both shared the same theories concerning literature and the nation,¹⁶ although they applied them to different nations. Yet a shared literary theory is not enough to force literary similarity on such different societies. In Quebec, children carry a much greater weight of sociological, political, and religious significance than they do in English Canada. Rousseau's Emile, not to mention W.O. Mitchell's Brian, would have received short shrift in the repressive household of Claire Martin's *Dans un gant de fer*.¹⁷ Traditionally, in Quebec, large families were not only necessary to work the land, and favoured by the Church, but were also part of the "revenge of the cradle." As a result, the child was simply one of a large family — in the early literature a contented one like the typical family of the *roman de la terre*, where the peasant couple, "entourés de leurs nombreux enfants . . . vivent contents sur la terre à laquelle ils se consacrent corps et âme."¹⁸ If the work was written after the old illusions had faded with World War Two, the child is more likely to be one of an under-fed, runny-nosed mob, symbol of his own oppression and that of his parents, especially his mother. Grand-mère Antoinette has no illusions about the purity of childhood — she consistently compares her grandchildren to the vermin they themselves are infested with. Blais writes, laconically, "mais Grand-mère Antoinette domptait admirablement toute cette marée d'enfants qui grondait à ses pieds" (tr. "Grand-mère Antoinette was admirable as she tamed the tide of children roaring around her feet.")¹⁹

As Mirielle Servais-Maquoi points out in her *Le Roman de la terre au Québec*, the small Quebec élite, including the Church, during the century after the Rebellion of 1837 fervently promoted the link between the people and the land as the only possible means to preserve Quebec as a nation. George-Etienne Cartier (1814-1873), speaking in 1855, put it with passion: "Canadiens français, n'oublions pas que *si nous voulons assurer notre existence nationale, il faut nous cramponner à la terre*" [his italics].²⁰ Even during the rapid industrialization of Quebec during and after the First World War, and the equally rapid evacuation of the habitants of the

Quebec countryside, either to the city or to the United States, the conservative appeal to the land continued to be presented as the only way to preserve the Quebec identity, and many novels aided this appeal "en décrivant, avec un pessimisme outrageant, les catastrophes qui accablent le malheureux déserteur de la terre paternelle."²¹ As a result, the claim to the soil in Quebec was usually embodied in the figure of the peasant, rather than that of the child.²² This is appropriate, for although the two are related²³ the child embodies an innate promise of growth and change. The peasant, however, is a static image, appropriate to the conservative emphasis in Quebec which preserved him as a cultural symbol of passive nationalism for over a century. And it should not be forgotten that the passivity of the peasant worked to the advantage, not only of the English-Canadian, but also of the Quebec élite; George-Etienne Cartier was not only one of the patriotic revolutionaries of 1837, but he also, after a short exile in the United States, landed on his feet as a Father of Confederation. The new nationalism of the Quiet Revolution had to repudiate the old conservative image of Quebec society as 'français, rural, et catholique'; often the baby was thrown out with the revolutionary bathwater. The problem of the modern Quebec writer is not in establishing a title to the land; it is showing how the Québécois can manage to live in a city without being oppressed by some faceless "boss," whether English, French, or American. As a result, the peasant figure has been replaced more often by the figure of the urban guerilla than by the child.²⁴ Therefore, although some links are made below between literary child figures in Quebec and English Canada, it is wrong to assume that the two figures are used with equal frequency, or to mean exactly the same things.

Even in English Canada, one finds variations in the use of the child figure from region to region. The child as claimant to the land seems far more common in Western Canadian literature, perhaps because the West is the region most recently settled.

Canada as a whole is far more difficult to claim than is a region, simply because Canada does not fit the usual Romantic definition of "nation." If one is English, two other "races", the native people and the French, were here first, and therefore have better title. Since English Canada is far from the ideal of *one* people of *one* racial background speaking in *one* language, the English-Canadian writer often uses the child as a device to move English Canada closer to ideal nationhood. Often, the English-Canadian literary child is the product of a mixed marriage, a child who will somehow grow up representing a bicultural (or even multicultural) ideal, rather than succumbing (as seems more likely) to cultural confusion or assimilation. Catharine Parr Traill (1802-1899), in her *Canadian Crusoes* (1852), writes of three children lost in the wilderness. Two, Hector and Catharine, are the children of Catharine Perron and Duncan Maxwell; Catharine nursed Duncan back to health after the Battle of the Plains of Abraham (a favorite

device of literary matchmakers with federal leanings). The other child is their cousin, Louis Perron. The two boys, as Clara Thomas points out "inherit their fathers' temperaments"; Hector the Highlander is "stern, steady, persevering, cautious" while Louis the Frenchman is "hopeful, lively, fertile in expedient and gay as a lark"; Catharine, however, possesses "the best attributes of both races."²⁵ (One can see clearly here that Traill, like most Romantic nationalists, identifies "race" and "nationality".) Not surprisingly, the children survive, as did their literary model.²⁶ They discover a little Indian girl, whom they rather unimaginatively name Indiana, rather than Friday. She too, as Thomas points out, is described according to the firmly established racial stereotypes of the time. Nonetheless, all four children work together, and at the end of the novel, Catharine marries Louis, and Hector, Indiana. Thomas connects the ending to "the author's own fantasy of wish-fulfillment for the future peace, prosperity, and Christian brotherhood of the Canadian people" (34-35); there is no doubt of the ending's nationalist significance. Here we see British, French, and native, the three "races" with a claim to the land, united in peace, order, and good government.

Philippe Aubert de Gaspé (1786-1871) provides a rare example of the same device in Quebec in his *Les Anciens Canadiens* (1863). Archibald Cameron of Lochiel is educated by the Jesuits in the same seminary as Jules d'Haberville; naturally they become friends. Later Archie joins the English army and Jules the French. Inevitably they meet in the thick of battle on the Plains of Abraham. Archie spares Jules's life, and so feels able later to propose to Jules's sister, Blanche, but she rejects him for patriotic reasons. She explains to her brother that she does not wish to be "la première à donner l'exemple d'un double joug aux nobles filles au Canada" (tr. "the first to set the example of a double yoke to the daughters of Canada").²⁷ But significantly she adds "il est naturel, il est même à souhaiter que les races française et anglo-saxonne, ayant maintenant une même patrie, vivant sous les memes lois, se rapprochent par des alliances intimes; mais il serait indigne de moi s'en donner l'exemple" (tr. "it is natural and even desirable that the French and English in Canada having now one country and the same laws, should forget their ancient hostility and enter into the most intimate relationships; but I am not the one to set the example").²⁸ Maurice Lemire, in his *Les Grandes thèmes nationalistes du roman historique canadien-français* notes that this is a common device in several historical novels concerning the period; the love-stricken Englishmen, victorious in battle, are defeated in love.²⁹ What happens next is *not* typical of the Quebec novel, however; Jules d'Haberville *does* marry an Englishwoman and produces the first of a long line of Canadian fictional children with names reflecting both cultures – Archie d'Haberville. The reaction of English Canada to this novel could hardly be anything but positive, even complacent, as its rapid and frequent translation into English in 1864, 1890, 1905, and 1929 proves.³⁰

Although a Quebec nationalist would be unlikely to use the child of a mixed marriage as a symbol of *his* nation, this use of the child is understandably common in English Canada. Sometimes the children of the mixed marriages are unborn at the novel's end — leaving the success of the solution to the reader's imagination. Hugh MacLennan's famous two solitudes finally meet in the marriage of Paul Tallard and Heather Yardley. In Sinclair Ross's *As for Me and My House* (1941) a child — the illegitimate son of Judith West and Philip Bentley — resolves the plot. Judith West, as her name implies, *is* the west,³¹ and the child, who brings change and hope into his father's previously sterile life, is analogous to the masterpieces which Philip Bentley, inspired by the land and freed by his adultery from his unsuitable profession as a clergyman, will finally paint.³²

The child at the end of Howard O'Hagan's *Tay John* (1939) would seem to have little chance of representing anything, since he is still in the womb, and his mother is dead. But his father, Tay John, the son of an Irishman from Ontario and a Shuswap, was born out of his mother's grave and womb simultaneously, an act which provides him with the best claim to the territory — autochthony. When, at the novel's end, he walks back into the earth, dragging the dead and pregnant Ardith Aeriola behind him on a toboggan, his resemblance to a vegetation god rising out of the earth in the spring and descending into it in the winter becomes marked. The next turn of the natural cycle will bring forth his child. Ardith Aeriola's confused ancestry makes this child an amalgam of all the main nationalities in the West — immigrant and native.

At the end of Robert Kroetsch's *The Studhorse Man* another child combines the Acadian heritage of her father, Hazard Lepage, with that of her mother, who has a name which could be either Indian or English — Proudfoot.³³ In Margaret Laurence's *The Diviners* (1974) a parallel figure, Piquette Tonnerre Gunn, is the child of Jules Tonnerre, a Métis whose grandfather fought with Riel, and Morag Gunn, whose ancestors were Highland settlers.

Although Ross, Kroetsch, and O'Hagan leave their child figures rather undeveloped in their novels, they do not deserve to have them brutally reduced like this into nationalist or regionalist *dei ex machina* or genetic resolutions of a theoretical difficulty. Perhaps for Traill and Aubert de Gaspé, the child of mixed parentage was the only solution to the problem of Canadian national identity, given the rigidity of the Romantic equation of "nation" with "race." But in Ross, and Laurence, the babies' parents are artists — Philip paints, Judith sings, Jules is a folksinger, Morag a novelist. In Kroetsch and O'Hagan, the parents have mythic overtones. The fathers are heroes who are only revealed to us through the words of an artist. Martha Proudfoot has symbolic associations not only with the Virgin Mary, but also with Isis and Venus, while Ardith Aeriola is a type of the eternal seductress. The strong connection of art and myth with the child

figure marks a transformation in the way writers look at Romantic nationalist theory. The change was at least partially necessitated by events, as well as by the wide acceptance of new philosophical models of reality; it became clear that whatever the hopes of Lord Durham may have been, the Québécois would not willingly assimilate. As well, the immigration pattern in Canada meant that the old Romantic ideal of racial purity was doomed, even if Hitler had not given it the worst kind of name. Unlike their predecessors, who insisted that we must have a common language, race, and landscape before we could have a national culture,³⁴ these modern writers are now saying that a national culture or myth of the nature *is* the nation.

Margaret Laurence's *The Diviners* (1974) is a model of the way Romantic theory is being rewritten in modern English-Canadian literature. *The Diviners* is about ways of discovering one's identity, both individual and national; and finding one's identity and the creative process often come to the same thing. Now art creates the nation; in the past, geography was the root-bed of all art. At first glance, Laurence seems to be patterning Morag's quest for identity on the old Romantic nationalism, since Morag feels she must trace her ancestry, find her authentic language, and make a pilgrimage to the racial homeland of her ancestors. Yet Laurence consistently refutes and reformulates all the old concepts. The old Romantic nationalism often ended in the rigid horrors of "scientific" theories of race, and a terrifyingly simple-minded geographical, historical, and linguistic determinism. Laurence replaces the old insistence on mechanical cause and effect, on purity and fixity, and especially on truth, either religious, philosophical, historical, or scientific, with a fluid and relativistic mythology, based on imagination and passion. One crucial scene encapsulates both Laurence's theoretical foundation, and her method of using these borrowed theories only to subvert them. Morag hides her first submission to the literary section of the university newspaper in volume one of Hippolyte Taine's *History of English Literature* (1863; English tr. 1871). Taine's version of Romantic nationalism was a naturalistic, that is, an over-optimistically "scientific" one. He believed that all social products — art, religion, philosophy, government — were the result of mechanical interaction among three general influences which he labelled in his most famous formulation "*race, milieu, et moment.*" By the end of the novel, Morag will have turned the situation and Taine's theories inside out by concealing her version of *race* and *milieu* inside *her* novel — the one she is writing all through *The Diviners*. In the newspaper office, Morag bumps into Ella Gerson, who has her poem about the holocaust stuck inside a copy of Marx's *Das Kapital*. Ella's presence defuses any suspicion that Laurence is advocating any theory of nationalism that could lead to another Auschwitz. Ella knows what Morag spends the rest of the novel learning. When Morag asks her if she had relatives who died in the concentration camp, she answers "Yes . . . But it would've been the same if I hadn't."³⁵ Writers' sympathies do not always have to be tied to family and "race," but can

extend as far as their imaginations will reach. Yet one cannot totally ignore one's own past, as Morag does for years, to her cost. At the end of the novel she tells Pique's Dan, who still thinks he can reject his family and his father, "your own place will be different, but it'll be the same too, in some ways . . . You can change a whole lot, but you can't throw him away entirely" (354). Laurence, following Morag's advice, retains Taine, but in the manner of Marx upending Hegel. One of the many ways she turns him upside-down is by countering the idea of racial and family pride based on purity of blood, with the idea of adoption. The natural child is not necessarily the true inheritor. Morag says to Christie, her adoptive father, on his deathbed "you've been my father to me" (396); Eva Winkler adopts Christie and Prin as parents, cleaning their house, nursing them, tending their grave; Ella's mother adopts Morag, lending her Russian literature and socialist pamphlets, as well as a shoulder to cry on (186); and Royland, the old, childless water-diviner, adopts Morag's child Pique as a grand-child (242).

Romantic national theory persists, not because it is true, but because people need to believe they belong somewhere by right, without pain or cost. Laurence refuses to allow any of her characters that luxury. Her message is that the true inheritors of the nation, as of any gift, are those who can come to terms with it imaginatively, not those who demand it as their right because of rigid racial, historical, or political claims.³⁶

Margaret Atwood similarly subverts the old notions in her *Surfacing*. As children, the narrator and her brother pretended to burn Hitler, believing "if only he could be destroyed everyone would be saved, safe."³⁷ As an adults she retained this moral absolutism, applying this Romantic nationalist belief in national stereotypes to Americans, consistently blaming them for all the ecological and cultural problems of her childhood "paradise." Going through a portage, she and her friends find a dead heron, and when she meets the men who she is sure are responsible for its wanton killing, she is convinced they are Americans. Then comes the subversive moment; the "Americans" are from Toronto and Sarnia. This begins a process of rising guilt; she cannot face at first the idea that the evil she has been labelling "American" is "in us too . . . innate" (132). She cannot accept until she dives into the lake that in having an abortion against her will, she is also guilty of wanton killing. Her comment that "the trouble some people have being German . . . I have being human" (130) still governs her behaviour even then. She tries to do penance by making restitution, by having an "animal-child": "it will be covered with shining fur, a god. I will never teach it any words" (162). Finally, however, she realized that to be human is to be guilty, fallen from the beginning. Even an unborn child is corrupted by the very thing that defines it as human, "word furrows potential already in its proto-brain" (191). She realizes that she has been using the labels "American" and "Canadian" to designate qualities that have nothing to do with nationality, and everything to do with language: "If you look like them and talk like them you are them, I was

saying, you speak their language, a language is everything you do" (129). To equate these labels with terms from *Survival* (Toronto: Anansi, 1972), "Americans" are "victors," "Canadians" are victims"; she must herself learn that to constantly struggle to transcend these roles is to become truly human. Thus the baby becomes, not a symbol of the first true Canadian, but "it might be the first true human" (191). Both Laurence and Atwood seem to be trying to combine the realization that the world is becoming smaller and smaller, borders more and more irrelevant, with the feeling that an identity based on a strong sense of place is essential to true humanity.

Technology has transformed nature, and it has also transformed the child-figure. In an urban country, it is impossible to take the "child of nature" straight from Rousseau. Somehow the child must be adapted to perform the function of establishing a national or regional identity related to the land while at the same time coming to terms with the urbanization of the average Canadian. Part of Atwood's narrator's rejection of "Americans" was a rejection of technology. Yet she finally accepted that to try to escape technology in modern Canada, to go "back to the land" as her parents did, is to live in a fools' paradise, a paradise that is being eaten up by the very technology they are trying to escape.

Gander Stake, in Robert J.C. Stead's *Grain* (1926) recapitulates the high-speed passage of the West through the era during and after the First World War when technology transformed wheat farming — he moves from natural child, to inarticulate ploughboy, to city mechanic. He has been "robbed of his childhood" by his love affair with machinery (58) and had the "imagination ground out of his soul" (118) by the discipline of farm labour.³⁸ Ironically it is a city girl, Jerry Chansley, who points out to him the beauty of nature: "She had said the sky was beautiful. For the first time Gander watched it — and wondered" (151). Although he may or may not return from the city where he goes at the end of the novel, it is clear that as far as Stead is concerned Gander has a better chance to learn to love nature there than in the country.

Martha Ostenso's *Wild Geese* makes several similar points; again it is a city girl, Lind Archer, who teaches "the children at school to look for beauty in every living thing."³⁹ Ostenso makes a clear distinction between the land, which is connected with the young, natural Judith Gare, and the soil, which is connected with her father, the tyrannical patriarch Caleb Gare. Judith, lying naked on the land in the spring, thinks: "Oh how knowing the bare earth was, as if it might have a heart and a mind hidden here in the woods. The fields that Caleb had tilled had no tenderness, she knew" (67). At first it seems startling that she hates the soil and wants to get away to the city, just as Judith West had in *As For Me and My House*. But they both did a man's work in the fields, as did the child Gander, and it was "deadening work, so that after a while the spirit forgot to follow the body behind the horses . . ." (204). For both the evidence of their rebellion is a child conceived out of wedlock.

These modern English-Canadian writers do not totally repudiate the old Romantic ideal. Nature is still the source of beauty and of identity, but simply living on the land, waiting for it to impose itself on one's impressionable brain no longer seems to work. The old Romantic view of the relations between the child and the land has received some phenomenological adjustment. The child must now be educated to love nature; he must move from the country, where he is limited by a lack of culture or by the need to work constantly, to the city, where he can develop his spirit. Thus Brian in *Who Has Seen the Wind*, influenced by his Uncle Sean, decides to become a "dirt doctor," fusing his love of the land with a knowledge of the new technologies developed in urban universities to preserve it. In this novel, the truly "wild child," the young Ben, although attractive, is totally asocial; the town children, Fat and Artie, are cynical or vulgar or stupid.⁴⁰ Brian, however, can move in both worlds, mediating between the prairie and the small town, the country and the city.

These English-Canadian children leave for the city with optimism, even relief. In the Quebec novel, the city still seems to be a dangerous place although rural life is no longer unduly idealized. Emmanuel's older brother Pomme has his fingers cut off in an industrial accident, and Roch Carrier's Philibert, after fleeing to the city from a father who could be Caleb Gare's twin brother, dies in a car accident.⁴¹ The city children in Gabrielle Roy's *Bonheur d'Occasion* (1945) lead miserable lives.

Clearly, for the Quebec novelist, as for the Québécois, it is difficult to revise an identity so comprehensively defined by a relationship with the soil. Despite English-Canadians' complaints about their own lack of a clear identity, obviously one *too* clearly defined can also be a disadvantage. But now writers are beginning to realize that the country of the mind they create is as important as the "real" landscape "out there" which the Romantic nationalists believed in so firmly all the time they were creating it. As George Bowering writes in *A Short Sad Book*, his post-modernist satire of old-fashioned nationalist literary criticism,

one time I woke up & said I love this country
I love this country I was going to write
I was going to write this country I love.⁴²

NOTES

I would like to thank Susan Beckmann and Paul Denham of the English Department, and Monique Genuist, of the French Department, University of Saskatchewan, for their helpful suggestions.

¹Even contemporaries found this poem excessive. Pelham Edgar, as an undergraduate, wrote *à propos* of Archibald Lampman's *Among the Millet*, "many a critic will doubtless expect the accustomed hymn to the swathed but gigantic limbs of the infant Canada" (Toronto *Varsity*, 2 March 1889, p. 119); cf. Earle Birney, "Canada: Case History" (1945) and "Canada: Case History, 1969 Version" in *The Collected Poems of Earle Birney* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1975), p. 125; II, 175.

²See Robert Pattison, *The Child Figure in English Literature* (Athens, Ga.: The University of Georgia Press, 1978) and J.H. van den Berg, *The Changing Nature of Man: Introduction to a Historical Psychology* (1961; New York: Dell, Delta, 1975).

³See *Poor Monkey: The Child in Literature* (London: Rockliff, 1957).

⁴Carl Jung sees the child as a prime symbol of self-realization, or better, as an archetype of individuation; see *Psyche and Symbol*, ed. Violet de Laczlo (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1958).

⁵Jean Jacques Rousseau, *The Political Writings of Jean Jacques Rousseau*, ed. C.E. Vaughan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1915), II, 437.

⁶*Roughing It in the Bush*, abr. ed. (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1962), p. 30.

⁷*The Bush Garden* (Toronto: Anansi, 1971), ii.

⁸Konrad Lorenz, *King Solomon's Ring: New Light on Animal Ways* (London: Methuen, 1952).

⁹Wallace Stegner, *Wolf Willow* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1955), p. 21.

¹⁰Schlegel, reprinted in *Literary Criticism from Pope to Croce*, ed. Gay Wilson Allen and Henry Hayden Clark (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1962), p. 187.

¹¹*Selections from Canadian Poets*, (1864; rpt. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973), ix.

¹²"French-Canadian Literature," in *Bourinot, Marquis, Roy: Criticism*, ed. Clara Thomas (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973), p. 452; p. 489.

¹³*The Canadian West in Fiction* (1949; rev. ed. Toronto: Ryerson, 1970), p. 52.

¹⁴*Sarah Binks* (1947; rpt. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1971), xvii, xix.

¹⁵& *Une Saison dans le Vie d'Emmanuel* (Montréal: Editions du Jour, 1965), p. 13.

¹⁶See Jeanne d'Arc Lortie, *La Poésie nationaliste au Canada française, 1606-1867* (Québec: Presses de l'Université Laval, 1975) and Maurice Lemire, *Les Grands thèmes nationalistes du roman historique canadien-français* (Québec: Presses de l'Université Laval, 1970).

¹⁷*Dans un gant de fer* (Montréal: Cercle du Livre de France, 1965).

¹⁸Cited by Mirielle Servais-Maquoi, *Le Roman de la terre au Québec* (Québec: Presses de l'Université Laval, 1974), p. 11, from J.-S. Tassie, "La Société a travers le roman canadien-français" in *Les Archives des Lettres Canadiens* (Montreal: Fides, 1964), III, 156.

¹⁹Marie-Claire Blais, *Une Saison dans la vie d'Emmanuel* (Montréal: Editions du Jour, 1965), p. 10; *A Season in the Life of Emmanuel*, tr. Derek Coltman (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1966), p. 7.

²⁰*Le Roman de la terre au Québec* (Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1974), p. 6.

²¹Servais-Maquoi, p. 15.

²²Cf. Tassie, p. 157-8, "celui qui dominant la scène était sans conteste le père."

²³See George Boas, *The Cult of Childhood* (London: The Warburg Institute, University of London, 1966), p. 8.

²⁴Jacques Hébert gives us an unsuccessful child-revolutionary in the eighteen-year-old Francois Sigouin of his *Les Ecoeurants* (Montréal: Editions du Jour, 1966).

²⁵Thomas, "Traill's Canadian Settlers," *Canadian Children's Literature*, No. 5/6 (1976), p. 36; p. 37.

²⁷*Robinson Crusoe* was the only book that Rousseau would have allowed Emile to read.

²⁷*Les Anciens Canadiens* (1863; Montréal: Fides, 1970), p. 268; tr. *Canadians of Old* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1974), p. 273.

²⁸*Les Anciens Canadiens*, p. 268; *Canadians of Old*, p. 273.

²⁹Lemire notes that these novels inflict a kind of "psychological revenge" on the conquerors (p. 175). He also quotes from a speech given in 1918 by the Abbé Groulx of *L'Action Française*, whose novel *Au Cap Blomidon* (1932) contains the rejection theme but not the intermarriage theme. Groulx argues against mixed marriages because they inevitably lead to "anglicisation" (p. 16).

³⁰The English translations of *Les Anciens Canadiens* were: *The Canadians of Old*, tr. G.M. Pennée (Québec: Desbarats, 1864); *Seigneur d'Haberville*, tr. G.M. Pennée

(Toronto: Musson, 1929); *The Canadians of Old*, tr. Charles G.D. Roberts (New York: Appelton, 1890); *Cameron of Lochhiel*, tr. Charles G.D. Roberts (Boston: L.C. Page, 1905).

³¹David Carpenter made this suggestion in his graduate class in Canadian literature at the University of Saskatchewan, 1979-80.

³²Dick Harrison, *Unnamed Country: The Struggle for Canadian Prairie Fiction* (Edmonton: University of Alberta, 1977), p. 152.

³³According to the Communications Officer at the Saskatchewan Cultural College, Proudfoot is a common name among Blackfoot Indians of the Blood Reserve, Alberta. *The Studhorse Man* (1969: Markham, Ont.: PaperJacks, 1971) is set in Alberta.

³⁴John E. Logan [pseud. Barry Dane] in his "National Literature" (originally published in *The Week*, 21 August 1884, pp. 600-601, rpt. in *The Search for English Canadian Literature*, ed. Carl Ballstadt, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975) uses the pattern of English history to answer the question "Can we have a distinctive Canadian literature?" His answer was yes – but not until 2584. He feels it will take so long because Canada lacks a distinctive race: "Had the Normans overrun England, obliterating almost every trace of the Saxon, as we have the North American Indian, the England of today might be but a differing branch of a continental race and language" (115). Our national poetry would, by same analogy, best be written in "Anglo-Ojibbeway."

³⁵*The Diviners* (1974; Toronto: Bantam, 1975), p. 180. Subsequent references are to this edition and page numbers are inserted in the text.

³⁶Cf. Robert Kroetsch, "Stone Hammer Poem" in *The Stone Hammer Poems, 1960-1975* (Nanaimo, B.C.: Oolichan, 1975). To the comment on John Newlove's poem "The Pride" – "I wonder how people could ever think that just because we are living on the same land that we took away from the Indians that we could ever consider ourselves to be children of the Indians" – Margaret Laurence replies "possibly what John meant was something like the fact that, hopefully, we might attain enough understanding of the Indian culture and way of life, so that we could, in a sense, not consider ourselves as the children of the Indians but consider that in a way (if you go back far enough) all mankind has common ancestors" (from "Literature and Canadian Culture: An Interview with Margaret Laurence" by Bernice Lever in *Margaret Laurence*, ed. William New (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1977), p. 30.

³⁷*Surfacing* (1972; Markham, Ont.: PaperJacks, 1973), p. 129. Subsequent references are to this edition.

³⁸*Grain* (1926; Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1963), p. 58; p. 118.

³⁹*Wild Geese* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1925), p. 145.

⁴⁰Michael Taft, English Department, University of Saskatchewan, suggested this to me.

⁴¹Roch Carrier, *Il est par-la, le soleil* (Montréal: Editions du Jour, 1970).

⁴²*A Short Sad Book* (Vancouver: Talon Books, 1977), lines 15, 16, 18.

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