Kevin Major: Newfoundland's problem novelist

Lloyd Brown

Résumé: *Lloyd Brown examine les trois premiers romans de Kevin Major,* Hold Fast, Far from shore *et* Thirty-six exposures, *et cherche à montrer, par-delà la maîtrise formelle du romancier et les faiblesses de son parti pris moral, comment les auteurs régionalistes peuvent imposer leur vision dans le cadre d'une expérience de prime abord limitée.*

Kevin Major's first three novels – *Hold fast, Far from shore,* and *Thirty-six exposures* – have been widely acclaimed. For example, *Hold fast* and *Far from shore* have both won the *School library journal* Best Book of the Year award. *Hold fast* has also won the Canada Council award for Children's Literature and has earned international recognition by being placed on the Hans Christian Andersen Honor List. All three novels have been published by Dell Publishing Company, which claims to bring together under the Laurel-Leaf imprint "outstanding works of fiction...particularly suitable for young adult readers." Reviewers and critics have also been exuberant in their praise of these novels. Egoff (1981) commends *Hold fast* for its strong sense of regionalism (75). Cameron (1981) describes Chris of *Far from shore* as "Holden Caulfield in the accents of Newfoundland" (38). Neilsen (1984) says of *Thirty-six exposures* that it is "a celebration of youthful courage and vitality," and "Like all of Major's novels, it is positive and uplifting" (28). In light of this popularity and praise it is important to examine these novels in some detail and, by comparing them with other contemporary novels for adolescents, to say something about their success and failure and discuss Major's achievement as a writer of modern realistic fiction for youth.

Although the reviewers have sometimes been extravagant in their praise of Major's first three novels, the praise has not been without foundation. First, Major succeeds admirably in revealing the teenage mind, in portraying adolescents struggling with the loss of loved ones, coping with the urges of sex, struggling to find their place among their peers, and trying to establish their independence. For example, he is superb in his portrayal, in *Hold fast*, of Michael's attempt to keep his composure after his parents' death. Like most outport males, Michael is not given to crying. But in the cemetery he finds himself weeping. He describes his experience this way:

I must a shook my head a dozen times to drive the damn stuff away. And I stood there then, soft as mud, bawling my eyes out. Water pouring out like nobody's ever died before. (1)

The expressions "drive the damn stuff away," "bawling my eyes out," and "water pouring out" are exaggerated, unsentimental terms. They are carefully chosen to reveal the struggle in the mind of a young boy who, though "soft as mud," is manfully trying to control his emotions and who, in trying to maintain a strong male image, is careful not to display sentimentality or tenderness.

Major is also successful in portraying Michael's mental confusion after the death of his parents. This confusion is created by the very structure of the language in this breathless passage, with its disconnected, short, staccato sentences:

Run. Run, you crazy fool of a son. Run through the paths. Jump outa the way or them thoughts'll grab ya. Bring ya up standin. Choke ya. Take away your last living breath, clean and holy. (8)

Major also shows Michael recalling experiences with his father from his early childhood and sharing stories about his father and mother with his grandfather. These are attempts by Michael to establish continuity, to savour what has been lost. The language, the experiences and the stories all make concrete and help the reader to experience the struggle of the young mind to express its bewilderment and to find meaning and stability when faced with loss.

As Saltman (1987) points out, these novels also show Major attempting to "push back the boundaries of the adolescent novel by experimenting with structure" (67). In each subsequent novel Major explores a different structural device, each providing a broader perspective. In *Hold fast* Major uses the first-person point of view, so familiar in the problem novels of such American writers as Judy Blume, S.E. Hinton, and Paul Zindel. While it conveys a limited vision, it does create for adolescents an appealing confessional tone. In *Far from shore* Major uses the technique of multiple narratives. Here we experience a multiplicity of perspectives – Chris's and his mother's, father's, and sister's – of the same issue or experience. Though the repetition is sometimes tedious, this technique does allow the reader to experience something of the complexity of the issues and a fuller understanding of the experiences. *Thirty-six exposures*, told from the third-person point of view, is composed of thirty-six chapters, each a photographic shot (an exposure from the title) of Lorne, his friends, his family, his school, and the landscape. Both the third-person point of view, though not wholly successful, and the multiple photographic shots show Major attempting to move away from the single vision of the first-person narrator to a less restricted multiplicity of perspectives.

Unlike most problem novels, whose settings lack particularity and could be anywhere in North America, Major's novels have a strong sense of place.

Through his many references to hunting, skidooing, snaring rabbits, and fishing; through brief descriptions of incidents such as caplin rolling on the beach (*Hold fast*) and a boat landing with its catch of seals (*Thirty-six exposures*); through his creation of local characters such as the kind and wise grandfather in *Hold fast* and the blustering, frequently-drunken father in *Far from shore*; and through his use of the local dialect, Major captures the local uniqueness. It is especially in his use of dialect, in his capturing its peculiar vocabulary, rhythm and idiom, that he creates a strong sense of region. He writes it confidently, without a hint of self-consciousness. The reader is relaxed in reading these novels, knowing the author understands his characters and their language, and does not doubt that the language they use is theirs. There are no serious slips to destroy the illusion. To read *Hold fast*, for example, is to hear again the blunt, often testy language of outport school students and to be reminded of half-forgotten words and phrases. Consider these words from Michael (*Hold fast*), who is objecting to the way his Uncle Ted speaks to his Aunt Ellen:

> And what he said to Aunt Ellen. Sure you wouldn't talk to a dog like that. I knows mom wouldn't a hauled off and clobbered anybody who said that to her. No, it's a laugh she wouldn't've. (66)

The unaccented "sure," the comparison with "a dog," the ungrammatical "knows," the familiar exaggeration for hit – "hauled off and clobbered," and the idiomatic "it's a laugh she wouldn't've" all create a ring of truth and mark it as the authentic voice of outport adolescents.

However, to read these novels in quick succession – that is, to spend an extended period of time in the world they create – is a tedious experience. This is so because these novels provide a narrow range of experiences and an extremely limited vision of reality. Like most problem novelists, Major concerns himself in these novels with the problems of youth – problems with adults, with drugs, alcohol and sex. Adults are seen as tyrants, and institutions such as the home, school and church, institutions which have always been a civilizing influence in our lives, have been emasculated. For example, because of the death of his parents, Michael has been removed from his natural home and forced to live with his uncle and aunt. Uncle Ted is an oppressive despot who runs his household "Like we was prisoners in a jail cell" (69). Aunt Ellen is reduced to silence by her husband and spends her afternoons watching soap operas. Chris (*Far from shore*) goes to church, but for the wrong reasons. He is a "server" because he gets "a kick out of being up close to where everything is going on" (12). He thinks he'll stick with it "to keep on...the good side" of Rev. Wheaton, who may ask him to be a counsellor at church camp, a place where there is some religion, but "you don't notice it" (47). Neither is school a very encouraging, influential institution for the young people in these novels. For example, Michael finds it a place of conflict and prejudice, and Lorne (*Thirty-*

six exposures) sees it as a frustrating place, one dominated by narrow minded, unimaginative, vindictive adults. His battle with the authoritarian, vengeful history teacher, Mr. Ryan, is the central conflict of the book.

The fact is that Major's adolescents are cut off from the tradition of care that parents, teachers, and ministers usually represent. It is true that adult females like Aunt Ellen in *Hold fast* and the mother in *Far from shore* are sensitive, generous people; but they are too passive, too overwhelmed by circumstances to be very influential. They seem to be subdued by the male bluster and violence, thus depriving the young people of their generous caring and nurture. For instance, when Chris fails grade ten, his mother can only throw up her hands and exclaim "I don't know what to do with him" and conclude that she'll have to "leave him alone...and perhaps he'll learn" (54). This is in sharp contrast to Mollie Hunter's treatment of her heroine, Bridie McShane in *Sound of chariots*. Bridie grows up in a tradition from which she learns and develops. Adults in her life are not stupid, weak and violent. They have their faults, but they also possess courage, integrity, and wisdom which are passed on to her. From her father she learns the courage and perseverance necessary to develop her gift as a writer. And from her teacher, Mrs. Mackie, who made her heart sing by telling her that she "glimpsed the shadow of the edge of the meaning of poetry" (58), she learned the confidence and skill to be a writer. Both of these adults, as well as her mother and others, initiated her into a tradition that gave structure and meaning to her life, that helped her develop a sense of who she was.

Major's young people, on the other hand, are alienated, seemingly cut off from their inheritance, lacking a "holdin' ground." Michael, after his sojourn in the wasteland (St. Albert), returns home hoping to find stability and order. However, three days after he arrives, his grandfather, whom he respects and who is the one person able to help him make sense of the "whole friggin world" (212) dies. Lorne, near the end of *Thirty-six exposures*, symbolically "sprinted ahead, alone" (154). The poem at the end of the book says that he left the university for the freedom of Paris: "He broke free – running, panting –/to meet himself along the Seine" (155). There is nothing to show reconciliation with or respect for the adults left behind, adults whom he has hurt. Neither is there much hope that this adventure, this lighting out for new territory, will ensure for Lorne an easy transition into maturity. He has no sense of obligation to learn from "the Van Goghs in Paris" (155). This escape to Paris is not likely to solve any of his problems if he meets only "himself along the Seine" (155). If he is to develop any sense of the promise of his own life, if he is to make "his picture" (155), he will first need to submit to and learn from the heritage he finds there, but there is no indication he is willing to do that.

Because the home, the church and the school seem unable to help or give direction to their lives, the characters in these novels are obliged to draw on their own resources and to devote themselves to their own self-fulfilment, to

the achievement of their own freedom and rights. The result is a debilitating self-indulgence and an absence of concern for others. The real self, these books seem to suggest, is found in rebellion, not in accepting institutional values; in defiance, not in the recognition of authority. The real self seems to be the private, not the public one. There are no public heroes, just private individuals "doing their thing." They have a depraved energy that adults seem unable to counter.

This is not to say that they are individualists marching to a different drummer, like Holden Caulfield, with whom they have been compared. It is true that Major's protagonists resemble Caulfield in their alienation and rebelliousness and in their use of a breezy, colloquial, hyperbolic language. However, the comparison cannot be pressed further without distortion. Holden Caulfield is an innocent in a phoney, dirty world. This innocence provides an ironic contrast which judges the world he inhabits. He is also a reflective, sensitive individual who recognizes his moral responsibility. He won't throw snowballs for fear of disturbing the snow's nice, clean whiteness. And he cleans vulgar language off the school wall because he doesn't want the "little kids" to see it. This desire to protect children is expressed in another incident. He tells his sister that he'd like to be a catcher in the rye, standing at the edge of a cliff where children are playing, catching them as they fall over:

> I mean if they're running and they don't look where they're going, I'd have to come from somewhere and catch them. That's all I'd do all day. I'd just be the catcher in the rye and all. (156)

There is no such ironic contrast in Major's books. His young people may reject adults, but not the adult world. Michael complains that his uncle Ted is violent and rigid in his thinking and attitudes, but he himself is just as violent and stubborn as his uncle. He bewails the fact that "the friggin truth don't work around here" (135), while he practices "cracking off the big ones...like it was the gospel truth" (158). Chris whines about his mother's flirtation with her boss, but he himself is an indiscriminate carouser. Whereas Caulfield cleans vulgarity from the walls, Chris and Michael are the kind who would put it there. Major's adolescents are in the main unsympathetic characters – obnoxious, narrow and rigid in their views, insensitive to the feelings of others, blind to the necessity for compromise. Michael sees everything as black or white and sees everyone as for him or against him. When he wants the drunk thrown off the bus on the way to St. Albert, the bus driver ventures to say that he can't put him off the bus "on the highway in the middle of nowhere" and adds, "Just leave him alone and he'll go off to sleep" (46). Michael shows no understanding of this view and fumes, "All the stupid driver done was take his part" (46). Later he describes his fight with Kentson to his Aunt Flo. She comments innocently, "That's your side of the story, is it Michael?" He responds sharply, "No, it's not my side of the story! It's what happened" (132). It is this

self-righteousness, this supreme confidence in the correctness of his own view, so typical of Major's protagonists, that makes him so objectionable. It is also this bold assurance that he is always right that makes it impossible for him to compromise. Why should he compromise if only he knows the truth? It also explains his dominance over and manipulation of his cousin, Curtis. Curtis, a retiring, sensitive boy given to reading books, is at first rejected by Michael as a wimp, too passive in his relationship with his father, too weak ("there was more muscle on a turnip" [83]) to fight and ignorant of the manly ways of outport life, such as hunting and skidooing. It is only when he begins to speak and behave like Michael that he is accepted by him. This change becomes clearly evident when they both run away from home and camp in the National Park. Here he sheds the manners and civility earlier practiced at home and becomes a primitive. When, as Michael puts it, they were "all fixed away nice" at the campground, Curtis expresses his pleasure: "Shit, old man, this is goin' to be all right". And Michael pays him the ultimate compliment: "The dumb nut was starting to sound like me" (179). By the end of the book the transformation is complete. He is almost a reflection of Michael, and Michael recognizes it with approval:

> If someone had said two months before, when I first laid eyes on the guy, that we'd be here in the woods, laughing and carrying on like we'd done, I would a said they was nuts. Goes to show how much a fellow can change. (199)

Michael, of course, is too unyielding in his relationship with others, too self-assured, too blind to the complexity of events and human motives to change himself and to recognize the irony in the last sentence. The fact is that emulating Michael is no solution to Curtis's problems. Primitivism, vulgarity, and unbridled freedom are not likely to improve his relationship with his father; they did little to improve Michael's relationship with adults or peers who disagreed with him.

In *Far from shore* the world of politics and social issues impinges more directly on Chris than it did on Michael in *Hold fast*. Chris lives in a world of unemployment, family breakdown, and alcoholism. We are expected to believe that there is a causal connection between them: that unemployment leads to family breakdown and alcoholism and that all three lead to Chris's rebelliousness. It would be difficult to argue that these are not related, but they provide a too-easy explanation for Chris's mindless hooliganism. He is an older Michael, what we should expect Michael to become. Like Michael, he is vulgar and inconsiderate of the feelings of others. He has the same limited interests (fishing, hunting, and skidooing), is reluctant to take responsibility for his actions, is stubborn, violent and self-indulgent. These characteristics cannot all be explained by references to economics and sociology. Chris's problems are more spiritual than economic.

These character flaws seem to express themselves more intensely, more per-

vasively and with more serious consequences in Chris's actions than they do in Michael's. Because Chris drinks, he becomes involved in vandalism and is taken to court. Because of his carelessness and lack of responsibility, a boy almost drowns. Because he is older, his vulgarity seems to be more explicit and more crude. One thinks of this monologue of Chris's about his and his friend's attitude to girls:

> You comes across some of the sleaziest-looking broads you'll ever lay eyes on walking the roads over there [Blakeside]. You needs a combination lock on your zipper almost.... But Stan don't give a shit what they looks like. They're all the same with a paper bag over their heads he says.
>
> I've got to tell the truth though. I never done it with either one of them, not yet.... If I had a truck tire innertube for a safe, maybe I would, because with them broads you never know what they got. (71-72)

I have never read anything in literature for youth that is less elevated, anything more coarse than this.

In this novel, as well as in *Hold fast* and *Thirty-six exposures*, sex has lost its sense of mystery. It is no longer a matter of morality or of significance. It does not motivate serious thought or inspire poetry. It is just another topic to be exploited. Those who say that literature is a reflection of life argue that this is the way life is: that teenagers, especially males, treat sex this way in reality. Two points need to be made in response to this argument. First, this is not the only way life is. There are still teenagers who regard sex as an expression of love, who also prefer civility to crudity and beauty to ugliness. Any novel that does not take this into account misrepresents reality. Second, a good novel is more than a reflection of society. It is a new creation, a world in which human experience is explored and we are, as Leavis (1962) puts it, made aware "of the possibilities of life" (10). A novel, especially one written from the first-person point of view, if it is to make us aware of these possibilities, needs characters who are intelligent, perceptive and who, as Egoff (1980) puts it, "have an ardent curiosity about life" (365). There are such characters in some young adult novels. One thinks of Owen and Natalie in LeGuin's *Very far away from anywhere else*. They are a bright, talented couple who care for each other. They discuss their future plans, struggle with the place of sex in their lives, and consider the nature of love. The result is a thoughtful book whose language allows intelligent talk, one that makes some claim on our reflective life (Altieri 56-57). Two examples will illustrate. On one occasion Owen confronts Natalie about sex. Her response is, "No.... It isn't right," and he comments:

> She didn't mean morally right. She meant right the way the music or the thought comes right, comes clear, is true. Maybe that's the same thing as moral rightness. I don't know. (55-56)

Later, Owen attends a concert at which Natalie plays the viola. He describes the effect her playing had on him:

> There was glory in it.... And that was partly love. I mean real love. In the song I had seen Natalie whole, the way she really was, and I loved her. It was not an emotion or a desire, it was a confirmation, it was glory, like seeing the stars. (71)

The notion that rightness is more than convention and that love, being a part of rightness, is linked to exaltation and is worthy of celebration can only be expressed by one who is thoughtful and intelligent and by one who has concern for others. This is what we miss in Major's problem novels – being in the presence of young people who are thoughtful and who show concern for others.

At the beginning of *Thirty-six exposures* one thinks that Lorne is different from Michael and Chris, that he probably signals a turning point in Major's writing. He is, it seems, more thoughtful than they are. He writes and reads poetry and is a photographer. One thinks that he may provide some balance to the two rowdymen, Michael and Chris. He does not. In the first place, although he writes poems, he seems to lack the sensibilities of a poet. He shows very little interest in ideas, shows no special interest in language, and lacks the necessary curiosity about the world to be a poet. Lorne does not seem to be committed to poetry. He writes poems, but his heart is not in them. There is no passion in them and no delight in language. Most of his poems seem more functional than poetic – half of them are written for a school social studies project.

Writing does not seem to be central in his life, certainly not in the way it is in the life of Bridie McShane in *A sound of chariots*. She is shown to have the instincts of a writer very early in her life as she writes for her teacher, Miss Dunstan, "lovingly choosing and picking among her pirate's treasure of words for the ones that had the right sound and colour about them" (55). Hunter also portrays the development of her poetic mind. One thinks, for example, of her sudden, acute awareness of the world and her own mortality after the death of her father. She developed a heightened degree of perception of "each passing moment as a fragment of the totality of Life itself" (237). The narrator describes one of her revelations:

> Some late roses still clung to briar-stems trailing across the wall, and staring at them as if she had never seen a rose before and never would again. She noted all the minute gradations of colour in each shallow pink of translucent petals. (134)

Such epiphanies supplied her with "so many ideas she wanted to write down" (242) and so many images she wanted to turn into poems. In reading this book one is struck by the importance of writing in Bridie's life. It is a means of coping with the death of her father and of making sense of her own life.

There is no suggestion in *Thirty-six exposures* that Lorne's writing will help

him to understand himself or that it is a means of exploring his experiences and discovering more about the world. He reads Yevtushenko, but he seems to have learned nothing from him: he has not been influenced by Yevtushenko's open-mindedness, his strong sense of social consciousness, or his passion for language and ideas. He may read Yevtushenko, but he imitates his friend, the coarse, boorish Trevor. This is evident early in the book. The narrator records Lorne's thoughts about death:

> Sometimes when he was alone something would trigger his thinking about what it meant for him to be alive. And that eventually he would be dead. The thought that there might be nothing else he could know about in the millions of years of time wrenched him in fright. It was absurd to now be so conscious yet to think that after he died there would be nothing of him forevermore. (18)

But this musing does not in Lorne's case lead to heightened awareness. It is so painful as to "force his mind onto something else" (18). What is this something else? It is thoughts of Gwen, and here he reminds us of Trevor and the recent chance he had to "friggin do it" (19). Even if he had thought of copulation as an antidote to death, one wishes the author had put it more delicately. By the end of the book Lorne is almost an imitation of Trevor. He speaks like him and acts like him. Elaine, his friend, recognizes the change. When he tries to molest her in the car, she characterizes him accurately as "trying too hard to act like you think fellows should be acting, trying to be too much like Trevor" (129). We are reminded of Curtis's transformation in *Hold fast* and realize that the theme has not changed a great deal: that civility, thoughtfulness, poetry and art seem still to be no match for crudity and mindless vulgarity.

The narrow range of these books, as I intimated earlier, is related to their language, in the main, the witty, uninhibited vernacular of Newfoundland youth. It is often successful in creating humour and the frenetic bluster of teenagers. Michael describes his Aunt Flo's kitchen:

> A newspaper left on the coffee table was like someone had committed a crime.... If you so much as mentioned the word dust, I daresay you'd be sucked up into the Electrolux feet first.
>
> The floor...just like the mirror you practically had to hold your breath so's you wouldn't dull the shine. (*Hold fast* 53)

This kind of writing may be authentic, but after a while it becomes tiresome. There is just too much reliance on hyperbole and a too self-conscious striving for images to create the ridiculous and the grotesque. Jennifer, in *Far from shore*, is not just contrary, she's the kind of person who "if she swallowed a nail, it'd come out a screw" 15). Rideout, in the same novel, is not a loud-mouth but has "a friggin mouth on him big enough to drive a tractor-trailer through" (61). Juanita Hickey, in *Hold fast*, not only has "a face on her like a turbot" but

was also such "a pain that if you fired her into a barrel of pickle she'd make it boil over" (115). When reading these novels, one longs, as Rees (1980) says when discussing the language of Paul Zindel's novels, "for just one ordinary...metaphor to leaven the unpalatable richness of the fare" (27).

The repeated use of hyperbole in these two books helps define the world the reader is drawn into, one characterized by excess, bravado, incivility, and lack of refinement. There is in Major's use of figures of speech shock rather than subtle surprises. Instead of delight in their aptness and pleasure in their inventiveness, one feels only irritation at their excess. Neither is figurative language used here as a form of discovery, a tool for exploration, a way of making more exact and more concrete our understanding of things. Mollie Hunter shows us what the possibilities are in *A sound of chariots*. One thinks of confrontation between Bridie and Billy Carstairs, the bully whom she hated. He pushed his face "peeringly into hers," and she noticed "the skin of it unhealthy white and spattered with freckles like the skin of a new potato that still had specks of earth clinging to it" (93). There is also the image of luminous flowers which Bridie passes one evening on her way to her grandmother's:

> In the unlit window of one of the tall houses gliding past her she saw a great vase full of full-blown roses, white roses looking with soft, ghostly faces at her out of the purple-black darkness of the empty room behind them. (241-242)

And then there is the brief moment of revelation when a fly rests on her, its wings registering "their whole peacock kaleidoscope of colour on her sight" (134). These are fresh, arresting images, images that encourage us to look closely at the world. They give us a new perspective on the commonplace. To read these lines is to become more acutely aware of the world, to see it differently because we look at it through the eyes of one who has seen it clearly and thought about it. It is also to share the author's delight in language. For Hunter, by telling her story from the third-person point of view, is able to assume a voice that has a greater range and is more mature than her protagonist's, allowing her to make fuller use of the complexities of language. That is not to say, however, that the third-person point of view ensures this. In *Thirty-six exposures* there is so much dialogue that the role of the omniscient narrator is much weaker than it might have been. The result is that we are obliged to read too much of the inane and vulgar dialogue which characterized *Hold fast* and *Far from shore*. Furthermore, the language of Major's narrator in *Thirty-six exposures* is uneven. While it is, in the main, serviceable and sometimes effective ("while he waited he lay back on his bed in a square of evening sun" [59]), it is frequently infelicitous and banal. Consider this uninspired, vacuous ending to a brief description of Lorne on a lookout with his coat open to catch the wind: "He leaned forward, a human sail, atop his world, he concluded; bloody dramatic" (5). Such pedestrian prose surely limits the writer's quality of thought and feelings about the events and characters of the novel.

In consequence, it fails to provide readers with the quality of language, thought and images necessary to help them understand, talk intelligently about, and think new thoughts about the real world.

Major's problem novels, then, are distinctive. They differ from most such novels because they establish a strong sense of region and reflect aspects of the culture in which the protagonists live. They do not, however, as Fulford (1978) extravagantly claims, set down "a grand and generous and overflowing heritage" (15). The Newfoundland heritage includes courage, perseverance, regard for one's elders, respect for learning, and acceptance of responsibility. There is little evidence of these qualities in these books.

They deal frankly with the perennial problems of adolescents, such as death, family disputes, peer rivalry and jealousies, drinking and sexual desire. But like most problem novels which deal with these topics, they present a one-sided picture of the world. They portray adults as tyrants; institutions like the home, school, and church as weak and without significant influence; and adolescents as alienated and self-indulgent. While Major captures admirably the vocabulary, rhythm, and idiom of the vernacular of Newfoundland youth, he, by depending almost exclusively on it as a narrative technique, limits himself to the perspectives of youth and assumes their voice with its lack of elegance, its immaturity, and its narrow range. If we regard novels, to use Inglis's description, as "imaginative forms of life" (310) which explore the possibilities for human action, create a sense of hope and make us aware of both beauty and ugliness, and help us to tell the difference between the two, we will be disappointed with *Hold fast*, *Far from shore* and *Thirty-six exposures*.

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