

NATURE, CULTURE AND LOVE:
MAZO DE LA ROCHE'S
EXPLORERS OF THE DAWN AND
THE THUNDER OF NEW WINGS

by
D. M. Daymond

Mazo de la Roche's writing reveals a consistent concern with the relationship between nature and culture. In many of her earliest works this dialectic is embodied in the conflict between individualistic characters who express feeling and intuition and repressed and repressive figures who fear disorder, defend tradition and cling to barren respectability. The tensions created by these contradictory values are dramatized in de la Roche's early short stories and, in particular, in two of her earliest and less well known novels — *Explorers of the Dawn* (1922) and *The Thunder of New Wings* (1925). These works are especially interesting because they foreshadow the more sophisticated patterns of de la Roche's later work and illustrate her faith in man's capacity for love as a source of reconciliation between the contradictory needs associated with nature and culture.

Explorers of the Dawn was published when de la Roche was in her forty-fourth year. This work, a collection of ten related episodes, is unified by tone, setting, character and theme and can be read as a single story.¹ Six of the chapters were published separately as short stories and one of these, "Buried Treasure," was the first story which de la Roche submitted to Ellery Sedgwick, the editor of *The Atlantic Monthly*. Its acceptance prompted her to submit several more:

In adapting [*sic*] my story, "Buried Treasure," last August you were kind enough to say that you trusted that it would be the beginning of a long and pleasant acquaintance. . . . I have been wondering whether you would like to have me write a little series of stories about [the Curzons] so that your readers might get to know them and to look forward to their future adventures.²

¹The de la Roche papers at the University of Toronto include a manuscript of this work entitled "Freedom."

²The Atlantic Monthly Press, de la Roche Papers, Mazo de la Roche, letter to E. Sedgwick, January 4, 1915.

By February of 1919, de la Roche was considering a collection of these stories:

I shall always take your advice and now I am in great need of it. I have written six stories of the boys which, it seems to me, would make quite a respectable little volume. Do you think I could arrange to have them published before next Christmas? What publishing house do you recommend and how should I approach them, timidly or aggressively? Of these six stories one has appeared in *The Century*, one in *The Atlantic*; you have another for *The Atlantic* (you really have it you know); the *Woman's Home Companion* has two yet to appear and I have just finished the sixth which has plenty of action and is not at all subtle.³

Explorers of the Dawn was published partially as a result of the influence of Christopher Morley, who began corresponding with de la Roche after reading some of the episodes as short stories in *The Atlantic Monthly*; he suggested to Alfred Knopf that a collection of these stories might be popular. When *Explorers of the Dawn* was completed, Morley wrote a foreword for it in which he compared the book with tales of whimsy and sentiment by Kenneth Grahame (*Dream Days*) and J. M. Barrie (*Peter Pan*).⁴ In the months following its publication, *Explorers of the Dawn* joined *The Beautiful and Damned* by F. Scott Fitzgerald and Louis Hémon's *Maria Chapdelaine* on the best-seller lists.

An outline of *Explorers of the Dawn* appears in an early short story, "The Year's at the Spring," which was published in 1911 by *MacFadden Fiction Lovers Magazine*. This story was not incorporated directly into the longer work because it is partially a synopsis of the events which appear there in an expanded form. It introduces many of the major characters of *Explorers of the Dawn* and suggests themes which are more completely developed in that work. Some of the events from "The Year's at the Spring" appear in a slightly modified form in "The Jilt," one of the previously unpublished episodes of *Explorers of the Dawn*.

Explorers of the Dawn recounts the adventures of three young boys whose explorations lead them to a series of discoveries concerning the nature of existence. They encounter such human emotions as jealousy, grief, hate and love, and they acquire some insight into old age, poverty and death. The events are presented in the first person by one of the children, John Curzon, who is now an adult reflecting on experiences from his childhood.

³*Ibid.*, Mazo de la Roche, letter to E. Sedgwick, February 10, 1919.

⁴Christopher Morley, "Foreword" to Mazo de la Roche's *Explorers of the Dawn* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1922), 10.

John, his older brother, David, also known as Angel, and his younger brother, Alexander, alias the Seraph, are forced by the sudden death of their mother and their father's departure for South America to leave the country house where they were born. The children, "unaccustomed to restraint,"⁵ are left in the care of their father's former governess, Mrs. Handsomebody. As a result, they are introduced to "an atmosphere of drabness and restraint," symbolized by the "dry, blistered planks of Mrs. Handsomebody's backyard" (*ED*, 16) which is quite unlike the "springy country turf" (*ED*, 131) of their former home. Mrs. Handsomebody's home, a "tall, narrow house, in the shadow of the grey Cathedral in the rather grey and grim old town of Misthorpe" (*ED*, 14), is a virtual prison for the boys although it functions more as a fortress for Mrs. Handsomebody. Its solemn gothic atmosphere is stifling. The parlour with "stuffed birds in a glass case" (*ED*, 34), "closely shut windows and drawn blinds" (*ED*, 68) and "the portrait of the late Mr. Handsomebody, presiding like some whiskered ghost," (*ED*, 18) suggest the lifeless and constricting atmosphere into which the Curzon boys, "thirsty young animals," intrude "like a wild disturbing wind" (*ED*, 18).

The tension between the Curzon boys and Mrs. Handsomebody is partly the result of the inevitable conflict between generations but, more significantly, it is the product of a confrontation between tradition, respectability and rationality (culture) and imagination, vitality and instinct (nature). This tension is central to each of the episodes of *Explorers of the Dawn*. The austere and angular Mrs. Handsomebody, with her "bombazine dress, hard black bonnet, reticule, and umbrella, gripped like an avenging sword" (*ED*, 244), is a representative of duty, responsibility, routine, and conventional attitudes. She approaches life with a "mathematical precision" (*ED*, 135) and attends lectures on the "Application of Science to Human Relationships" (*ED*, 226). She is regarded as a "gaoler" (*ED*, 238) by the boys; their "abounding energy" (*ED*, 219) chafes under the "grey decorum" (*ED*, 241) of her rule. However, despite her repressive appearances, there is evidence which intimates that Mrs. Handsomebody's restrained and conventional behavior masks a portion of her personality which has long been suppressed. Her maiden name, Wigmore, connotes both a concern with appearances and a connection with artificiality. More significantly, her attic, which is "guarded by three closed doors" (*ED*, 86), is permeated by a sense of "fear and loneliness" (*ED*, 87) and contains some "fearful secret" (*ED*, 87). Mrs. Handsomebody may not always have been what she appears to be; her divided nature is suggested by the trunk hidden in the recesses of the attic. Superficially, it is a "dingy and insignificant" box but its appearances are deceptive:

⁵Mazo de la Roche, *Explorers of the Dawn* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1922), 16. All subsequent references to this work will be indicated by the abbreviation *ED* and the appropriate page number.

It was a dingy and insignificant box on the outside, but it was lined with a gaily coloured paper, on which nosegays of spring flowers bent beneath the weight of silver butterflies, and sad-eyed cockatoos. The trays were full, as Angel had said, of women's things, delicate, ruffly frocks of pink and lilac; and undergarments edged with yellowing lace. A sweet scent rose from them, as of some gentle presence that strove to reach the light and air once more. (*ED*, 89)

The Curzon boys find book learning dull but "in affairs of the imagination [they are] no laggards" (*ED*, 219); they manage to escape from Mrs. Handsomebody's prison both physically and imaginatively. Their imaginative activity transforms the ordinary into the exotic; a dustman's cart becomes a black pirate craft (*ED*, 161), and sometimes "the grey old town [is] wrapped in a golden mist of romance" (*ED*, 207). This imaginative activity is a defense against an environment whose destructive potential is suggested by the story of Cosmo John, a symbol of permanently frustrated vitality. At one point in the events, John Curzon pauses before the stained glass window dedicated to the youthful Cosmo John and reflects on the significance of early death:

He had died at the age of fifteen, not a tender age to me, but the age toward which I was eagerly straining, the vigorous, untrammelled age of the big boy.

I stared at the young knight . . . and thought it a great pity that he should have gone off in such a hurry, just when life was opening up such happy vistas before him, vistas no longer patrolled by governesses and maid servants, nor hedged in by petty restrictions. (*ED*, 190)

Not surprisingly, the central episode of *Explorers of the Dawn* is entitled "Freedom."

Although the narrator can, in retrospect, extend a degree of sympathy to Mrs. Handsomebody, his general attitude tends to be negative. As a child he "knew only too well the humiliation experienced by the helpless male when over-bearing woman drags him ignominiously from his harmless recreation" (*ED*, 22), and his point of view remains essentially anti-feminist. He points out that Mrs. Handsomebody "captured and quelled the manly spirit of Mr. Handsomebody": "From being a blustering sort of man, he had become very mild and fearful" (*ED*, 16). John also witnesses a confrontation between Martindale, the cobbler, and his governess in which the cobbler, "a full-grown male, submit[s] to being bullied by a creature who [wears] a bustle and a black silk apron" (*ED*, 262).

Not all the female characters are viewed as potentially destructive of masculine individuality and freedom. Mary Ellen, the Irish cook with

“bounding spirits” (ED, 133), functions as an ally and accomplice of the Curzon boys. Moreover, several characters, often older and occasionally from the fringes of society, align themselves with the children in their struggle for freedom. For example their earliest exploit, a treasure hunt, results from an alliance which they form with the aged and, according to some individuals, unbalanced Captain Pegg, “a real pirate” (ED, 34) who lives in the dingy brick house next door with his son, Mortimer, and his daughter-in-law, a childless and “prim couple” who are always “neat and precise” (ED, 20) in their ways. The very old and the very young are thus united in a common effort to resist the dull conformity and colourless routine assigned to them by the figures of authority:

“We do what we can to keep a little glamour and gaiety in the world. Some folk —” he looked at Mrs. Handsomebody — “would like to discipline it all away.” (ED, 49)

Captain Pegg forms “a bond of understanding” (ED, 22) with the Curzons by participating in the world of their imagination and responding sympathetically to their energy and spontaneity. He is a world traveller whose perspective is broad and tolerant. He shares in the children’s rebellion as does Granfa, an “ancient rebel against authority” (ED, 200), who is temporarily adopted by the boys after his escape from a workhouse.

The Curzons are also befriended by the De Lacey family and Bishop Torrance. The De Laceys are a large and spirited family who foreshadow the Whiteoaks of the Jalna novels. They live in “a large old house” with wide open shutters and doors that give “a promise of jollity and lack of restraint within” (ED, 227). In the company of the “spirited” (ED, 247) De Lacey children, the Curzons give way to such an “abandon of wildness” (ED, 229) as they have never known. Inside the De Lacey home they encounter highly animated servants in the “lawless region below” (ED, 241) and the unconventional and spontaneous parents in the large upstairs apartment which is “bewildering in its colour and movement” (ED, 241). Mrs. Handsomebody feels that “those people are not respectable” (ED, 234).

Bishop Torrance, “an understanding and high-hearted playfellow” (ED, 53), sanctions much of the boys’ behaviour because he recognizes their instinctive generosity and capacity for love. For them, his tolerance, like his “deep, green garden” (ED, 53), is a welcome change from Mrs. Handsomebody’s intolerance and her “planked back yard” (ED, 78). The Bishop has had first-hand experience with youthful rebelliousness through his son, a prodigal whom the Curzons are instrumental in returning to his father.

In general, the movement of *Explorers of the Dawn* is from repression, disorder and suffering to freedom, harmony and the fulfillment of dreams. Nevertheless, tragedy and despair make their presence felt. Ada

Martindale is driven to madness by the loss of her daughter and eventually escapes from her agony through suicide, an act which ironically leads to the discovery of her daughter. Her despair and death contrast sharply with the youthful idealism of the book and its escapist tendencies. The inclusion of these events suggests de la Roche's unwillingness to exclude all the unpleasant aspects of reality and anticipates the more realistic novels which were to follow.

Explorers of the Dawn offers an escape into "the republic of childhood."⁶ It also presents events which have inescapable implications for the environment which is left behind. On the surface, episodes in which youthful energy, curiosity and imaginativeness thwart the forces of repression and convention may seem to offer only a pleasant escape from unpleasant social realities. However, the values implicit in these confrontations are unmistakable and can be applied to the real world. The initial popularity of *Explorers of the Dawn* suggests an unexpressed desire for a greater recognition of these values in society. There is no overt teaching or preaching in this work, but the opposing systems of value are clear, and, at least temporarily, the resulting tension is resolved as love provides the basis of a new harmony and hope for the dawning day.

The widespread acceptance of *Explorers of the Dawn* may well reflect a longing shared by de la Roche and the post war society for a recovery of lost spontaneity, freedom, and, perhaps most important of all, love.

Shortly after de la Roche completed her second book, *Possession* (1923), she spent a month travelling through Nova Scotia and writing promotional material about the Maritime Provinces. This experience prompted her to use a Nova Scotia setting in her next novel, *The Thunder of New Wings*. This novel may have been influenced by de la Roche's reading of Michael Sadlier's novels. In the March 1923 edition of *The Canadian Bookman*, Sadlier's review of *Possession* follows de la Roche's review of Sadlier's *Desolate Splendour*, a book which she greatly admired. In her summary of the plot of *Desolate Splendour*, de la Roche refers to the Pletherns, an old English family who live in "the great house of Malvern," a Canadian girl who comes to live in "this strange household" when her father dies, and the present owner of the estate who is "true to the traditions of the Pletherns."⁷ A similar setting and similar characters appear in *The Thunder of New Wings*.

De la Roche's initial optimism for and subsequent disappointment with this work are recorded in her autobiography:

⁶Sheila Egoff, *The Republic of Childhood* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1967).

⁷Mazo de la Roche, review of *Desolate Splendour*, *The Canadian Bookman* (March, 1923), 70.

My visit to a certain foggy, out-of-the way spot in Nova Scotia had inspired it. I felt that it was going to be a more interesting novel than *Possession*. Nothing I ever had written would equal it. Assuredly nothing I have written can compare with it in failure and disappointment.⁸

Despite the fact that everyone, including her adopted sister, Caroline, and Hugh Eayrs of Macmillan,⁹ felt that the book was an unworthy successor to *Possession*, de la Roche was never completely sure. Her dissatisfaction with its fate was still apparent in 1929:

I was reckless before I was successful. I went from one publisher to another, wriggling out of contracts, giving all of them an opportunity to lose money on me . . . being not only reckless but almost shady, managing somehow to keep our souls and bodies together. . . . I wrote three books that had scarcely any sale and one that has never even been published. It has good work in it too but my Canadian and American publishers thought it too queer, too something or other that I never quite understood, and so it lies at the bottom of an old oak chest in Canada.¹⁰

The Thunder of New Wings remained in that chest until 1932 when she allowed *Chatelaine* to publish it in nine installments between June, 1932 and February, 1933. At the same time, Little, Brown published an edition of one hundred copies in order to protect her copyright. Re-reading it several years later, she felt that it seemed "a remarkable book" and went on to comment on the one aspect of it which she thought was weak:

Yet I saw where I had gone terribly wrong. I had been so struck by that place in Nova Scotia, the strangeness of it to me, an Ontario, that I had crammed all sorts of irrelevant "guidebookish" descriptions into the story, which was quite able to stand on its own legs.¹¹

The Thunder of New Wings is clearly one of de la Roche's least successful novels. The causes of its failure are numerous. Ronald Hambleton, for example, attributes its failure to the disparity between her "observed material" and "material that has no locality":

⁸Mazo de la Roche, *Ringing the Changes* (London: Macmillan, 1957), 166.

⁹*Ibid.*, 167.

¹⁰University of Toronto, de la Roche Papers, Mazo de la Roche, letter to Arnold Palmer, November 29, 1929.

¹¹Mazo de la Roche, *Ringing the Changes*, 16-67.

This book suffers from schizophrenia. On the one hand, Mazo de la Roche gives us the rootless invention of her private imaginings; the scenes in England are set in the same mapless countryside as those of *Explorers of the Dawn* — no such Devon ever existed in actuality. On the other hand, she gives us the observed localities of Nova Scotia and, to a smaller degree, of Quebec.¹²

This disparity, though it is much less of a problem than Hambleton suggests, does contribute to one's sense that the novel is structurally weak and lacks unity. More serious defects include overwritten passages of description as well as a thinness and deficiency of substance which result in scenes and episodes which are often unimaginative or dramatically inappropriate. Too many chapters lack any clear structural or thematic significance, and in the *Chatelaine* version several of these episodes were omitted or reduced in size. For this reason, the *Chatelaine* version is in many ways the more successful of the two.

Despite its weaknesses, *The Thunder of New Wings* is, like *Explorers of the Dawn*, an interesting novel because it foreshadows elements which were to be used in the *Jalna* novels and also because it represents a further exploration of the conflict between nature and culture. The structure of the book is simple enough; the story is presented by Joan Elliot who doubles as author-narrator and as participant in the action. She describes herself as "a spectator, a connoisseur, of the emotions"¹³ that surge about her, Joan is sympathetically portrayed, but she emerges as an essentially inhibited, ineffective and unexciting heroine. In many respects she seems to resemble the author herself; she is half Irish, "thin as a fiddlestick,"¹⁴ and, though often reserved and always somewhat reticent, she knows that her nature includes "something Celtic — passionate" (*TNW*, 132). She is "one of those thin, pale-faced people who look delicate but are in reality of fairly tough fibre,"¹⁵ and she admits that she has always "had a strange sense of expectancy of adventure."¹⁶ One is tempted to speculate that one of the causes of de la Roche's failure with this novel was her close

¹²Ronald Hambleton, *Mazo de la Roche of Jalna* (Toronto: General Publishing, 1966), 186.

¹³Mazo de la Roche, *The Thunder of New Wings* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1932), 141. All subsequent references to this edition are indicated by *TNW* and the appropriate page number.

¹⁴Mazo de la Roche, *The Thunder of New Wings, Chatelaine* (June, 1932), 10.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 32.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, 46.

involvement with her narrator, an identification which inhibited the development of that character into the more spontaneous and vital figure that one is accustomed to find as her protagonist.

In its original form, *The Thunder of New Wings* is divided into two equal parts. It begins soon after Joan Elliot decides to visit her cousins at Cobbold House, a rambling stone home on the Cornish coast. Her decision is prompted by the sudden death of her father, George Elliot, "an Irish civil engineer who some years earlier had brought his wife and child to Canada" to live in a house on Rue St. Louis, the street where de la Roche's great-grandparents paused on their journey from Ireland to Ontario. Elliot was educated in England where he met Richard Lashbrook, who later married his sister. When Joan's father dies, she journeys to the "secluded estate"¹⁷ of the Lashbrooks to be with her cousins, Theo and Vicky. Soon after her arrival, Richard Lashbrook is crushed in an automobile accident, and the two children of his first marriage, Theo and Vicky, a second wife, Clara, and her son, Ayrton, are informed that the estate has been left to Ayrton. As a result of the longstanding bitterness between Joan's cousins and their stepmother, Clara, the family quickly disintegrates into opposing factions. To escape from this atmosphere of greed, selfishness and hostility, Joan, who feels "a sudden, fierce desire for space, for freedom," and her cousins decide to emigrate to a two-hundred year old farm at Balmeny, Nova Scotia. This "primitive New World sanctuary,"¹⁸ had been bequeathed to Theo by her father.

The remainder of the first half of the novel is set in Nova Scotia where several new characters appear. These include the aged Captain Alonzo Haight, keeper of the lodge, his son, Jarge, an adopted son, Toby, and Pat Baldry, the mayor of Balmeny. Toby is the second of the "two strong-fibred masculine spirits" whose presence dulls the cousins' "bright contact with each other."¹⁹ "His virility, his greed for life, his unthinking enjoyment of experience"²⁰ attract their attentions and intensify their animosities. The first section concludes when Captain Haight reveals that this apparently fatherless waif is really the true heir of the Lashbrook estate, a discovery which Vicky seizes upon as a means of challenging Ayrton's ownership of Cobbold House.

In the second section of the novel, the scene shifts to Cobbold House where the confrontation between Clara and Vicky begins in earnest. Clara, the "scheming, red-haired, pale-browed Judas" (*TNW*, 258) who had taken

¹⁷*Ibid.*, 9.

¹⁸*Ibid.* (July, 1932), 12.

¹⁹*Ibid.* (October, 1932), 18.

²⁰*Ibid.*, 18.

"triumphant possession" (*TNW*, 9) of the Lashbrook estate, protects her position "like a she-fox facing a pack of hounds" (*TNW*, 177) and responds to Vicky's challenges "like a little red fox at bay, snarling with her back to the wall" (*TNW*, 207). Bitterness and hostility flow unrestrained in a series of violent confrontations until the house is "stuffed full of hate."²¹ As the confusion increases and the atmosphere becomes more strained, the Lashbrooks act "like swordsmen in a tourney, waiting for the moment to strike," and Toby's decision to marry Clara arouses even more "primitive feelings" among the cousins.²² In the final scenes, Vicky and Theo are drowned while boating with Captain Haight, and a new heir to the Lashbrook baronetcy is born to Clara and Toby.²³ With a legacy from Vicky and Theo, Joan returns to Quebec where she meets and marries Pat Baldry.

The Thunder of New Wings resembles *Explorers of the Dawn*, especially in its use of animal imagery, the imagery of flight, gothic effects and the inheritance and hidden observer motifs. However, whereas the earlier work tends to celebrate spontaneity and freedom, this novel focuses on the negative aspects of individualism and irrational behaviour, especially in its examination of the Lashbrooks, a family which recalls the De Laceys of *Explorers of the Dawn* and foreshadows the Whiteoak family.

The Lashbrooks, originally a hardy yeoman family of Cornwall, are "strong of back, clear of eye, and hot of head," "keen-minded, but not in any way intellectual" (*TNW*, 7). Richard Lashbrook, the deceased patriarch of this large and complicated family, was "noisy, domineering, [and] boisterously alive" and made few attempts to control his "passionate, careless [and] selfish nature."²⁴ His ill-assorted family does not lack vitality, but most often it is expressed in irritability, selfishness, greed and an egotism which fosters envy, hatred, distrust and violence. At one point, Ayrton Lashbrook remarks that the atmosphere at Cobbold House is "charged with constraint, ready at any moment to flame into hostility"; the Lashbrooks have, he continues, always been "like a lot of wolfhounds on leashes, ready to fly at each other's throats."²⁵ Even Joan feels that "there is a touch of the sinister in the Lashbrook family."²⁶ Thus one is presented

²¹*Ibid.* (November, 1932), 14.

²²*Ibid.*, 14.

²³In the *Chatelaine* version, Toby's decision to marry Clara is dismissed as incestuous by the remainder of the family, and Toby drowns along with Vicky and Theo.

²⁴Mazo de la Roche, *The Thunder of New Wings, Chatelaine* (June, 1932), 9.

²⁵*Ibid.*, 10.

²⁶*Ibid.* (September, 1932), 43.

with a view of vitality which emphasizes its destructive and divisive potential. Spontaneity, which is so often constructive in *Explorers of the Dawn*, is here essentially uncreative.

The title and epigraph of *The Thunder of New Wings* are taken from the first act of Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*, and several interesting parallels in characterization and theme can be drawn between these works. For example, Captain Haight and his aged companion, Teg, resemble Shelley's Jupiter and Demogorgon. Captain Haight is described as "a perfect old devil," "a thundering old villain," "a rather sinister figure" and "an old terror." He gives "the impression of some old tribal chief," for there is "a crude sort of power in his personality as though he had been accustomed for many years to rule the lives of others." Joan feels "the impression of power knit into this man's presence," and his presence precipitates "stirrings indicative of sinister movement."²⁷ He is associated with all the major events in the novel including the discovery of Toby's identity, the marriage of Toby and Clara, and the boating tragedy in which Vicky, Theo and Teg are drowned. Teg, dispossessed by Haight years earlier, has strange prophetic powers and believes that he is joined with God in a battle against Haight. He is as "indeterminate as Alonzo Haight [is] wilful, shadowy as Alonzo [is] brazen."²⁸

The cousins — Joan, Theo and Vicky — may have been suggested by Asia, Panthea and Ione, and the characterization of Baldry associates him with Prometheus. Like Prometheus, Baldry is equipped with knowledge of the sciences and the arts; moreover, he is free from the envy, hatred and greed for power which characterize many of the characters. After a period of separation, Baldry is reunited with Joan, the most charitable and understanding and the least calculating of the characters in the novel.²⁹

Prometheus Unbound is an allegorical drama dealing with freedom, power, and the defeat of evil through the union of love and reason. De la Roche's novel is more cautious in its idealism; nevertheless, the possibility of a "new life" (*TNW*, 279), or, to use the terms of *Explorers of the Dawn*, a "new day," free from selfishness, strife and hatred, is suggested in the final episodes. The world which "the stirring of great wings" (*TNW*, 278) foretells is a regenerated world in which man stands free through love. This world remains a desirable dream, a potential not yet realized, and in sharp contrast to the existing world of discord and hate. The largest proportion of this work pictures a world which is unpredictable, unstable,

²⁷*Ibid.* (July, 1932), 43-44.

²⁸*Ibid.* (February, 1933), 21.

²⁹Not surprisingly, Joan's favourite heroine is Anne Elliot, the quietly intelligent and self-effacing protagonist of Jane Austen's *Persuasion*.

and characterized by dissension, primitive violence, and personal interest. It begins and ends with sudden and violent death and is consistent in its portrayal of the destructive potential of greed, jealousy, irrational desire and selfish ambition. Cobbold House is "stuffed full of hate," and Vicky and Theo are "swept along on the flood of their hatred for Clara" (*TNW*, 193). With the exception of the narrator, the most sympathetic of all the characters, most of the major figures are motivated by a longing for power unregulated by reason or charity. The marriage of Clara and Toby and the birth of their son as well as the union of Baldry and Joan may suggest the possibility of the revitalization of the world through love. This, however, remains a promise and a hope. Again one becomes aware of the unresolved tension between de la Roche's tragic awareness of the world as it is and her romantic readiness to create a world where love achieves a reconciliation between the conflicting needs associated with nature and culture.

University of Guelph