MALCOLM'S KATIE: *LOVE, WEALTH, AND NATION BUILDING*

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Isabella Valancy Crawford's major poem *Malcolm's Katie,* a central work in the English Canadian literary tradition, deals with love, regeneration, wealth, and nation building. The poem, along with her others, has often been treated as the production of a solitary genius working largely outside the ideas of her time and tradition. Readers have seen Crawford as unique or eccentric because *Malcolm's Katie,* unlike poems of her contemporaries, is particularly rich in archetypes and symbols. She has, moreover, employed Indian lore and imagery with richness and evident sympathy. She seems to have done her work without having had much connection with the leading figures of her day; indeed, she seems to have been poor and even hard pressed to make a living. Perhaps most importantly, she has written, some suggest, a poem that is remarkably modern in its concepts of wealth, power, capital, exploitation, and environment. The comments about her use of archetypes and the Indian are true, and she does use language in a rich and unique way. But whatever her direct social and intellectual connections were, Crawford wrote a poem, in *Malcolm's Katie,* that addresses itself to the major concerns of the country in her time — and the values expressed in the poem are those of the majority of the people of her time. The poem is not the less great for that. But it needs to be read — the love story of Max and Katie — on all of its levels if a full and correct understanding of it is to be gained.

To begin with, her intention in the creation of the character Malcolm Graem and her attitude toward the "smooth-coated men," the representatives of railways and secondary industry, must be placed correctly. "Graem" means "the gray house," and Malcolm is described as gray on two or three occasions. But he is a loving character and is at least as gray in years and in experience as he is in character. The "smooth-coated men" and the drive to secondary industry are functions of nation building for Crawford; they come after and are apart from the eras of the empty forest and settlement building. Crawford disliked the wealth that oppresses, but she did not object to wealth as such, and her solution to oppression was faith and benevolence. She lived at a time when the ideas of the Social Gospel were developing, and her cure for greed, nihilism, and the desire to exploit was love. That means she did not see the managers of capital, the money-makers, and accumulators as, by definition, good or evil. She was, moreover, a believer in nation building, the nation building, as the poem makes obvious, of Canada. Out of that belief she wrote her poem "The Rose of a Nation's Thanks," published on the morning the troops arrived home to Toronto from the battle of Batoche, and she wrote "Songs for the Soldiers" on the same general subject. The engagements with the forces of Louis Riel assured the growth of the nation.

For Crawford it was to be a nation like the one from which Canada sprang. It was to have similar values. Wealth, capital, power, and position would come to many among those who worked hard. In her poem "Canada to England," she suggests that the young country is matching the old:

> How sounds my voice, my warrior kinsman, now?
> Sounds it not like to thine in lusty youth—
> A world possessing shout of busy men,
> Veined with the clang of trumpets and the noise
> Of those who make them ready for the strife,
> And in the making ready bruise its head?
> Sounds it not like to thine — the whispering vine,
> The robe of súmmer rustling thro' the fields,
> The lowing of the cattle in the meads,
> The sound of Commerce, and the music-set
> Flame-brightened step of Art in stately halls, —
> All the infinity of notes which chord
> The diapason of a nation's voice?
>
> . . . .
>
> The bonds between us are no subtle links
> Of subtle minds binding in close embrace,
> Half-struggling for release, two alien lands,
> But God's own seal of kindred, which to burst
> Were but to dash his benediction from
> Our brows.[1]

Crawford does not claim the moral superiority of the Anglo-Saxon race as Alexander McLaughlan does in his poem fittingly entitled, "The Anglo-Saxon."[2] But it would be folly, as "Canada to England" shows, to believe that she would turn away from a major nineteenth-century concept in Canada. It is a "conception of history," as Carl Berger says, that "was rooted in the belief in progress, in the conviction that history was the record of steady improvement in material conditions and in intellectual and moral life. The idea of progress was invariably measured in material terms because it was assumed that the physical surroundings exercised a powerful role in shaping the human mind."[3]

Malcolm's Katie is a poem about nation building. It is a poem about true love triumphant in the face of great obstacles. It is a poem about a war of ideology in the newly forming society. It is connected in its philosophical structure to the ideological struggle in Susanna Moodie's *Roughing It in the Bush,* for both works reject individualistic exploitation for social-souled creativity informed by a Christian God whose intentions are ultimately benevolent. It is also connected, interestingly enough, to the philosophical struggle in Hugh MacLennan's *Barometer Rising,* for Jim Fraser in that novel is the advocate of a philosophy of Chance, of purposelessness. He parallels Alfred in *Malcolm's Katie* who preaches the same doctrine, but much more darkly. In both works, the advocates of purposefulness in

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[1] Isabella Valancy Crawford, "Canada to England," in *Collected Poems,* ed. James Reaney (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1972), pp. 237-38.
[2] Alexander McLachlan, "The Anglo-Saxon," in *The Poetical Works of Alexander McLachlan,* ed. E. Margaret Fulton (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1974), pp. 33-35.
[3] Carl Berger, *The Sense of Power* (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1970), p. 109.

history and human community tie purpose not only to the struggle for personal virtuousness but also to the destiny of Canada as a nation. The love stories, in both cases, are defined and made possible by the terms of national struggle for the fulfillment of the community. *Malcolm's Katie* also connects on all its three levels — nation building, personal love, and ideology of community — with Charles G. D. Roberts' poem "Autochthon," which is a declaration that the power driving the elements, the spirit that moves germination and growth in nature, and the strife that forges men and nation are, in fact, aspects of a single purposeful force. The opposites in *Malcolm's Katie* are fairly easy to see. Warmth, love, summer, the social soul, purpose, belief in God, struggle, and fidelity are in contrast to cold, lust, winter, individualism, Chance, disbelief in God, sloth, and infidelity. Those opposites operate in relation to the individual love story, the battle of philosophies, and to the concept of nation building. No one aspect is separable.

Since the discussion about *Malcolm's Katie* is still, essentially, concerned with *what Crawford is saying,* I propose to give a resumé of the plot while explicating the meaning of the poem. The poem will prove to be consistent in its intention and achievement, closely related to the major ideas of its time, and deeply thought out and reasoned by its writer.

It opens with Max placing a ring on Katie's finger, a ring forged from a coin earned by his first boyish labour. The ring brings together the concept of love and the concept of work for wages or for fulfillment of reasonable desires. When the lovers part near the close of Part I, Max says, "God speed the kiss," and Katie says, "God speed the axe." Love and gainful work are blessed together. Although the ring unites the initials K and M, Katie's father will not let the lovers unite. Max is not yet worthy of Katie, for he "owns naught else but some dim, dusky woods/In a far land. . . ." Max must go out, a soldier of the axe, to build the nation and, thereby, to win the hand of Katie. Everything in the first part of the poem expresses optimism. Max is content "crescent-wise, but not to round full moon." That image simply means that Max has begun to achieve but that his wishes are, as yet, unfulfilled. The images of full circle, of roundness, of full flower, and of the wheel suggest rightness, completion, and perfection. Crawford uses the same sense of a preparatory circle to describe Katie who tells Max that she is "a bud" who will, "some June," "blush a full-blown rose." Although Katie's father Malcolm is stern and set round with images of wealth, he is not evil or even unreasonable. He loves Katie, and she loves him. Max naturally sees Malcolm as an obstruction to his present wishes, but he doesn't accuse him of greed or selfishness. Nor does he suggest that Malcolm worships his wealth. He says, rather, that "his herds/Have monarchs worshipful as was the calf/Aaron called from the furnace. . . ."

Malcolm's conquest is different from ordinary conquest because "the wheel of difference" that describes people like Malcolm turns upon the fact that "they OWNED the soil." The wheel is another full circle suggesting rightness. Moreover, Max uses words of approval to describe Malcolm's social ascent, his "dear love of wealth and power," his winning of "honest ease" and the "fair esteem of men." For Canadians of the time, Malcolm simply did what a man should do. That point is important: Malcolm is a properly successful man in the view of his age and his author. He "has a voice in Council and Church," as he ought to have. Isabella Valancy Crawford and her contemporaries did not object to wealth, but to

wealth abused. The role of the first settlers, of the agriculturists, in much of the nineteenth century was to work the land, to become self-sufficient, to settle, to gather wealth, and to obtain position. The idea of the pioneer soldier was rooted in the ideas of civilizing the land. H. V. Nelles writes:

> A frontier community, finding itself surrounded by an oppressive expanse of forest stretching for unimaginable distances in almost every direction, set out to remove it as the task of orderly agricultural settlement. Lumbermen conveniently led the assault, slashing their way through the finest timber stands, while pioneer farmers swarmed in behind, burning everything that remained. That such para-military destruction might be part of a golden rather than a dark age was to be explained by the fervour of civilizing instinct within a context of apparent abundance.[4]

The "context of apparent abundance" shaped much of the consciousness of the time. The free man, often newly unfettered in Canada, worked in a context of apparent abundance: wealth was not a sign of evil but of virtue fairly employed. Crawford does not stress an eccentric or excessively possessive sense of ownership when she capitalizes the word OWNED, referring to Malcolm's motivation to work on his land, for many of the previously deprived people of other countries gained self-respect and freedom from oppression by owning land in Canada. For the same reason she italicizes the words *mine own* which the labourer speaks when looking over his land. The freedom that immigrants gained was a freedom to work into self-sufficiency on their own land after having been tenants and less than tenants in the lands they left. The maritimer Oliver Goldsmith expresses the idea precisely in his poem, *The Rising Village*. Writing of the immigrants, he says:

> What noble courage must their hearts have fired,
> How great the ardour which their souls inspired,
> Who leaving far behind the native plain,
> Have sought a home beyond the Western main;
> And braved the peril of the stormy seas,
> In search of wealth, of freedom, and of ease!
> Oh! none can tell but they who sadly share
> The bosom's anguish, and its wild despair,
> What dire distress awaits the hardy bands,
> That venture first on bleak and desert lands,
> How great the pain, the danger, and the toil.
> Which mark the first rude culture of the soil.[5]

The transformation into riches is often symbolized by golden grain. Goldsmith writes of the lonely places

> where the sturdy woodsman's strokes resound,
> That strew the fallen forest on the ground.
> See! from the heights the lofty pines descend,

[4] H. V. Nelles, *The Politics of Development* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1974), p. 183.
[5] Oliver Goldsmith, "The Rising Village," in *The Evolution of Canadian Literature in English: Beginnings to 1867*, ed. Mary Jane Edwards (Toronto: Holt, Rinehart, 1973), pp. 74-75,

And crackling down their pond'rous lengths extend.
Soon from their boughs the curling flames arise,
Mount into air, and redden all the skies;
And where the forest once its foliage spread,
The golden corn triumphant waves its head.[6]

Alexander McLachlan stresses ownership, freedom, and independence in his poem "Acres of His Own":

Here's the road to independence!
Who would bow and dance attendance?
Who, with e'er a spark of pride,
While the bush is wild and wide,
Would be but a hanger on,
Begging the favours of a throne,
While beneath yon smiling Sun
Farms by labor can be won?
Up, be stirring, be alive!
Get upon a farm and thrive!
He's a king upon a throne
Who has acres of his own![7]

He uses the image of the settler as king, as Crawford does in *Malcolm's Katie.* Mrs. Moodie uses the same kind of language in her poem "Canada, The Blest — The Free," included in the 1871 edition of *Roughing It in the Bush.* The guardian angel of the new land says:

Joy, to stout hearts and willing hands,
That win a right to these broad lands,
And reap the fruit of honest toil,
Lords of the rich, abundant soil.[8]

The guardian angel goes on in a passage similar to one in *Malcolm's Katie* in which he addresses, specifically, the oppressed people moving to freedom and ownership of land in Canada:

Joy, to the sons of want, who groan
In lands that cannot feed their own,
And seek, in stern, determined mood,
Homes in the land of lake and wood,
And leave their hearts young hope behind,
Friends in the distant world to find;
Led by that God, who from His throne
Regards the poor man's stifled moan.
Like one awakened from the dead,
The peasant lifts his drooping head,
Nerves his strong heart and sunburnt hand,
To win a portion of the land,
That glooms before him far and wide

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[6]Goldsmith, p. 75.
[7]McLachlan, p. 201.
[8]Susanna Moodie, "Canada The Blest — The Free," in *Roughing It in the Bush* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1923), p. 17.

> In frowning woods and surging tide
> No more oppress'd, no more a slave,
> Here freedom dwells beyond the wave.[9]

The battle of the pioneer soldier, what H. V. Nelles calls the "para-military" activity, is not undertaken to wreak violence or havoc but to build simple independence in the case of some or in the case of others, such as Malcolm Graem, to develop "outspreading circles of increasing gold." Crawford writes of Malcolm's wealth in relation to her symbol of rightness or perfection. The "*circles* of increasing gold," moreover, may stand simply for an increase of land under crop.

Part I takes place in a canoe. In the opening section of the poem the canoe is scattered about with "globes . . . of large lilies." Katie is asked to see her own "small rose face" mirrored in the water. Max, as has been said, is content "crescent-wise, but not to round full moon," and Katie is a bud who will later "blush a full-blown rose." In the song, "O light canoe," the canoe sits in the centre of a globe, which becomes the centre of a starry sphere:

> Above, below — O sweet surprise
> To gladden happy lover's eyes
> No earth, no wave — all jewelled skies.

There is a sense in the poem that the circle implies perfection and that the perfection of love between two people is best symbolized by the extension of a circle which is expressed in a globe. As the poem develops, Crawford withdraws the circle and globe image because the larger world, as she presents it, possesses evil, sorrow, and the necessity to struggle. The larger world is not Eden, though it has the possibility of being redeemed by love.

Part I is optimistic. Max is going out to do what Malcolm did earlier, and the young man's initials are the same as the older man's. Names are important in the poem. Katie (Catherine) means "the immaculate one, the purified one," and is based ultimately on the Greek word which means "to cleanse." Maxwell is an old Scottish name, deriving from a pool. The name Max means great. Alfred means "crafty-counsellor." Malcolm means "disciple of Columba," the most famous saint of Scotland, who went to the island of Iona from which he undertook conversions. His biographer and successor wrote of him that he "had the face of an angel; he was of excellent nature, polished in speech, holy in deed, great in council . . . loving in all."[10] The description is not irrelevant to the character of the Malcolm of the poem. One quite un-Scottish name appears in the poem, the name given to Malcolm's brother Reuben, who is described as yoked together with Malcolm in the early days of land-breaking. In the Bible, Reuben is the eldest son of Jacob and Leah and a founder of one of the twelve tribes of Israel. He is associated with Gad (meaning "fortune" or "good fortune") in the occupation of Eastern Palestine and, in cooperation with others, in the opening of the West of the land. Application of his Biblical role to *Malcolm's Katie* is fairly obvious. His name and Malcolm's together suggest pioneering, wise council, and good fortune.

[9]Moodie, p. 17.
[10]*The Book of Saints* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1966), p. 173.

Part II opens with the beautiful introductory poetry which anthropomorphizes the arrival of autumn in terms of Indian lore and character. It is a time of richness and colour, a time when Max grows to full strength. He works clearing the land with a métis helper. Max is "lab'rer and lover" whose axe cleaves "moon-like thro' the air." When he fells his first tree, he speaks in the terms of lordship used by Moodie and McLachlan:

> "O King of Desolation, art thou dead?"
> Cried Max, and laughing, heart and lips, leaped on
> The vast prone trunk. "And have I slain a king?
> Above his ashes will I build my house;
> No slave beneath its pillars but — a king!"

McLachlan also records the cutting of a first tree in his long poem, *The Emigrant.* He says in the section, "Cutting the First Tree," that it "was like a sacrament,/Like to laying the foundation/of a city or a nation. . . ."[11] When the tree falls, McLachlan writes:

> There's one giant overcast;
> Stubborn, but he fell at last.
> There he lies, like Caesar slain,
> And he'll never rise again.[12]

Max is impelled by his love which

> Has its own sun, its own peculiar sky,
> All one great daffodil, on which do lie
> The sun, the moon, the stars, all seen at once
> And never setting, but all shining straight
> Into the faces of the trinity—
> The one loved, the lover, and sweet love.

Into the scene of land clearing, Crawford introduces the development that comes after the settler, another part of the nation building activity. "In these new days men spread about the earth/with wings at heel. . . ." The settler hears "The shrieks of engines rushing o'er the wastes;/Nor parts his kind to hew his fortunes out." The passage does not express disapproval of the men connected with trains. They are different from the settler. But the settler does not leave his "kind to hew his fortunes out" by the new means, commerce and technology. Instead (as the next passage shows) the settler stays to help build the community.

The process of nation building in *Malcolm's Katie* is three-tiered, it would seem, relating to the passage of time and to history. Crawford makes the parts of the process clear in the famous passage about the "smooth-coated men":

> Then came smooth-coated men with eager eyes
> And talked of steamers on the cliff-bound lakes,
> And iron tracks across the prairie lands

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[11] McLachlan, p. 228.
[12] McLachlan, p. 230.

And mills to crush the quartz of wealthy hills,
And mills to saw the great wide-armed trees,
And mills to grind the singing stream of grain
And with such busy clamour mingled still
The throbbing music of the bold, bright axe—
The steel tongue of the present; and the wail
Of falling forests — voices of the past.

The past is represented by the forests and the tangled, dense world of the aboriginal and wild vegetation. The present is represented by the settler, the soldier pioneer and his axe — the "steel tongue of the present." The future is represented by the "smooth-coated men with eager eyes." They *talk of* technological development, for it comes apart from and, usually, after present settlement. Max's personal future, as Crawford shows, is the house and the farm in the settlement. But his is only a part of the nation's future.

Part III introduces the complication presented by Alfred, the crafty counsellor. The section begins without a passage of anthropomorphized Indian lore in relation to the season. Malcolm and Katie have their lives affected by the wooer, Alfred, who is "reputed wealthy." That is the only reference made to Alfred's economic position. He is mobile and is never described as employed in work; but he is not placed in an economic stratum either. Malcolm has difficulty sizing Alfred up, has bad dreams about him, but decides Katie must choose whether she wants him or not. Alfred is a lover, as he says himself, "not of Katie's face,/But of her father's riches." He is an arch-individualist — the opposite of "social-souled" Max. He believes that any man is a "high fool/who feels the faintest pulsing of a wish/and fails to feed it into lordly life. . . ." Existence, for Alfred, is contained in three score years and ten, and then it is over. He does not believe in any purpose in the universe; all is chance. In a world without purpose and without immortality, the individual does best who serves sensual pleasure and desire for personal satisfaction. And so Alfred is the image of the arch-exploiter. In short, he seeks — as the poem suggests — money and sex. He is an athiest, nihilist, sensualist, individualist — the kind of person the nineteenth century recognized as philosophically determined in the role of exploiter. The believing, purpose-oriented, historically conditioned, socially responsible man — regardless of wealth — need not be an exploiter. Alfred wants Katie for her beauty and her wealth; he intends to exploit her. As Crawford writes, "Events were winds close nestling in the sails/Of Alfred's bark. . . ." He profits by Katie's misfortune, though he performs a heroic act. On a hot summer day she goes to seek the lily blooms. It is a day for "lily-love," she says, and she sings a lily-song. The song says that the lake is a shrine made by the river. It is a "White bosom holding golden fire." It desires "But to be filled/With dew distilled/From clear fond skies. . . ." The dew that fills the lake, according to Crawford, is "love!" Katie runs the log boom to get to some lilies, falls into the water, and would drown but for Alfred who saves her, though he is trapped by Malcolm's logs in the process. Alfred shouts and shouts, waking Malcolm, it would seem, from his noon sleep in which he has been a part of Malcolm's dreams again. Both Alfred and Katie are saved, and, naturally, because of his heroism, Alfred is treated more favourably as wooer. But when he proposes to Katie, she refuses. When permitted an honest choice, even though Alfred has saved her life, she refuses. Katie is

true to her name, "the immaculate one, the purified one," drawn from the Greek word meaning "to cleanse." She never wavers in her faith; and she is the force that transforms all hard, resisting forces in the poem.

Part IV, the central of the seven sections, is set in the only winter season used in the poem. The anthropomorphized North wind "fights with squaws and takes the scalps of babes!" The introductory passage suggests hibernation as well as death because implicit in the destructive activity of Alfred is the regeneration upon which the poem closes. Nature, Crawford tells us, "heard her God/Rebuilding her spent fires/While the Great Worker brooded o'er his work." Max, a great human worker, is at work with his axe, which is the instrument that promises "all joyous things/that furnish forth the lives of kings. . . ." The song of the axe is a hymn of great promise, a strong, optimistic hymn. But it is not a song of the shirt; it is not an egalitarian hymn. Its language is prophetic, but it is prophetic of achievement that will end in a rich, class-structured society. That fact needs to be seen clearly because Crawford uses language to describe technology and development which the modern reader sees as ambiguous. Her "smooth-coated men," "mills to crush the quartz," and "shrieks of engines rushing o'er the wastes" often suggest alienation and exploitation to the modern reader. Moreover, readers might well think of the alienation expressed and the socialist-tending attacks made upon wealth by Archibald Lampman in "The Railway Station," "To a Millionaire," and "The City of the End of Things." But Crawford is not a Lampman in those matters. The axe promises all the "joyous things/That furnish forth the lives of kings. . . ." It promises that "Cities and palaces shall grow." Max is a pioneer, connected to the land as Malcolm is, but they are only a part of the process and do not deny the rest of it. The ideal that Crawford addresses is the ideal that Alexander McLachlan describes in his poem "The Man Who Rose from Nothing." The man is not known round the world, but he has risen in Canada:

> He's a magician great and grand.
> The forests flee at his command;
> And here he says, "Let cities stand!"—
> The man who rose from nothing.
>
> And in our lelgislative hall
> He tow'ring stands alone; like Saul,
> A head and shoulders over all—
> The man who rose from nothing.
>
> This gentleman in word and deed
> Is short and simple in his creed:
> "Fear God and help the soul in need"—
> The man who rose from nothing.[13]

Like Crawford, McLachlan does not spurn wealth or capital, but he wants the people who possess them to be generous and benevolent. The expression of noise and shock that Crawford uses in relation to technology and the railroad is simply a clear expression of nineteenth-century perception. Observers, especially in the bush or in country places, were

[13]McLachlan, p. 204.

astounded by the railroad train that hurtled into sight with deafening sound and mechanical force. Writers in the period often use the word "magic" to describe technology and the wielders of technology. Charles G. D. Roberts' poem called "The Train Among the Hills" conveys a sense of shock and noise but not of alienation. Roberts uses phrases like "strange mutterings," "sweep and shattering thunder," "crash of routed echoes," and "the dread form" to describe the train. But when he sums up the experience, the train has revealed to Roberts "the thronged, blind world/To goals unseen from God's hand onward hurled."[14]

Both the song of the axe and Max in his own voice describe the soldier pioneer as a nation builder. Those statements prepare for the reappearance of Alfred who has qualities of the winter season in which the action of Part IV takes place. He gives Max "a cold, short smile." He finds, later, that "all again is chill and empty" in his breast "and hard and cold." The discussion the two men have occurs between a self-seeking individualist and a man motivated by love and a social soul. Alfred declares that "naught is immortal save immortal — Death!" Max rejoins that "all else is mortal but immortal — Love!" Death enters the action as well as the argument as a result of Alfred's lie to Max. In his "doubt-wounded" heart, Max sins doubly: he doubts Katie's love, and he turns away from God to Satan in his anger and disappointment. The tree that falls upon Max is "a voice from God." Alfred cannot read the meaning or purpose, though Crawford tells the reader quite clearly that the falling tree is God's answer. Alfred sees the event as an argument for Blind Chance and proof that Max is too good for the world. And so he abandons Max to almost certain death.

Part V opens with a passage using anthropomorphized nature, but not in specifically Indian terms. The hill speaks, telling — with foreshadowing — of the dove that waits, unsuspecting, to be attacked by the eagle. The hill describes the situation of threat, and then — without visible transition or preparation — Malcolm speaks to Katie. The two sections merge almost as a continuation of a single, unbroken narrative. Katie sings a song of fidelity, the forget-me-not song, causing Malcolm to ask Alfred if he has ever met Max in his wanderings in the unknown areas. Alfred lies again, declaring that Max has taken an Indian wife. Katie accuses him of lying and leaves the company of the two men.

Part VI opens with a discussion of the teaching power of sorrow, which is called the "dark mother of the soul" and "Helper of the Universe." The section opens in autumn again, the time of harvest and fruitfulness. Alfred is with Katie. In a passage parallel to one at the beginning of the poem, Alfred asks Katie to look down into the water. This time she is not asked to look over the canoe side into the lily sprinkled lake but from a pair of "wooden jaws" into a piece of river that "tears itself in fighting." Alfred proposes to Katie again, lying to her once more about Max, and she again refuses. He then tells her he has seen Max dead, and she collapses in a faint. Alfred intends to take advantage of her in her insensate state:

> "Now will I show I love you, Kate," he said,
> "And give you gift of love. . . .
> The hour has come. . . ."

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[14] Charles G. D. Roberts, "The Train Among the Hills," in *A Treasury of Canadian Verse*, ed. T. H. Rand (Toronto: William Briggs, 1900), p. 301.

Crawford uses an involved image to suggest the erotic consummation Alfred is planning. He will be taking Katie in lust, into a perversion of the love relation, and so:

> The black porch with its fringe of poppies waits,
> A propylaeum hospitably wide,
> No lictors with their fasces at its jaws,
> Its floor as kindly to my fire-reined feet
> As to thy silver-lilied, sinless ones!

A "propylaeum" is a vestibule or entrance to a temple or to an enclosure. "Lictors" are attendants who punish offenders at the order of officials. The "fasces" is a bundle that was carried before a Roman magistrate as a symbol of authority. Alfred is saying, in simpler language than the metaphor the poem presents, that his opportunity has come while Katie is insensible since she will not submit when in her senses, denying him because of her fidelity to Max. When she faints, no one is there to punish him. Fittingly enough, the bundle signifying authority, the fasces, contained rods or sticks with an axe that had its blade extended from the top of the bundle! Just as Alfred is contemplating the seduction, Max reappears "gaunt as prairie wolves in famine time." He saves Katie. Alfred is next, by some means unexplained, in the river, unconscious. Max responds differently than he has in the past, having learned through suffering. Despite the risk to his own life, he saves Alfred.

Part VII opens in the home of Max and Katie. Malcolm holds their child Alfred, who has been named to signify the pardon and conversion that has taken place. Malcolm declares that the "fresh forests make an old man young," and Max replies that he believes that Eden bloomed in such a place as they are in, "and Eve was only Katie's height." Max has not called their place Eden or new Eden, but has said it is *like* Eden. Even so, Katie rejects the idea:

> "Oh, Adam had not Max's soul," she said;
> "And these wild woods and plains are fairer far
> Than Eden's self."

Canada, unlike Eden, offers refuge to "pale starvelings," to the "fleers from the waves of want." Katie declares she would not change what is around her "for the smooth sward of selfish Eden bowers,/Nor Max for Adam, if I knew my mind!" The *rejection* of Eden cannot be stressed enough. Crawford is not postulating a new Eden; she is rejecting the Eden idea, as Mrs. Moodie does before her in *Roughing It in the Bush* and as Charles Mair does in his poem, "Kanada." Eden has two people in it, and the prelapsarian state is innocent. *Malcolm's Katie* takes place in the seasonal world, the fallen world of sin, temptation, and struggle. Canada is a place of refuge for the needy. It is a place where hard work, fidelity, love, and virtue can win moral victory and effect spiritual regeneration.

The poem is an intensely moral work. Max earns the hand of Katie, and, in winning her, wins the prospect of wealth. Katie and Max do not live in mere subsistence. The poem closes at the frontier; the music of the axe is heard. But Malcolm has joined them, bringing his "flocks and herds" with him. We remember Max saying in Part I that Malcolm's "flocks have golden fleeces, and his herds/Have monarchs worshipful as was the

calf/Aaron called from the furnace. . . ." Max is clearly in line, by work and inheritance, for a social position and power like Malcolm's. Early in the poem when Max describes Malcolm fighting for "dear love of wealth and power/and honest ease and fair esteem of men," he adds the comment that "One's heart beats as it!" Katie asks why when Max has described such activity as "inglorious." He tells her that by "inglorious" he means not conventionally glorious, not causing death, oppression, and violence. His heart beats because the idea is noble, an idea to be emulated. It means possession of land, security, and "outspreading circles of increasing gold."

Malcolm's Katie is about love. It is about romantic love, familial love, love of work and virtue, love of the land, love of wealth and power, and love of nation. Crawford fears none of the kinds of love, for presiding over all is Katie, "the immaculate one, the purified one." The poem is moral and optimistic. Crawford envisions the growth and expansion of the nation. When the cynical, loveless, greedy, nihilist opportunist arrives, he can be contained by love and converted to virtue. The view is certainly not a Marxist one, nor is it a very twentieth-century non-Marxist outlook. But in Canada, in an expanding new nation where, in the nineteenth century, thousands of "fleers from the waves of want" were possessing land, working to independence, to wealth, and to position under the benign influence of a Christian God, the view was held by many. Out of it Isabella Valancy Crawford forged one of the great poems of the English Canadian literary tradition.

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