THE FIGURE OF THE ARTIST IN LATE NINETEENTH-CENTURY CANADIAN FICTION

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The period of the 1880s and 1890s was an important one in the development of Canadian culture for it saw the maturation of the first generation to be raised Canadian. Among the concerns of the literary people in this group was the hope for a distinctive Canadian literature. Energetic debate about the possibility of such a literature developing and what its qualities should be filled the literary journals of the day. Carl Ballstadt in the introduction to his edited collection of essays, *The Search for English-Canadian Literature,*[1] has identified the central issues in the debate which carry on into the twentieth century, giving us an understanding of a critical tradition. Very briefly stated, the issues were nationalism versus continentalism or internationalism, realism versus romance, native myth and legend versus classicism, as well as the problems of colonialism and philistinism. The debate was pursued from many perspectives: cultural, philosophical, economic and political. While some of the issues were those being discussed in the larger world, taken collectively they define the cultural concerns of a particular people at a particular time in their development. Because of scholarly study we have a sense of the debate as it was carried on in the literary journals and in the lives and writing of the important poets of the period, Roberts, Carman, Lampman, Scott and Crawford in particular. However, as yet little attention has been paid to the fiction.

While it is true that the quality of fiction in Canada was weak throughout the early and mid-nineteenth century, the genre often being employed merely to entertain or moralize, changes were occurring by the 1870s. They are described by T. G. Marquis in his

[1]Dr. Carl Ballstadt, *The Search for English-Canadian Literature* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975).

English Canadian Literature[2] (1913) and by Roper, Schieder and Beharriell in their chapters on fiction of the 1880s-1890s in *The Literary History of Canada* (1865).[3] While Canadian writers for the most part wrote of their own country and people, reflecting the nationalism of the period, it was a time too of internationalism in which writers were knowledgeable of recent world literary developments, particularly the move toward realism. Canadian journals of the period reflect the broader interests with reviews, notes and articles on American and English authors and books and on the literary questions of the day. Literary and cultural journals from outside Canada were imported in significant numbers and Canadian writers often published, travelled and even relocated outside their country. While one might deplore the economic exigencies that contributed to this state of affairs, nevertheless, the effect was often one of stimulation to the writer. A body of fiction was created that, while still not first rate, except in a few cases, like that of Sara Jeanette Duncan, nevertheless does merit critical attention for its place in the development of Canadian literature.

It is not possible to discuss here all of the fiction of the 1880s and 1890s in order to contribute to a larger understanding of the literary aspects of the period. Roper, Schieder and Beharriell have observed that in the 1890s the number of novels published by Canadians quadrupled. They list hundreds of titles, indicating a wealthy area for future scholarly attention. I wish to focus on one small body of fiction that seems particularly suited to an understanding of the cultural aspects of the time, and that is the fiction of the artist. While not as popular as some kinds, it gives imaginative form to some of the primary concerns of the period, revealing the novelists' statements on the condition of art and the artist in Canada and their hopes or misgivings for the future.

Four novels in particular will be discussed. They are: Thad. W. H. Leavitt's *The Witch of Plum Hollow* (1892), Maud Ogilvy's *Marie Gourdon: a Romance of the Lower St. Lawrence* (1890), Joanna E. Wood's *Judith Moore: or, Fashioning a Pipe* (1898) and Sara

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[2]T. G. Marquis, *English-Canadian Literature* in Clara Thomas ed., *John George Bourinot: Our Intellectual Strength and Weakness; Thomas Gurhrie Marquis 'English-Canadian Literature'; Camille Roy: 'French-Canadian Literature'* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973), pp. 101-589.

[3]Carl F. Klinck, general editor, *The Literary History of Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1965), pp. 260-339.

Jeanette Duncan's *Cousin Cinderella* (1908).[4] All the authors, with the exception of Maud Ogilvy, who was a native of Montreal, were from Ontario. While the novels vary in quality they offer revealing and strikingly similar statements about the nature of the artist and society in Canada.

Thad. W. H. Leavitt's *The Witch of Plum Hollow*[5] is the slightest of the novels and the least satisfactory as a work of art. The plot is rambling, coincidence abounds in the action, and the characters are melodramatic. However, in his portrayal of the artist figure Leavitt strikes several chords that ring true in relation to the larger cultural questions of the period and that are consistent with patterns revealed in the other works of fiction under consideration.

The central character and artist figure in *The Witch of Plum Hollow* is Rue Jahns, who at the beginning of the novel is a young girl living in rural Ontario in an area called La Rue's Mills on the St. Lawrence River near Kingston. The novel traces Rue's development from a raw, untrained, intuitional artist to one of artistic maturity. In

[4]Roper, *et. al.* list other novels about the artist (in Carl F. Klinck, general editor, *The Literary History of Canada,* p. 310) but for various reasons they are not useful to this study. Maria Amelia Fytche's *Kerchiefs to Hunt Souls* (1895) is about a woman who gives up a teaching career to pursue romance in the bohemian quarters of France. It does not deal with the artist as such. W. A. Fraser's *The Lone Furrow* (1907) is a temperance novel. Susie Frances Harrison's *Ringfield* (1914) does have a central character who is an actress but the novel focuses on love and moral issues rather than her career. Jane Conger's *A Daughter of St. Peter's* (1889) is not, as the authors say, about artists in Rome. Sara Jeanette Duncan's *A Daughter of Today* (1894) is about an artist, but an American. She is worth observing in relation to Duncan's Canadian artist figure in *Cousin Cinderella.* Duncan presents the American artist in Britain as unscrupulously grasping after success, while the Canadian is much more sensitive to and respectful of British art and culture. Maud Petitt's *Beth Woodburn* (1897), while about a woman novelist, has her reject art for religion. A general observation about these novels is that they indicate a moralistic suspicion of the artist as being bohemian and degenerate, a not surprising attitude in a period when vigourous morality, religion and nation-building obsessed the middle class.

[5]Thad. W. H. Leavitt, *The Witch of Plum Hollow* (Toronto: The Wells Publishing Company, 1892). Leavitt was born in Leeds County, Ontario, about 1844. He began life as a school teacher and as a young man went prospecting for gold in South Africa, Australia and New Zealand. While in Australia he wrote: *The History of Victoria and Melbourne, The History of Tasmania and Australian Representative Men.* On his return to Canada he became editor of *The Brockville Examiner.* He later founded and edited *The Brockville Times.* He then entered the civil service in Ottawa. From 1899-1905 he was an organizer for the Conservative party in Ontario. In 1905 he became inspector of Public schools, Ontario. He died in Bancroft June 21, 1909. He is also the author of: *History of Leeds and Grenville, Ontario, from 1749 to 1849* (Brockville, 1897) and *Kaffir, Kangaroo, Klondyke* (Toronto, 1898). (Biographical source: W. Stewart Wallace, *The Dictionary of Canadian Biography* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1926).

his presentation of Rue's development, the society that shapes her, the sources of her inspiration, the impediments to the same and the elements of her final success, Leavitt reveals his statement on the condition and possibilities of the artist in Canada in his day. Leavitt presents Rue's society, represented by her parents, as being characterized by colonial degeneracy and a frontier consciousness. On her father's side there is good United Empire Loyalist stock, but the line has deteriorated, for it could not sustain its original goals and values in an outpost of civilization nor could it devise more suitable ones. Rue's father has squandered what was left of the family fortune on drink. What is more, when Rue's mother died shortly after her birth, he married the German nurse, a crude and uneducated woman, as a convenience, and has taken no part in his daughter's education. Rue's stepmother is left with the raising of the child, which she does as best she knows how, that is by attempting to instill in her a practical, commonsensical attitude to life and by teaching her basic skills such as how to cultivate turnips. She has no inkling of any other possibilities in life. When Rue requests a pretty picture from town her stepmother brings her a stout pair of shoes instead. Rue's parents might serve as classic examples of those two impediments to creativity in Canada discussed by E. K. Brown: colonialism and the frontier mentality.[6] The unsympathetic audience or environment is often an element in romantic literature of the artist; the narrow, rural, colonial society is the Canadian variant.

The source of Rue's artistic inspiration is her intuitional response to the beauty she finds in nature. As frequently as possible she escapes her confining home and flees to the woods where she paints beneath a spreading and protective old chestnut tree. Again, the love of nature is a characteristic of the romantic aesthetic, but Leavitt adds the Canadian variation here as well. At the foot of the chestnut is the tombstone of Billa LaRue, the original grantee in the area who died in the late eighteenth century. Rue keeps her materials in a chink beneath the stone. It is not only nature, but a particular history and tradition that Rue responds to. Her name, Rue, is that of her place, although she is not a descendent of the original settler. If her father represents the colonial mentality, that which cannot relate to the new land because it is foreign to its *a priori* sensibilities, Rue represents Leavitt's hope for the possibility of an indigenous response and

[6]E. K. Brown, "The Problem of Canadian Literature," in his *On Canadian Poetry* (Ottawa; Tecumseh Press, 1973).

creativity. It is characteristic of all the novelists under discussion that the land and a sense of place are crucial to artistic growth and expression.

Because her society does not provide her with the training she needs as an artist (another detail common to the literature of this period), Rue has had to develop her skills on her own. She employs the raw materials she finds in her environment (birch bark, a cake of bluing, dye) to express her vision. She practices her art in secret, knowing her family would be unsympathetic, even hostile to her spending her time in an endeavour they do not understand. It is significant that it is not a native Canadian who first responds to her work but a New York lawyer, in the area on business, who recognizes the child's talent and sets up a fund whereby she will be sent to school locally and then in Paris. The necessity of going abroad to find training and an audience is also a consistent aspect of this literature, reflecting the realities of the time when Canada, an emergent nation, took little time for promoting the arts. When Carl Martyne takes an interest in her work Rue is so overwhelmed that she cries. During her Canadian school years Rue spends her summers paddling among the islands in the St. Lawrence and painting the natural beauty of the area. One summer she conceives of the notion of selling her art and approaches an American resort on the south side of the river. At first she is dismayed at the contrast between her humble homespun and canoe and the sophisticated dress and environment of the American holidayers (again Leavitt is defining the condition of the Canadian artist) but she quickly wins their respect with her fresh honesty and passable representations of the area. This is the beginning of Rue's progress toward international artistic stature.

Before leaving for Europe to study painting, Rue meets Majoroni, an Englishman of Italian descent in Canada on holiday. Majoroni pretends to be interested in Rue's art but it is apparent from the beginning that he is the villain of the piece with designs of a more sexual than aesthetic nature. On a symbolic level, Majoroni represents the degeneracy of Europe of which the Canadian artist must beware. The Canadian takes from Europe what it can offer of training and tradition but must not betray the inspiration he receives from his own country and, more particularly, its qualities of freshness, honesty and infinite possibility. The figure of the degenerate European occurs almost invariably in the literature of the artist.

Majoroni attempts to lure Rue from her native direction, not only at home, but also in Europe where he pursues her. It should be noted further that Majoroni's attitude to Rue is one of cynicism. Like her father, he has no real faith in or understanding of her potential as an artist, and berates her society for being backward and uncivilized.

In Europe Rue is alternately intimidated and stimulated by the great works she sees in the galleries, the latter reaction gradually gaining ascendancy. Through hard work and discipline she weds technique to her native talent, producing more than passable work. The climax to her endeavours comes when she is inspired by an account she reads in the Collegio Romano of the martyrdom of the Jesuits in Canada. She is thrilled at this page from her country's history and seeks to give it lasting expression. She works long and hard at the canvas, frequently experiencing doubt as to her ability to realize her objective. In the midst of this monumental labour, at a time when she feels greatest doubt and inadequacy, Majoroni appears on the scene and asks her why she is sacrificing her beauty and health to this silly exercise. Majoroni's cynicism is the catalyst Rue needs to spur her on to the last phase of her struggle. She rejects Majoroni's offer of wealth and luxury as his mistress and throws herself into her work, completing it. Rue's perseverance is rewarded by the selection of her painting for display in the Paris Salon. While her canvas may not be to contemporary taste, depicting as it does the ghastly martyrdom counterbalanced by angels welcoming the martyrs to heaven,[7] there can be no mistaking Leavitt's optimism concerning the possibility of a distinctively Canadian work of art taking its place in the larger world. Lest it be missed, he depicts the European audience falling to its knees in awe of the masterpiece. The evil Majoroni is not forgotten. In one last desperate attempt to win Rue's affection he has her kidnapped, but the plucky Canadian leaps from his boat and swims to safety. A brief epilogue observes that Majoroni was last heard of when his yacht disappeared in the Solomons where it is presumed that cannibals did their worst. Majoroni's ethnocentric blindness has found an apt reward.

[7]As bad as this painting would appear to be, it is not unlike the kind of art that was displayed in the Academies and Salons of late nineteenth-century Europe, as the recent exhibition of the Tanenbaum Collection (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, Spring-Summer, 1978) would indicate. Representational art with historical and religious themes and emphasis on sentimentality was *de rigueur* during the period, although, of course, stoutly opposed by the Impressionists and other more experimental painters.

There is one last point to make about the symbolic patterns of *The Witch of Plum Hollow.* The novel begins with the supernatural appearance of old Billa La Rue (the original settler who died a century earlier and on whose tombstone Rue painted as a child) in the New York office of Carl Martyne, the young lawyer. Billa engages Martyne's services to substantiate his original Ontario land claims, giving Martyne a box of gold coins for his labour. It is this commission that takes Martyne to La Rue's Mills, introduces him to Rue and subsidizes her education when Martyne recognizes her talent. Leavitt symbolically suggests the possibility of the fulfillment of the promise of the young country through art. It is by recreating the Canadian experience that the birthright is guaranteed. Although there are many apparent weaknesses in Leavitt's novel, the implicit statement about the Canadian artist is consistent with what one finds in other novels of the period and indeed with patterns in twentieth-century Canadian literature.[8]

Maud Ogilvy's *Marie Gourdon: A Romance of the Lower St. Lawrence*[9] pursues the lives of three talented contemporaries who are natives of Father Point, on the north shore of the St. Lawrence River in Quebec. Like *The Witch of Plum Hollow,* the novel takes the shape of the development of the artist figure from hesitant beginnings to maturity, although it is in late adolescence rather than childhood that the characters are introduced. They are Marie Gourdon, a singer, Eugene Lacroix, a painter and Noel McAllister whose interests are literary. The three have been educated and encouraged in their respective arts by the good parish priest, M. Bois-le-Duc.

Like *The Witch of Plum Hollow,* Ogilvy's novel is rooted in Canadian history and place. An introductory note describes the disbanding of a Scottish regiment in the Rimouski district and the intermarriage of the Scots and French which has led to the phenomenon of people in the district speaking only French but having Scottish surnames. When we first meet Marie Gourdon she is

[8]One thinks of the Canadian artist abroad in such twentieth-century works as Robertson Davies' *A Mixture of Frailties* (1958), Morley Callaghan's *That Summer in Paris* (1963), Mordecai Richler's *St. Urbain's Horseman* (1966), John Glassco's *Memoirs of Montparnasse* (1970), James Bacque's *Big Lonely* (1971) and Margaret Laurence's *The Diviners* (1974).

[9]Maud Ogilvy, *Marie Gourdon: A Romance of the Lower St. Lawrence* (Montreal: John Lovell and Son, 1890), Ogilvy also wrote *The Keeper of the Bic Light House* (Montreal: Renouf, 1891) and biographies of the Honourable J. C. D. Abbott and Sir Donald Smith. She contributed short fiction and articles to the magazines of the day.

standing by a large rock (one recalls the tree and the tombstone in Leavitt's novel) near the waves of the St. Lawrence, singing the French-Canadian boat song, "A la Claire Fontaine". The refrain of the song ("Il y a longtemps que je t'aime / Jamais je ne t'oublierai") occurs several times as a unifying device in the novel, symbolizing Marie's faithfulness to her home even after she leaves it to study in Europe. The name Father Point, although a real place name, may also be seen in the larger context of representing the nurturing qualities of place for the artist figure.

The novel begins with a pledge of love between Marie Gourdon and Noel McAllister sealed by the refrain from "A la Claire Fontaine". Almost immediately the prospects for the pair are dashed when a lawyer comes to Father Point seeking his last male desendent of the McAllister line which has died out in Scotland. Noel is informed that he qualifies to inherit the family estate in Scotland provided that he take up residence there and marry his cousin. Noel has been restless for the last few years at Father Point and the offer is most attractive to him. Marie sees his desire to leave and tells him that of course he must take advantage of his good fortune, in spite of her real feelings which would have him stay. Noel takes a self-justifying attitude to Marie's encouragement, persuading himself that it indicates her lack of real love and, with a clear conscience, leaves her and his home for better things.

The novel then moves forward ten years presenting the Canadians in Europe, pursuing their respective interests. We see what a life of wealth and privilege has done for the Canadian boy, Noel McAllister. He has done nothing but sit in his castle and let his ambitious wife/cousin manage the affairs of the estate. Although his election to parliament would be a foregone conclusion if only he would let his name stand, he will not even do that. He is weak, lazy and bored. The native vigour and manliness that sent him out in the fishing boats and fired his intellect at home are gone. By choosing material and social success and denying his home he has compromised his heart and soul, betraying his very being.

Marie and Eugene have had happier fates in Europe. They have come for training in their respective arts and have not betrayed Father Point. They maintain lifestyles and attitudes which mark their allegiance to place and their sense of identity. Marie, although she has studied in Paris and pursued a career that has seen her perform for Royalty, has taken the stage name of Mlle. Laurentia after her

native land. When she is asked to sing something of her own choice it is often "A la Claire Fontaine". Although her success has brought her wealth and she could afford to live a gay, glittering life, she chooses to live simply in modest homes outside the various urban cities to which her career takes her. She finds cities stifling and prefers country air and space. When she visits a fine English country home she spends as much time as possible in the garden. Like Marie, Eugene has come to Europe in quest of audience and training. He has plied a solitary and dedicated course as a painter for the last ten years.

The three are brought together again in Britain. Marie visits an estate adjoining that of Noel McAllister. The McAllisters are invited to dine. The difference in the attitudes of the host family to Noel and Marie is immediately apparent. While they have invited Noel as a matter of form, Marie is there because of the immense respect they have for her. Marie has earned her way into society whereas Noel has allowed himself to rest on privilege. When Noel realizes that Mlle. Laurentia is the same Marie he had known years ago he is suddenly animated and rushes to welcome her but is met with a cold reception and a request that he not address her in familiar terms. Marie has long ago seen the folly of her love for the weak Noel, and, while it has caused her pain, she is over it. However, Noel begins to see the magnitude of what he has lost. A few months later, after Noel's wife has died in an accident, he goes to Marie's London residence and declares that he is now free and hers. Once again, in a scene reminiscent of Rue's rejection of Majoroni, Marie rejects him.

At the same time that Marie rejects Noel, Eugene takes the Royal Academy in London by storm with a painting depicting the humble piety and simple faith of the inhabitants of Father Point. Like Marie he becomes the toast of society and appears to have all he could ask for. But adulation is not really to his taste; he is a reclusive and sensitive person. He has done the painting because of the inner satisfaction and need it fulfills, not for worldly success. At her invitation Eugene visits Marie after the Academy opening and reads to her the latest letter from the curé, informing her that he is returning for a visit to Father Point. She reveals her homesickness and in response to their shared feelings they realize their love for each other. They marry and sail for home. Ogilvy provides the image of huge, white glistening icebergs on their Atlantic crossing to suggest the purity and strength of their shared vision. In an epilogue the

reader is provided a last glimpse of Noel McAllister staring moodily into the dark waves that dash against his Scottish shore. The ghost of an old ancestor is his only companion.

Ogilvy's novel expresses many of the same premises as Leavitt's. She shows artistic imagination coming from a strong sense of place, she agrees on the necessity of Canadians going elsewhere to find training and a critical audience, she expresses faith in the Canadian artist taking his place in the world, but she asserts that allegiance to Canada is crucial to the success of the artist and that certain European pitfalls must be avoided. To deny one's roots is to deny one's self and is death for the artist.

In *Judith Moore, or, Fashioning a Pipe,*[10] Joanna E. Wood does not take her artist figure to Europe, but suggests the possibility of a native strain taking root and flourishing in Canada. Again the artist figure is initially rustic and unrefined. Andrew Cutler is the product of a small southern Ontario town called Ovid the concerns of which run in the rigid grooves of farming, politics and religion. Wood observes: "The Ovidian mind is not prone to poetry." As in La Rue's Mills, practicality and down-to-earth common sense are the ideals in this basically frontier society. Andrew is a bit of a pariah for he loves books and like Rue, Marie and Eugene has a sensitivity to the beauties of nature which his community is oblivious to. He is of Loyalist stock and has inherited the family farm, one of the original land grants in the area. Although his parents have died and Andrew is free to go elsewhere he has stayed on the farm partly out of a sense of duty to the past and partly out of love for the land. His heightened feeling for nature is revealed in his careful plowing around a bird's nest and his frequent reflections on the beauty of his surroundings. Not only is Andrew whimsical in this regard, but he has, as the Ovidians put it, a "crank on books". Hidden away in his

[10]Joanna E. Wood, *Judith Moore, or, Fashioning a Pipe* (Toronto: The Ontario Publishing Company, 1898). Wood was born in Lanarkshire, Scotland, and came to Canada as a child. She lived in Queenston Heights and died in Detroit in 1919. Her first novel, *The Untempered Wind* (1894), about an unwed mother, received great critical acclaim in the United States where it had been published by Tait and Sons, New York. *Current Literature,* New York (October, 1894, p. 378), called it "the strongest and best American novel of the year." In 1898, after *Judith Moore* had been published, *The Canadian Magazine* in its "Books and Authors" column (March, 1898, pp. 460-461) ranked Wood as one of the three best Canadian novelists along with Gilbert Parker and Charles G. D. Roberts.

bedroom are books by Shakespeare, Quarles, Herbert and Suckling.[11]

Wood goes further still in developing Andrew's sensitivity; in fact, he becomes on a symbolic level a representation of the ideal Canadian type. Like some of her contemporaries Wood employs the idea of North to epitomize the unspoiled purity and hope of Canada and she has Andrew relate to it in a way that is at times mystical. Andrew has inherited land in Muskoka. When a developer proposes exploiting its mineral possibilities Andrew refuses, preferring the natural beauty of the land. Further, Andrew spends time each winter in the distant North wandering for days through its icy beauty. As he does so, he becomes aware that the land is struggling for articulation:

> What moments had been his, when, leaving his guide preparing the camp for night, Andrew had gained some high ridge, and pausing, looked far across the peaks of graduated hills, clad in somber cedars weighted down with snow, white, silent, yet instinct with that mystery which presses upon us pleading for elucidation.[12]

In fact, as Wood presents it, it is not only Andrew who seeks expression in response to his surroundings. Even among the Ovidians there is a more primitive need to pattern and shape experience and a response to the power of words. Some of the most memorable parts of the novel depict the imagination and colour of the oral tradition, particularly story telling, in Ovid, and at one point Wood observes that while the Ovidians know nothing of poetry, perhaps they just need encouragement. She also notes the alliteration of everyday speech:

> She was "Sam Symons' Suse" to all and sundry. The Ovidian mind was not prone to poetry; still, this alliterative name seemed to have charms for it, and, perhaps the poetical element in Ovid only required developing, and it may be that the sibilant triune name found favour because it chimed to some dormant vein of poesy, unsuspected even by its possessors.[13]

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[11]The pattern of the rural artist having to hide his love of art from his society in order to conceal his difference is one that continues in the twentieth century, for example, in Ernest Buckler's *The Mountain and the Valley* (1952), Sinclair Ross' *As For Me and My House* (1941), Alice Munro's *Lives of Girls and Women* (1971) and Percy Janes' *House of Hate* (1970).

[12]Wood, *Judith Moore*, p. 57.

[13]Wood, *Judith Moore*, p. 19.

Indeed, Wood's naming the town Ovid suggests its potential for a level of expression that it has not achieved. Like the novels of Leavitt and Ogilvy, then, Wood's is concerned with the development of the young nation toward cultural maturity.

The possibility of this goal being achieved becomes apparent with the visit of Judith Moore to Ovid. Judith is the epitome of Art and in his wooing and winning of her, Andrew (and, on the symbolic level, Canada) finds fulfillment. Judith is a young operatic star who has been immensely successful on her first tour of Europe and has come to Ovid to rest before an American engagement. The meeting of Andrew and Judith is expressed in heightened terms. One day when Andrew is working in the fields he hears music that is so beautiful it seems otherworldly: "It was as if the heavens above had opened and showered down music upon his heart as he had flung forth the seed upon the earth." It is so intense "as to be almost a physical pain to him."[14] However, when Andrew searches for the source of the singing he does not find it. The next day when he hears it again, "Andrew could hardly believe that the sound issued from mortal lips — it was so flute-like, so liquid."[15] As the description of her voice is heightened, so is the physical description. Her face is characterized by "pallor" and "delicacy," her eyes are "wide and wistful," "pitiable in the intense eagerness that seemed to have consumed her"; she is like "an overtuned instrument whose tense strings quiver continually." Her clothing is designed entirely for decorative rather than functional purposes (a fact that Ovidians are quick to observe and criticize). Andrew approaches Judith for the first time as one caught in a spell: " 'I have come,' he said, half dreamily — stepping out from the shelter of the trees."[16] For Andrew, Judith represents the fulfillment of his yearning for beauty and expression in a world unawakened to their possibilities. For Judith the Canadian boy (described at one point as a "rustic Antinous") is a fresh, wholesome anodyne to the selfish demands of her sinister manager. As in the previous novels the European connection has unpleasant connotations of corruption and degeneracy. The manager is described as a greedy predator draining Judith's energy. He cares only for a return on his investment in her training, not for her art. If Europe is described as an unhealthy environment for the artist,

[14]Wood, *Judith Moore*, p. 14.
[15]Wood, *Judith Moore*, p. 27.
[16]Wood, *Judith Moore*, p. 31.

Canada is restorative. In the isolation and natural beauty of Ovid and with Andrew's love Judith returns to health.

There is a period of adjustment through which the Native Spirit and Art must pass and during which they learn how best to complement and heighten their respective qualities. At first Andrew makes fun of Judith's impractical shoes with their high heels and dainty pointed toes and Judith finds Andrew lacking in sensitivity to her more refined manners, but before long the pair are wandering through wood and field, decorating the animals with ribbons and creating bouquets from the wild flowers. Ovid too learns to appreciate Judith when she mesmerizes it with her singing in church. All goes well for the couple, who exchange love vows, until Judith's manager catches word of developments and comes and takes her away before she can explain her departure to Andrew, except in a note. The manager takes advantage of Judith's qualities of loyalty and naiveté by insisting that she is not a free agent and must accompany him.

Both Andrew and Judith decline during the separation. However, that winter, as he walks alone in the northern woods he loves, Andrew has a vision in which Judith appears and asks him to come to her. In reality she is lying near death in her hotel suite in New York. Andrew rushes to her side, she recuperates and he returns with her to Ovid. While the novel has apparent weaknesses, when looked at for the larger patterns Wood is developing in the theme of the artist, it expresses well the need she and other Canadian artists of the day felt for "fashioning a pipe."

Wood is a more accomplished novelist than Leavitt and Ogilvy. Structurally, *Judith Moore* covers a one-year period during which the seasons successfully complement the plot. Judith arrives in the spring during sowing; the love between her and Andrew grows during the summer; they are separated in the autumn, decline during the winter and return together the following spring. There is also a much stronger sense of veracity of place in Wood's novel. She recreates the character types, activities, language and attitudes of the small town with an accuracy that anticipates Sara Jeanette Duncan's *The Imperialist* (1904).[17]

[17]An even more penetrating look at small town Ontario is to be found in Wood's *The Untempered Wind* (Toronto: The Ontario Publishing Company, 1894), a novel about an unmarried mother who is viciously ostracized and persecuted for her "misdemeanour." This is one of the earliest representations of the narrow-minded small town that becomes increasingly familiar in twentieth-century literature.

Sara Jeanette Duncan's *Cousin Cinderella* (1908), [18] while it appeared later than the other novels under consideration here, is very much of the period in that Duncan left Canada in 1891 and her observations of the Canadian cultural scene were formed during the 1880s. Duncan analyses the condition of the Canadian artist at home and in the international arena in much more depth than the other writers. In all her novels she shows a remarkably profound understanding of the characteristics of Canadians and of the citizens of those two countries so important in our development, England and the United States. By studying the artist figure at home and then in England in *Cousin Cinderella* Duncan presents a realistic and penetrating analysis of the state of Canadian culture and necessary directions for the future. While there is less wishful thinking and optimism about the possibility of a distinctive Canadian culture expressed in her novel, many of the general patterns and premises are those of Leavitt, Ogilvy and Wood.

Duncan as a journalist writing for *The Week* and other periodicals in the 1880s turned her eye to the Canadian cultural scene and drew attention to its limitations. In an important essay in her column "Saunterings" in September, 1886[19] she describes Canadians as "an eminently unliterary people" and goes on to say why this is so. Several of her arguments have been developed in the twentieth century by critics like E. K. Brown and Margaret Atwood. Duncan states that it is not our cold climate or our educational system or our lack of a leisure class that has resulted in our unliterary qualities. It is rather our pride in things practical and our refusal to "star-gaze" when we can be going about business. She describes Ontario in this respect as "one great camp of Philistines" and observes that our concerns as a people are with politics, temperance and religion, areas in which we participate with gusto, but not the arts. She laments too our colonial trait of continually comparing the efforts of our people with the great works of other traditions which leads to a spirit of deprecation. The situation is reinforced by the fact that Americans ignore us and the English look upon us semi-contemptuously. This essay is very helpful for illuminating Duncan's attitude to the state of Canadian culture in the 1880s and

[18]Sara Jeanette Duncan, *Cousin Cinderella* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1908, reprinted by the University of Toronto Press, 1973).

[19]Sara Jeanette Duncan, "Saunterings," in *The Week* III (30 September, 1886), pp. 707-708. Reprinted in Carl Ballstadt, *The Search for English-Canadian Literature* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975), pp. 30-36.

helpful too in a discussion of *Cousin Cinderella* which can be seen as a fictional presentation of its thesis.

The central characters in *Cousin Cinderella* are Mary, who narrates the novel, and Graham Trent, a brother and sister born and raised in Minnebiac, a fictional small town in Ontario. Mary and Graham represent the best types of one of Canada's first families and are representative too of Canadian qualities and attitudes generally. It is Graham Trent who is the artist figure, or at least the potential artist figure in the novel. Sister and brother have been given the best education possible, an important element in their upbringing for their father, Senator Trent, who has made a personal fortune in lumber. Mary has attended a school for young ladies in Toronto and Graham military college in Kingston. Both are dutiful and obedient children with a strong sense of responsibility to family and country. Graham particularly illustrates these traits by doing service in South Africa and entering the family business. He even contemplates entering politics. But there is another aspect to Graham's character that is not encouraged and rewarded as are his educational, business and political interests; indeed, he has to relegate it to spare time status. This is his love of carving wood. As Mary says, "He loved the touch and the feel and the idea of wood."

Graham is a second generation Canadian. His father came to Canada from Yorkshire, worked hard and, as noted, became a financial success. He had no leisure time and no interest in anything but practical matters. Graham represents the next generation of Canadians. He has been raised in an environment of enough leisure that the work imperative has not been as strong as it was for his father and he has been able to indulge in a sensitive relationship with wood very different from the one his father has. However, he has been raised in such a way and the social forces are such that he does not dream of working with wood fulltime except in the business. Mary, the narrator of the novel, goes on to express Graham's situation:

> however, he was the son of John Trent and Son and with the business extending the way it has done and seems bound to do, he has been obliged to reserve the poetry of it for his spare time; which perhaps is as it ought to be.[20]

[20]Duncan, *Cousin Cinderella*, p. 6.

"As it ought to be"; here we have the classic statement of what Duncan in "Saunterings" defined as the strongest impediment to the development of the Canadian imagination: an over-reverential attitude toward practicality (what E. K. Brown later describes as the frontier spirit). If we can take Mary's word for it (and she has, after all, studied "Beautiful Thoughts" at Miss Vincent's in Toronto!) a mantel piece Graham created with a design of fir trees is "like a bar of music, a line of poetry." She notes too that he resists the tendency of Minnebiac to import its art. He is "like a missionary of simple purposes and fine ideas in wood," resisting the overly elaborate and cluttered imported (plush and gilt) Victorian tastes of his day. He has a strong love of Canada as well. When he returns from the South African War he observes that the English do not "make allowances," that is, they are strongly ethnocentric and inflexible in their culture, refusing to understand others. He takes the sound of the saws devouring the timber, so much a part of his life in Canada, as a symbol of place. As Mary expresses it,

> It is a delicious sound; they sing their way through it with a kind of mounting cry, that wanes and waxes and wanes again with a perpetual call and a perpetual lullaby; I like it better than any other note that you hear out-of-doors.[21]

Graham says of the sound of the saws after his return from South Africa: "There's a lot of Canada in that, and Canada, Sis, is a pretty good alternative." Duncan uses the image of wood very effectively to evoke the tension in Graham between societal pressures toward practicality and business and his own instinctual need for beauty and creativity. There are few images, too, that could evoke the Canadian experience more effectively, given the importance wood played in the nineteenth-century Canadian economy.

Graham never really does develop as an artist, and this is one of the points of Duncan's novel, illustrating as it does the problem of the Canadian imagination. However, he and his sister are sent to England by their father who wants to display Canada's maturity to the English. Trent Senior's attitude to England is a complex one. He is English in his origins and respects England very much and wants to keep up the imperial connection, but he is also fiercely Canadian and frequently becomes angry at the English for their ignorance of or superiority toward Canada which they still think of as a colony. In

[21]Duncan, *Cousin Cinderella*, p. 5.

England Graham's character as potential Canadian artist is developed in relation to English culture and national characteristics.

In many ways England is a joy for the young Trents. They delight in observing English customs and manners. They also have a great respect for the traditions and accomplishments of the English. Their attitude is brought into focus by Duncan when she has them meet an American friend, Evelyn Dicey, who is their age and of their class, but represents the American attitude to England which is much less deferential. In fact, Evelyn, with no self-consciousness whatsoever, is in England to wed her American fortune to an English title. Duncan presents the American as openly self-interested and uninhibited by questions of local custom and manners, whereas the Canadians are much more socially sensitive.

While Duncan suggests the close ties and affinities between the Canadians and the English she also points out the dangers of too close alliance which would result in the Canadians losing their precarious but real identity. Much more than the American, the Canadian runs the risk of assimilation. This is very much the danger recognized by the other novelists who insisted that while it may be important for the Canadian artist to leave Canada in order to develop, the identity must be preserved. Graham falls in love with England, and more particularly its fine old artifacts. He selects the flat in which they will stay on the basis of its old furniture and a seventeenth-century wood engraving. He also starts collecting fine old pieces of wooden furniture. However, it is significant that in Canada he was a craftsman in wood, an artist, albeit part-time, whereas in England he only collects. Also, he is himself unsure of his complete devotion to English art, for he says to Mary at one point that everything in England seems so completed. The Canadian boy senses a tiredness to the English scene that was lacking in his own more dynamic country. Respect for England while preserving his own character would be appropriate for Graham, but loss of self is the danger he courts there.

Duncan develops these tensions in a relationship Graham has with a member of the English aristocracy. Barbara Pavisay is a member of a proud old English family whose line extends back to the Tudors. However, the family has fallen on hard times and the only salvation appears to be an advantageous marriage. Graham, after getting to know the Pavisays and learning of their dilemma, proposes to Barbara. It is not so much the woman herself but his

sensitivity to the idea of the family losing its ancient seat that motivates Graham. Again the contrast can be seen with the American type, Evelyn Dicey, who is pursuing Barbara's brother, but not out of concern for the plight of the family. Evelyn wants a title and Lord Doleford can give her one. Evelyn is completely in control of her mind and emotions throughout her association with the Pavisays, but Graham understands his own motivations less. He thinks he loves Barbara but it is what she represents as "part of the fine old scheme of things" that really attracts him. He is in love with an ideal. How misplaced this ideal is becomes apparent in the imagery Duncan employs in describing the development of the relationship between Graham and Barbara. One day Graham meets Barbara who is lost in a thick London fog. He offers to lead her back to his and Mary's flat but they travel in circles, following a funeral that is also lost. Graham observes innocently that "There was something queer and drifting and Dantesque about it, always turning up in that fatal way at one's elbow out of the fog. There must be a moral synonym for it somewhere, if we weren't so fearfully dense."[22] The funeral's significance is lost to Graham for the present, but another ominous image employed by Duncan is that of Pavis Court itself. While it is of great beauty, one of the finest homes in England, it is just this quality that has frightening implications for Graham for he is in danger of being swallowed up by it. Mary, who shares Graham's sensitivity to the old and the beautiful, observes:

> It just caught and seized and possessed one; there was nothing for anybody to say. It put out a wonderful old claim which one answered instantly with love. It was as indifferent as you like, the austere curved gables hardly lifted an eyelid, the single stone rose-wreath that festooned the arms over the door hardly smiled, the narrow paved windows looked dimly into the past alone; but tenderness and worship it would have, the old grey thing, while one stone stood upon another.

Mary's feelings are mixed: "My heart sang for a moment, in the joy of it, and then went mute with the thought of Graham, giving him up for lost, and we went in.[23] Mary also perceptively says of Barbara that she is like a finished picture, not like a sketch, as she would wish her to be, and therefore cannot develop, a quality Graham lamented

[22]Duncan, *Cousin Cinderella*, p. 187.
[23]Duncan, *Cousin Cinderella*, p. 242.

in English art. Again and again Duncan observes the difference between the Old and New Worlds and by implication the danger of Graham in allowing Pavis Court and Barbara to take him over.

During the period of the engagement Mary observes that Graham becomes quiet and withdrawn. This is a period in which exactly the opposite should happen, as he and Barbara get to know and even love one another. Mary is sure that Graham is beginning to understand the mistake he is making. But he is too honourable to confide his doubts to anyone. Before it is too late, the situation is saved by Barbara herself who suddenly realizes that Graham has proposed out of altruistic motives. She had assumed that, like Evelyn, his motives were self-interested. When she sees what a sensitive person he is she realizes that he needs more in a relationship than she can give him and she ends it. After this experience, Graham is anxious to get back to Canada immediately. Suddenly England has lost its charm. What had seemed quaint now seems stale. Graham needs the freshness, space and infinite possibility of his own country.

In *Cousin Cinderella* Duncan has defined the importance of England as a source of tradition for the Canadian and has stressed the affinities between Canadians and English. But she has also pointed out the necessity of each national type preserving his distinctions. Duncan does not hint at what will happen to Graham upon his return to Canada. It is assumed that he will continue in the family business and be elected to Parliament. As in "Saunterings" she is not naively optimistic about the possibility of Canadians giving a high place to art. However, one might infer that just as Graham is more sensitive to creative needs than his father, so possibly his son might have similar needs and Graham might be more favourably disposed to allowing their development. Mary will marry Lord Doleford, so the English connection is still there. As she ruefully explains, her sex is in bondage anyway, so it is not as devastating for her that she make this marriage which will necessitate her leaving her Canadian home.

These late nineteenth and early twentieth-century novels contribute to a larger understanding of the state of culture and creativity in Canada during the period. They express a concern about the condition of the artist in this country and a search for artistic and cultural fulfillment while at the same time revealing some of the impediments to this end. The novelists reveal similar patterns in their

presentations of the artist figure. The artist receives his stimulation from a sense of place, often symbolized by the land and finds little support for his need to create in his society whose philosophy is one of narrow-minded practicality. He often has to go abroad to develop artistically because there is no training or audience at home. Initially the larger world is intimidating in its greater wealth and sophistication, but through talent and hard work the Canadian artist succeeds in winning respect abroad. However, he must remain loyal in spirit to his place of origin or lose his inspiration. Often he returns to Canada to renew his contact with it. Europe, while it provides certain advantages for the artist, is presented as tired and even corrupt and the great strength of the Canadian artist is his moral and spiritual vitality, qualities fostered by the emergent nation. Some writers did see the possibility of an indigenous culture developing in Canada. Many of the questions raised in this literature are still with us today.

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