

AN AUDIENCE IN MIND WHEN I SPEAK: GROVE'S IN SEARCH OF MYSELF

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Much of Grove's writing can be considered autobiography, yet only *In Search of Myself* records the full development of his personal and artistic life. In form and structure, *In Search of Myself* echoes the two earlier books, *Over Prairie Trails* and *A Search for America*, but it spans a much wider field of study. Grove outlines his theories of art and life in relation to the development of civilization, considering himself as a microcosm of the evolution of man and expressing a deterministic view of personality. His overall plan is to chart the difficulties of finding an audience for his writing; more interesting, however, is the way he creates a personal myth and a series of masks to hide the painful realities of his past. He directs the story of his life toward the readers of his novels, referring to the origins of those fictions. In an important way, also, he addresses his autobiography to his private self, to his imagination, and he invents a past to account for the person he believes himself to be as an adult.

There are three reasons why a new look at *In Search of Myself* can be justified. First of all, the work has intrinsic value. Earlier critical statements that Grove's autobiography is disappointing,¹ painful,² and misleading in its title³ have been largely discredited. Moreover, I believe

1. Margaret R. Stobie, *Frederick Philip Grove* (New York: Twayne, 1973), p. 176. Stobie's opinion is summed up in this way: "Not only the world of arts and letters and of national movements is lacking; the book as a whole is disappointingly empty. It does not stand by itself as having its own validity of interest, as *A Search for America* does. What interest it has accrues from a reader's previous interest in Grove's other writing. Even then it is thin and unrewarding."

2. Jay Macpherson, "Autobiography," in *Literary History of Canada: Canadian Literature in English*, ed. Carl F. Klinck (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1965), p. 680.

3. See p. 214 ff. in Douglas O. Spettigue's *FPG: The European Years* (Ottawa: Oberon Press, 1973) for an extended discussion of the significance of the title. Spettigue doubts that Grove sincerely attempts to locate the source of failure or the essence of personality. More recent criticism argues otherwise. See also Paul Hjartarson's "Design and Truth in Grove's 'In Search of Myself.'" *Canadian Literature*, No. 90 (Autumn, 1981) 73-90. This essay takes an overview of all previous views of *In Search of Myself*; although Hjartarson does not go as far as I should in asserting the validity of the title, he establishes the authenticity of Grove's story as autobiography, and he insists that *In Search of Myself* is critical to an understanding of Grove (p. 75).

that the characters he creates in the life story (based on what he intuitively perceives as aspects of his own personality) become far more convincing than any of the characters in his major novels. Secondly, our knowledge of Grove's European background now permits an accurate assessment of his life story. We know that the author of *In Search of Myself* writes from a dual perspective: he is the German writer Felix Paul Greve, who faked suicide to escape from an ignominious past and establish himself in a new land; he is also Frederick Philip Grove, distinguished Canadian orator and novelist. Informed readers also recall his statement as Felix Greve to Andre Gide: "I feel the same need for lying and the same satisfaction in lying that others feel in telling the truth."⁴ Thirdly, we are less disturbed by this egotistical propensity for lying because recent theories of autobiography ask us to look at such writing from the same viewpoints as fiction.

Each autobiographer adapts the genre to suit the needs of his material. Many male writers trace the pattern of their professional success; Grove, on the other hand, has little interest in the world outside himself, referring only occasionally to historical events or to other people in his life. His dominant concern lies in the sources of personal failure: "this book is the record of a failure; and its explanation: a double failure, an economic and spiritual one, for ultimately the one involved the other."⁵ The lack of financial success proves less important to him, however, than the frustration of individualism. He wants to look into a mirror and feel the gratification of self-satisfaction and public acclaim; he knows himself a failure, however, because he cannot reconcile his personal expectations with the actuality of his environment. Some part of this obsession with failure comes from the actual writing of autobiography. He experiences the difficulty which all autobiographers face in trying to shape their experience, and thus his failure is partly the limitations of the genre he has chosen to write within. Concerning the problem of personal failure he can rationalize and intellectualize, and in the writing down of his conflicting views of himself he can derive some comfort, but on a deeper level, I maintain, he remains a failure to himself as an individual throughout the telling of the story.

4. "Conversation With a German Several Years Before the War", in *Pretexes: Reflections on Literature and Morality by Andre Gide*, ed. Justin O'Brien (New York: Delta, 1964), p. 239.

5. Frederick Philip Grove, *In Search of Myself* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974, c. 1946), p.409. Subsequent references to the autobiography will be to this edition, and will be included in the text of my essay.

This dominant emotion of failure could prevent Grove from writing at all, but he handles the issue cleverly in placing the prologue before the account of his birth. Depletion and spiritual burn-out are apparent in the opening lines. The story begins: "It was a dismal November day, with a raw wind blowing from the north-west and cold, iron grey clouds flying low—one of those Ontario days which, on the lake-shores or in a country of rock and swamp, seem to bring visions of an ageless time after the emergence of the earth from chaos, or a foreboding of the end of the world about to die from entropy" (p.11). Melancholy, depressed by the mundane nature of his task in fetching a kitchen drudge, the narrator is here cast in the role of observer, a man distracted by some experience of the previous evening and haunted by events of a mysterious, distant past. Waiting outside the farmhouse for the girl to appear, he becomes further depressed by the contrast between his own present existence and the life of an unnamed Frenchman from his European past. He feels that he has failed to live up to the expectations others had of him.

This landscape and situation become typical of the art of autobiography as practiced by Grove. The narrator, who is far less appealing and less consistent in speaking voice than either the narrator of *Over Prairie Trails* or Phil Branden in *A Search for America*, marks the stages of Grove's lifespan by indicating four separate identities: the vulnerable child, the disillusioned youth, the mature adult, and the bitter old man. Obviously, these four identities tend to merge; moreover, the narration often develops as a series of doubles. For example, the prologue describes the antics of an old man who tells the narrator about a salesman who broke his neck trying to drive through the mud. We have a strange sense of Grove's inner self as an old man: ". . . once more, under the dismal sky, he surrendered merriment, slapped his raised knee with his right hand between guffaws. It was an incomprehensible, obscene, drenching torrent of mirth before which one could only stand gasping" (p.9). This tale initiates a sequence of coincidences and mishaps in which Grove has ample confirmation of his foregone conclusion of disaster and defeat. The narrator's tone is ironic, as is evident by the epigraph "Ca vous amuse, la vie?"

The prologue suggests the sum total of the life experience: a journey fraught by betrayal and frustration, followed by a grim satisfaction in knowing that fate works against him, then a moment of fulfillment when the solitary mind seems to connect with the outside world. Throughout the initial section of Grove's story, the narrator seems to enact this

process. He rationalizes about the possibility of recovering something from the idealism of youth, but he is overwhelmed by despair, focusing on the lack of audience for his writing. He has failed as an artist, "for no matter what one may say, he says it to somebody . . ." (p.6). Even though he feels self-pity because the unnamed Frenchman has someone else to write a biography while he must tell his own story, the narrator ponders the problem of audience until he arrives at a solution that involves his former friend. The unnamed Frenchman then becomes the key to his search for audience: "The important thing is that *you* have such an audience *in mind* when you speak. Whether it is really there does not matter. In case of need you can imagine it . . . If I could explain, to someone, why I had failed, the explanation might more than compensate for the failure to have made myself heard so far" (p.11). The narrator does not say "I" or "the writer" in this discussion of audience; he uses the pronoun "you" as if he felt himself merging with an external audience as a teacher or prophet instructing and issuing commands. On a more private level he murmurs words of advice to that hidden side of Grove, whose existence the reader only occasionally feels. In any case, this orientation toward audience becomes an important step in preparing himself to return to the world of childhood.

For the narrator, storytelling is part of the operation of memory. For example, the maid Annette seems to invent the child's beginning, as if it were a fairy tale: "'Once upon a time there was a little boy'" (p.16). The child's entry into the world has the quality of myth; furthermore, the burning house will be linked to other houses which mark the stages of life, death, and renewal in the life story. Although the process of storytelling is chronological, the narrator also relies on flashbacks, foreshadowing, and repetitions that bring out Grove's present consciousness, not just as a writer who wants to be recognized by posterity, but also as a man who appreciates the transience of his personal experience. To give the account of childhood, the narrator divides his speaking voice to become observer and participant. Perceived as through the eyes of the child, the world of Thurow is a world unto itself, with the father enormously tall, strong, attractive to women, and the mother beautiful, cultured, the nucleus of a group of artistically gifted people. For the narrator, the parents are those a developing writer might wish: ". . . a future writer like myself could hardly, according to outward appearance, have chosen better than the determining destiny did choose for me in the matter of parents. To what extent reality bore out this appearance is the subject of the first part of this book" (p.16). The

narrator, then, reshapes the past according to what he believes would make sense for Grove the writer. He uses the fictional technique of appearance versus reality, first creating a dream world, and then shattering it by describing the parents as they become physically deformed. The father turns into a hunchback, after falling down an elevator shaft, whereas the mother is transformed into a kind of lunatic whose body is grotesquely bloated by cancer.

Grove's origins are presented as they appear in the mirror of the narrator's memory, which is bound to be distorting since no one's memory will be entirely infallible. Grove covers his lies further by stating that Annette's constant storytelling left him with an inability to separate fact and fancy. At times, Grove seems to manipulate his narrator. Nevertheless, the narrator performs more freely in advancing the plot line. The key events of childhood, such as the father's infidelity, the flight from Thurow, the "triumphant progress" (p.75) through Europe, including the description of the beach estate at Boulogne, and the father's gift of a shaving kit acquire significance in terms of the rest of the life story where they become recurring motifs. The child foreshadows the adult Grove; in particular, the occasion in which the child takes the boat on the shore to row out to the lighthouse sets up an important context for other journeys, especially the weekly trips under difficult weather conditions and over rough terrain to visit wife and daughter.

The narrator uses the theft of the boat to set up other patterns of behaviour. He reveals the child in an unattractive light, as arrogant and self-satisfied, apparently delighted in the discovery of his own superior class position as a way of humiliating the fisherman. For the child, the experience is memorable as an example of frustration; for the narrator, the experience reveals a growing awareness of man's struggle against the determining forces of nature and society. The feeling of being cast adrift on the currents with ships bearing down on the small craft represents an ultimate horror. The fact that the father will not recognize the child's abilities sets up a further source of insufficiency. In the telling of these details, the narrator seems to guide the reader toward reaching conclusions regarding Grove's propensity to act in a certain way. In the account of the boat trip, as elsewhere in the autobiography, Grove establishes a goal, uses reason to chart a course, defies morality to get what he wants, and then finds the odds against his success are so overwhelming that he must retreat; in retreating, he is lucky to escape with his life.

Using symbols and symbolic landscapes, the narrator is effective in conveying the shaping forces of the writer's development from a child and youth. In the area of sexual development, for example, the narrator shows how the child's relationship with the mother is the basis for conflicting views of relationships between men and women. The narrator indicates that the child unconsciously assimilates his mother's feeling that men and women destroy each other ("In women she saw the great danger to men; in men, to women," p.94). The child feels both admiration and a guarded affection toward his mother, but there is an intense conflict between them, the exact nature of which is not revealed. In part, this conflict reflects the child's divided attraction between the contemplative versus the active life, a feeling which is later developed as a major thematic opposition between spiritual and material reality. Mother and son cannot agree on the direction the boy's career should take. On her deathbed, she tries to force him to enter the business of Uncle Jacobsen, "And seeing that I refused, she muttered a few words which mean more to me now than they did at the time; I cannot bear to repeat them" (p.116).⁶

Bertha's role in Grove's life runs throughout the autobiography like an underground spring of anguish. Certainly, mother/child relationships consistently involve the agony of separation; moreover, maternal elements seem part of the narrator's description of the development of sexuality in the youthful Grove. For instance, the fleeting glimpses of the prostitutes of Hamburg pale beside the vivid account of the affair with Dr. Broegler's wife. In telling the story of this relationship, the narrator shows sympathy for Mrs. Broegler, even condemning the youth's later rather callous treatment of her.⁷

Precocious sexual development is balanced against growing spiritual awareness. Looking back at the artist as a young man, the narrator brings out his feeling for the nomadic herds on the steppes of Siberia. As he hears the song of these wanderers, he feels ordained to interpret racial consciousness: "It was a vast, melancholy utterance, cadenced within a few octaves of the bass registry, as if the landscape as such had assumed a voice; full of an almost inarticulate realization of man's forlorn position in the face of a hostile barrenness of nature; and yet

6. In "Conversation With a German Several Years Before the War" (p.239), the mother makes two comments on her deathbed: "May you always remain proud" and "I'm afraid he may go to the bad."

7. Professor Spettigue suggests that the affair with Mrs. Broegler echoes the relationship with Elsa (p. 187).

full, also, of a stubborn, if perhaps only inchoate assertion of man's dignity below his gods" (p.154). He articulates a prophecy concerning his own nature: "I, too, was to be a voice; and I, too, was perfectly willing to remain nameless" (p.154). The narrator's descriptions of these primitive peoples is positioned carefully to bring out the way in which the youth himself is at the stage of primitive psychological development; as the story progresses, the youth will become more articulate, and he will acquire a fuller sense of himself as a civilized artist. However, the fact remains that the primitive urge to act as a nameless voice will conflict with the need for personal recognition. Is the narrator aware of this contradiction, and does he suffer accordingly from the self-alienation which would be the result of trying to write from two such disparate perspectives? Certainly, he tries to protect his integrity as a story teller by stating that memory causes some things to stand out and others to fade. He knows that Grove had never been to Siberia,⁸ but he must invent such a journey because it will foreshadow Grove's feeling for the landscape of western Canada and his belief in himself as a spokesman for the pioneer.

As the narrator presents these various images of childhood and youth, he practices further deceptions on the reader, frequently altering his relationship to his audience. In order to make the distinction between himself as a narrator and the subject of his tale, Grove, the writer, he changes pronoun: "In the case of the present writer far and away the greater part of his experience simply checked him by a process of distraction" (p.156). Only by using the third person in this way can he transfer personal experience to the realm of art; the theory of personality further acquires significance beyond that of Grove: "Every human being born can, in a way, be regarded as a seed; the seed, too has its viaticum; once released from the parent plant, it has to seek, or rather to find, its soil, there to grow or to perish" (p.156). Occasionally, the narrator tries to draw the reader in on a more intimate level, inviting him to share the experience: "Experience is strangely selective; mostly it teaches only what we have already learned" (p.157). Unlike *Over Prairie Trails*, however, there are no comfortable references to Grove's family, as if the life story were directed toward them. Nor is there any suggestion of a European audience, although the narrator looks back over his

8. Spettigue, p. 192.

shoulder with a certain degree of envy,⁹ at a European world in which the writer has a distinct place. Rather than feeling assured of a friendly audience, the narrator is disdainful of potential readers, as in the following reminder of Grove's supposed wealthy background: "It must not be forgotten that, no matter how deeply mortgaged Thurow might be, I still looked upon myself as its future master" (p.157). At this point Thurow is associated with personal control over destiny. Yet in the conclusion to the section called "Youth" the narrator sums up Grove's formative emotions in this way: "Never again . . . could I see my aim in life as anything but the ultimate working out of what was in me: a sort of reaction to the universe in which man was trapped, defending himself on all fronts against a cosmic attack" (p.163). Inborn desperate determination to fight against the forces of heredity and environment is the message which the narrator tries to instill in the reader in the description of the disillusioned youth.

At the beginning of the section on manhood, however, the narrator changes direction. He performs an act of self-destruction, negating his former selves, and attempting to construct a new image for the reader. The account of his writing the first draft of *A Search for America* contains a powerful myth associated with the landscape of prairie Canada: "The snow lies deep in the bush and it is bitterly cold" (p.188), he begins. After the farm chores are completed, the young wanderer writes feverishly in his frozen loft. Throughout the rest of his life, the cabin in the woods where he lives with the Irishman remains a symbol of artistic tranquility, a private world untouched by the corruption of industrial society. As he grows older, the craving for the shack beside a stream in the midst of the forest increases because the wilderness represents a form of creative energy which is necessary to his personal and artistic growth. One explanation which he provides for the sense of failure at the end of his life comes from the rejection of the wilderness in moving east.

9. For an interesting discussion of the way Grove relates to his European audience, see Janet Giltrow's essay "Grove in Search of an Audience," *Canadian Literature*, No. 90 (Autumn, 1981), 92-107. Giltrow's treatment of the problem of audience differs from mine in the approach to autobiography and in the belief that Grove found his audience: "A writer's choice of genre reflects the social context of his utterance—situation determines genre." Certainly, this is true of Grove's travel writings. Alien, aloof, disregarded in the community where he lived, he adopted rhetorical statements generally directed towards a distant audience. But the converse is also true: Grove's choice of non-fiction, and his manipulation of the genre's informal conventions, created a social context for him and his art. The response of Canadian Readers to *In Search of Myself* put him in the place he wanted to be" (p. 105).

In a sense, the later work *In Search of Myself* picks up where *A Search for America* leaves off. The narrator refers to the discovery of being almost forty as a dividing line in Grove's experience. Picking up with some aspects of the Phil Branden personality, especially the ability to successfully connect with strangers, the narrator tries to show how Grove reached a moment of revelation and a turning point in the direction of artistic and personal fulfillment. There is no sudden climax, however; instead, the narrator describes a series of events that act as a slow accretion of personal consolidation. An insight concerning technique in writing about Grove tends to precede the actual account of the event in the life. For example, the memorable passage on man's search for order acts as an important step in patterning Grove's life; it is followed by the ways in which Grove's life fell into a discernible shape: "... I believe in the unity of all life; in the unity of the urge which compels the atoms of quartz to array themselves in the form of a crystal; with the urge which holds the stars in their courses or which made me sit down to write this last will and testament of my life" (p.230). Immediately after this passage, we are told that a chance encounter with a Roman Catholic priest leads to a teaching position; the teaching position leads to the marriage with Catherine Wiens; finally, the drives between Gladstone and Falmouth allow him spiritual and physical renewal. The writing of *Over Prairie Trails* affords him the intensity of peak experience, both in the actual living of the drives and in the writing about them afterwards.¹⁰

Although the teaching years in Manitoba clearly embody the experiences which most closely approximate fulfillment for Grove, they are described as a series of contrasts between agony and ecstasy. The narrator records Grove's life in terms of the fictions he writes, but the writing process is painful. The reader picks up echoes of Grove's dual nature and senses a mysterious contradiction or split in consciousness. The character mentioned more often than any of the other characters from the novels is Abe Spalding, whose reality obsessed Grove as he witnessed man's attempt to conquer the land. The process of identifi-

10. The account of these drives in *In Search of Myself* has a different orientation from that of the account in *Over Prairie Trails*. The narrator of the autobiography is concerned to bring in Grove's wife and to comment on her courage in living alone in the isolated cottage surrounded by rude neighbors and wolves; at times, he seems to exaggerate her sufferings. The voice of the narrator is more cynical than the voice of the schoolteacher in *Over Prairie Trails*; like *A Search for America*, *Over Prairie Trails* is more optimistic in tone than *In Search of Myself*. Through fog, snow drifts, strange portents in the sky, and bitter cold, the school teacher enacts the ritual of the journey successfully.

cation with this character, however, is balanced by a determined belief in the writer's separate identity: "As I grew older, he did, slowly shaping his life as best he could. We were never one; though I felt with him, we remained two; I had suffered too intensely from his nature to identify with him at any time" (p.261). I find this an extraordinary remark because it suggests that Grove had little control over his characters; they simply developed themselves, living in his mind like separate extensions of his own being. Moreover, writing seems to involve a process of decay in which parts of the self are severed from the parent body.

For Grove, writing is intensely fatiguing. This mental exhaustion occurs because he cannot separate himself from the land itself; he feels the shelterbelts on the farms, for example, as "huge, inverted primitive brooms" (p.253). Both the landscape of northern Manitoba, where he feels most at home, and the characters, who are part of this landscape, become a reflection of his consciousness. An example of his anguished compulsion to write occurs in the account of the camping trip on Lake Winnipeg when he is suddenly seized by the inspiration to write the scene between Niels and Clara from *Settlers of the Marsh*. This burst of creative energy drains him so that he is struck by the years of writing as a burden; his characters, who are, in the last analysis, images of his own selfhood, become vampires, sucking his blood, leaving him "limp as a rag, making me a bore to others and a burden to myself" (p.373). It is no surprise, then, that the persona of the last section of the autobiography should be a bitter old man, exhausted by the intensity of his will to create.

The aging Grove described in the last pages of the autobiography has difficulty in hearing. This hearing problem is cleverly related to the overall metaphor of communication. Moreover, the narrator describes Grove's development as an orator in terms of finding his audience and then refining his technique as a speaker. In a strange way, the lecture tours allow Grove the only fruits of success which cause him to gloat in self-esteem. For example, the narrator delights in telling the reader that in one place the lecture hall has to be changed twice to accommodate an increasing audience. In fact, hearing is critical to the narrator's description of art. A pervading motif in the story links the obsession with trees with the obsession with finding an audience: "Just as a tree, falling in virgin forest . . . does not produce sound but merely a wave-like disturbance of the air, thus writing which finds no reader does not produce art . . ." (p.357). Without the echo, there can be no words. This feeling is intensified by his daughter, May's death, for inevitably

the child provides the echo for the parent's identity; in fact, the narrator informs us, not long before repeating the comment on trees in a forest, of the experience father and daughter share in removing unwanted bush in their wilderness home; these metaphors of personal life thus merge with the beliefs regarding art.

In stages, toward the end of the autobiography, the narrator steps aside to allow the reader to evaluate the role he has performed in relation to Grove. Throughout, he has had a strong sense of competition with his own audience, the reader, because inevitably such an objective perspective will prove more successful in a final assessment of the subject of his narrative. Now he appreciates that his task is over. The natural conclusion to his tale is transcendence of the "I": "The life which is peculiar to me consists in letting other lives work themselves out within that, to me entirely mysterious, entity which is known to others by my name. What I am, as a consciousness, has nothing to do with it; I have doubted whether there is anything that I can legitimately call "I" (p.452). When the narrator lets go of "I" then, he is allowing the subject of his tale a new identity. In the postscript, the Canadian writer is referred to as "he" because the narrator has died to himself: "In this record, I know I am dying to myself" (p.387). Because the characters he creates as he writes will have no further identity or relationship to him afterwards, he knows that the act of writing autobiography is much the same as the act of writing novels. Images of self are "born into death" (p.387).

There is, nevertheless, a certain triumph in preserving Grove's life, ordering it according to climax and anti-climax, shaping it by the rise and fall of creative energy, and noting *Over Prairie Trails* as the first occasion of publication, of substantial identification of the reader as audience. Even in the accounts of Grove as crippled by a mysterious spinal disorder, the narrator speaks with a gleam of triumph as he notes that the writing continues; in the cluster of quotables at the end of book, he is careful to remark that all artists fail to participate in the chase because their art gives them special disabilities. The life of the artist is the progress of the soul in accepting its own nature; thus, the final step in this process is beginning the cycle of journeying again so that the spirit is freed to assume new life. The aging Grove relives the personal myth that has sustained him throughout his life in America; he will become a free agent who roams and watches the world: "I should taste once more the triumph of creation, the utter triumph of the pangs of birth; and I would grow inwardly . . ." (p.457). The end thus takes us back to the beginning so that we sense that the stages of writing the

autobiography act as a necessary preparation of an old man for the act of dying. The final house, Grove's image of the soul, is described in the stages of reconstruction. The redecorated farmhouse is not the dreamed-of mansion from Manitoba days, but it presents more physically satisfying surroundings than Grove can recall since Thurow. Moreover, the theories of art expressed in the last pages of the autobiography focus on magical qualities. The artist may die, and his feeling for himself as a human being may be that of failure, but his work, endowed with supernatural force, will stand forever.

The test of a memorable autobiography lies in the writer's ability to deal with painful experience, and to balance such moments of intense living with the mundane, unexceptional progress of daily events. Although Grove has difficulty in writing about the major tragedy of his adult years, the death of May, dismissing her sudden illness and loss abruptly, merely remarking that the parents had at last paid their debt to fate, he provides an interesting account of his attempt to look after her as a small child while the mother is away in Winnipeg. It is unusual for autobiographers to speak extensively of their children, but Grove describes in detail how he copes as a single parent. Moreover, his major creative effort occurs at the same time as he is fulfilling this nurturing role as parent, a role usually performed by a woman. He does conceal guilt concerning the deprivations of her life, but he makes his relationship to her an echo of his own childhood and part of his universal belief in man as innocent victim. Similarly, his relationship with his wife, Catherine, is described in a stiff, formal tone; later he speaks of the way they partake of failure, and he suggests that she is responsible for drawing him toward financial entrapment. But he stresses her courage, and in the account of their balancing of teaching careers there is a quality of everyday realism.

In making a case for Grove's autobiography, I do not mean to minimize or understate the extent to which he practices a deliberate policy of deception on the reader. For many readers his lies represent an unforgivable betrayal of the trust between writer and audience; this betrayal is especially ironic when one considers that the focus of the autobiography is often on the communication process as a two-way connection between sender and receiver. Is the search implied in the title a legitimate attempt to locate the essential self beneath the various disguises? At one point Grove tells us he has learned a lot about himself; elsewhere, he suggests that he has hidden himself well. One problem lies in the different meanings he assigns to his audience; he wants his

writing to reach the masses, but he doubts their capability to respond effectively.¹¹ He has no real compassion for the plight of other writers in Canada, just as he has little sympathy for the hoboes he lives among in his years as an itinerant farm-worker. Even those literary critics who assisted him in publishing his works receive scant attention. A more important problem becomes apparent in considering his belief in the anonymity of the artist. The search for both personal and artistic identity becomes a continuous process, with no possible destination. There is only the exploration of multiple possibilities. As critic James Olney points out, using a phrase which seems particularly apt for Grove, metaphors of self are only suggestive: "We do not see or touch the self, but we do see and touch its metaphors; and thus we 'know' the self, activity or agent, represented in the metaphor and metaphorizing."¹²

Virginia Woolf once wrote: "I sometimes think only autobiography is literature—novels are what we peel off, and come at last to the core, which is only you or me."¹³ Admittedly, Grove's *In Search of Myself* lacks the wit and entertainment of Moodie's *Roughing it in the Bush*; certainly, it does not offer the reader such grandeur of self-insight as Bertrand Russell's autobiography. However, it has considerable validity as the search for the echo within and as the story of a man's attempt to rewrite his own personal past to suit the person he might wish to be.

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11. Frederick Philip Grove, *It Needs to be Said* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1929), p. 44 "Occasionally (in periods when the arts flourish) the ideal audience ('the invisible audience of the ages') become the public." Grove makes the distinction between ideal audience and a public demanding only entertainment, yet he insists that great art must eventually reach the masses.

12. James Olney, *Metaphors of Self: The Meaning of Autobiography* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), p. 34. Olney speaks of Montaigne as possessing "the profound subjectivity that goes so deep that it becomes transformed into an objective vision of the human condition." Perhaps this is also true of Grove's autobiography.

13. Virginia Woolf, Letter to Hugh Walpole (1932), *The Letters of Virginia Woolf*, Vol. V: 1932-1935, ed. Nigel Nicholson and Joanne Trautmann (London and New York: Harcourt Brace, 1979), p. 142.