"ELLEN LINDSTEDT": THE UNPUBLISHED SEQUEL TO GROVE'S SETTLERS OF THE MARCH

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Ever since Desmond Pacey published the first study of Frederick Philip Grove in 1945, there has been a controversy over the conclusion of Grove's most popular novel, *Settlers of the Marsh*. Pacey remarks that the logical ending of the novel is the murder of Clara by her husband Niels Lindstedt. Pacey says that Niels' subsequent reconciliation with his real love, Ellen Amundsen, is anticlimactic and constitutes a structural defect. "Grove has elsewhere rejected the demand for the happy ending," Pacey writes, "why did he see fit here to bring Niels through to something resembling contentment?"[1]

Since Pacey's remark, critics have taken sides on the issue. Thomas Saunders, in the Introduction to the New Canadian Library edition, supports Pacey, saying that the happy ending "is not typical and detracts from *Settlers of the Marsh* as an artistic entity."[2] In contrast, Ronald Sutherland and John Moss argue that the ending is realistic and positive. "Most people when struck with adversity do not roll over and die . . ." writes Sutherland, "they carry on, letting time heal as best it can."[3] Moss asserts that their complicity in Clara's death requires Ellen and Niels to "endure together." "And," he says, "there is no indication in Grove's vision that they should do otherwise."[4]

A 17-page prose fragment, apparently the beginning of a sequel to *Settlers of the Marsh*, reveals that the ending of the novel is more subtle and complex than we have imagined. The sequel, entitled "Ellen Lindstedt," presents new developments which prove conclusively that Niels has by no means achieved contentment. According to the sequel, Niels feels trapped by his marriage to Ellen almost immediately after

1. Desmond Pacey, *Frederick Philip Grove* (Toronto: Ryerson, 1945), p. 46.
2. Thomas Saunders, "Introduction," *Settlers of the Marsh* (TorontoL NCL, 1966), p. xiii.
3. Ronald Sutherland, *Frederick Philip Grove* (Toronto: NCL, 1969), p. 50.
4. John Moss, *Patters of Isolation in English Canadian Fiction* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974), p. 200.

the wedding. He harks back to a time after Ellen's refusal to marry when he imagined himself a solitary pioneer, forever moving into the wilderness to break new ground. In *Settlers of the Marsh*, Niels was motivated by his dream of Ellen: "no matter what I have done . . . it was done with you in mind," he told the girl. How can we then account for Niels' dissatisfaction with his marriage in the sequel?

D. O. Spettigue suggests that the explanation lies in Grove's personal history. Grove either cannot forget the wife he left in Germany or is "not yet certain that he may not have to move on again . . . and hence the impossibility of finishing 'Ellen Lindstedt.' "[5] Another explanation comes to light if, first, we understand how *Settlers of the Marsh* was conceived and executed, and, second, if we appreciate the dualistic philosophy which Grove intends the work to express.

Settlers of the Marsh was originally conceived as a trilogy entitled "Latter Day Pioneers," or "Pioneers" for short.[6] In response to the rejection of the first two volumes by publishers, Grove abandoned the trilogy in 1924 and revised the two completed works to form a single novel. *Settlers of the Marsh* is only a partial expression of the original philosophical purpose underlying the trilogy.

The first two volumes of "Pioneers" take the story to Niels Lindstedt's decision to surrender for the murder of Clara, the point where Pacey believes the novel should end. Grove rejected this alternative and added a final chapter entitled "Ellen Again," which describes Niels' prison term, return to the farm and reconciliation with Ellen. An "Epilogue," which Grove excised from the "Ellen Again" manuscript, says Niels and Ellen were married forty years and had three children. Their marriage "was full of grief and sorrow, full of care and tribulation, but also full of joy and trust." It "forms the topic of a different story."[7]

The marriage was to have been the topic of the third volume of Pioneers, probably never written but tentatively entitled "Male and Female." "Ellen Lindsteadt" apparently is Grove's attempt to write a sequel to *Settlers of the Marsh* based on his original intentions for "Male and Female." The evidence suggests that "Male and Female" would

5. D. O. Spettigue, *Frederick Philip Grove: The European Years* (Ottawa: Oberon, 1973), p. 203.
6. For details see: Henry Makow, "Grove's Garbled Extract: The Bibliographical Origins of *Settlers of the Marsh*" in *The Canadian Novel: Modern Times*, ed. John Moss (Toronto: NC Press, 1983), pp. 38-54.
7. See ms. "Ellen Again, Epilogue," Grove Collection, University of Manitoba: Box 11, Folder 5.

have traced Niels' gradual recognition that Ellen is only a symbol of his goal rather than the goal itself. Niels' real goal is an unattainable ideal of harmony based on the Platonic concept of an "idea" of perfection in the human soul.

Niels' vision of domestic harmony is the counterpart of the Platonic "Idea." Niels imagines himself "and a woman sitting on a mid-winter night by the light of a lamp and in front of a fire with the pitter-patter of children's feet sounding down from above: the eternal vision that has moved the world and that was to direct his fate."[8] Like the Idea, Niels' vision cannot be attained in the material world. Grove tells us in "Pioneers" that in Niels' "most inarticulate longings," his family was to form a "symphony" in which "not a single note should bring the slightest discord into the common harmony."[9] Already in *Settlers of the Marsh*, we learn that "women had never figured as a concrete thing in Niels' thought of his future" (39). The wife in Niels' vision had been "a symbol merely," and he found the intrusion of real women into his vision "strangely disquieting." After one encounter with Ellen, Niels reflects that "the fact that she had figured in his vision of the future, seemed like an intrusion, like the violation of an inviolable privacy . . ." (48).

Grove read Plato and underscored many passages.[10] He was sympathetic to Plato's view that the material world is a dim reflection, in moral terms, of a realm in which man's spiritual ideals—truth, beauty, justice, harmony—are fully realized. Love, according to Plato, is the desire to achieve or recreate the higher reality in our world. The loved one is a symbol or "reminder" of the ideals which our souls crave.

In the early 1920s, while writing the "Pioneers" trilogy, Grove wrote two other novels in which the hero mistakes a woman for the ideals he seeks. In the unpublished "The Canyon," a young Canadian poet, Harold Tracy, creates great poetry modelled on his "dream" of beauty. He falls in love with a beautiful young woman, Frances Montcrieff, who he imagines is the incarnation of his dream. Since the poet expresses his desire for perfection through his art, Harold can no longer create because he thinks he has found the ideal. The lovers' dilemma

8. F. P. Grove, *Settlers of the Marsh* (Toronto: NCL, 1966), p. 36. Further references to this edition will be given in the text.
9. See ms. "Pioneers," Grove Collection, University of Manitoba, Box 10, Folder 9-10, (Vol. II, p. 52).
10. Grove's son, A. L. Grove of Toronto, allowed me to examine a volume of Plato belonging to his father. *Five Dialogues of Plato bearing on Poetic Inspiration* ed. A. D. Lindsay (London: J. M. Dent, 1910, rpt. 1924).

is that, while they crave the fulfillment of earthly love, their souls also crave immortality through Harold's poetry. Frances decides that she must commit suicide if Harold is once again to envisage his dream. She takes him to Banff where she plans to jump from the ledge of a waterfall. Before leaping to her death, she tells Harold:

> No poet ever married the woman he loved and did not rue it. For human reality is not perfection. I had been a fleeting vision to you, setting your imagination on fire. And there I was in the flesh, contradicting the vision, interfering with it, slowly destroying it . . . Between spirit and flesh there is war everlasting. And so there is between man and woman, male and female.[11]

After Frances' death, Harold once more has a clear vision of beauty. He writes two famous volumes of poetry which are an immortal testament of the desire of the human spirit for perfection.[12]

In *The Yoke of Life*, published in 1930, there is again a duality between the unattainable ideal and its symbolic incarnation. Len Sterner is a young pioneer lad who has a dream of mastering all human knowledge. He confuses his love for the ideal of truth with the carnal passions he feels for a farm girl, Lydia Hausman. In his mind, Lydia becomes a symbol of his ideal. When Lydia drifts into prostitution, however, Len cannot reconcile her impurity and his physical desire for her with his vision. Already hampered by sickness and poverty, he determines to liberate his spirit from its carnal bondage. He takes Lydia to a secluded lake, where they commit suicide by drowning. Their act is represented as an asseriton of the desire of the human sould for a higher, spiritual state of being, unshackled by material reality.[13]

Both Harold Tracy and Len Sterner mistake the imperfect reminder of beauty for the ideal itself. In "Male and Female," Niels would discover that he has made the same mistake. The symbol of the Idea must be idealizable and unattainable. Ellen was an excellent reminder of his Idea of harmony while she was aloof and distant. In the day to day context of a marriage, however, Ellen can no longer fulfill this function. The attempted sequel suggests, therefore, that the newly weds will be faced

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11. See ms. "The Canyon," Grove Collection, University of Manitoba, Box 14, Folders 10-12 (p. 256).
12. For details see: Henry Makow, Grove's "The Canyon," *Canadian Literature*, No. 82 (Autumn, 1979), pp. 141-149.
13. For details see: Henry Makow, "Grove's Treatment of Sex: Platonic Love in *The Yoke of Life*," *Dalhousie Review*, LVIII, No. 3 (Autumn, 1978), pp. 528-540.

with trying difficulties. As they leave the church in their wagon, Niels, unlike most husbands, wishes to *delay* the moment when he will be alone with his wife. Never a man of words, Niels cannot think of a way to express his tenderness without touching Ellen. He wishes to avoid physical contact due to his "chaste" nature, and their past experience:

> He felt that, now they were married, unless he were willing to offend his wife, he would have to assume the part of a husband; for he had passionately loved the girl in the past, even when he was bound to another; and this newly entered into union was, or should have been, to him the fulfillment of his heart's desire. On the other hand, he had in the course of his first marriage [to Clara], so poignantly come to understand how much there is in love, of the earth and the flesh, and when a decade ago, Ellen had refused to marry him, she had expressed, though indirectly, such a horror of the physical side of marriage that, during the weeks and months they had now been engaged, he had vowed to himself to subdue all that he now considered the coarser side of his nature. He had thought with shame that it had been exactly this coarser side of his nature which had driven him into his first marriage, for though he had been chaste, he had been troubled with the mysterious, secret, and, as they had seemed to him, and still, shameful urgings of his body.[14]

Ellen, for her part, "trembles inwardly" at what the future might hold. The past had left its "imprint" on both of them. In particular, she fears that her confession of her father's sexual abuse of her mother, and its effect on her, may deprive their marriage of natural freshness and spontaneity. She "felt dimly that by her confession . . . she had deprived Niels of the very possibility of facing her frankly"(10). For most of the wagon trip, they sit in silence brooding over the past and fretting about the future. In this manner 13 of the 17 pages of the fragment set the scene for what was probably intended to be a larger work.

When the pass Niels' farm without turning, Nils' colts become agitated and appear ready to bolt. Instinctively, Ellen who has much experience with runaways, reaches for the reins in Niels' hands. She immediately realizes her mistake when Niels deflects her movement with his arm, and quickly brings the horses into line. "On Niels' forehead, a frown had settled; Ellen bit her lip and flushed with annoyance. Was this an omen?" (15).

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14. "Ellen Lindstedt" unpublished ms. courtesy of A. L. Grove of Toronto. Further references to this ms. will be given in the text.

When they reach Ellen's homestead, "a peculiar feeling [takes] a poignant hold of Niels." Because of bad associations with the white range line house, the couple have decided to make Ellen's farm their home. Nevertheless, Niels feels that he would always remain "the guest of his wife," living at her homestead. It is "the peculiarity of the man born with pioneer instincts in him, that only land which he has 'made' can ever truly be his." Significantly, at this point almost at the end of the fragment, Niels recalls another symbolic vision, one which is truly unattainable:

> He remembered now, when his own place had been cleared and made hospitable, and when Ellen had refused to be his, he had seen in himself the man who was a pioneer not only by instinct but, as it were, by profession: he had dreamt of moving on once more into the wilderness, to clear a new place; and again and again; leaving civilization, such as he knew it, behind and striking forever from the very beginning (17).

The pioneer who perpetually creates order out of chaos is an excellent symbol of Niels' desire for an unattainable ideal. In contrast, the succeeding and final paragraph of "Ellen Lindstedt" leaves a vivid impression of Niels' feeling of constraint now that his symbolic goal has been reached:

> Meanwhile Ellen, having opened the gate, waited for him to pass through with his horses and then closed the gate with a click—which sound reached Niels' ears with almost a shock of finality (17).

Niels, like Harold Tracy and Len Sterner before him, will learn that the material symbol cannot substitute for the spiritual ideal itself. If a material symbol is necessary, Niels should find one which is also unattainable, like the pioneering ideal.

Niels' dissatisfaction in "Ellen Lindstedt" increases our understanding of the conclusion of *Settlers of the Marsh*. Niels has not achieved contentment. The realization of his goal of marriage with Ellen will bring about the recognition that marriage does not offer the flawless harmony which he desires. Niels will have to find a new symbol for his spiritual aspirations, a new vision. According to Grove's tragic view, man achieves his Promethean grandeur not by virtue of his accomplishments but rather by his endless struggle for an unattainable spiritual ideal.

At best, Ellen will participate in this quest. In the manner of true Platonic lovers, husband and wife will share the same spiritual ideal.

This is foreshadowed in the last sentences of *Settlers of the Marsh*: "An hour or so later they rise and walk home through the dusk. They do not kiss. Their lips have not touched. But their arms rest in each other; their fingers are intertwined . . . As they go, a vision arises between them, shared by both" (217).

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