IN THE MEANTIME: DUNCAN CAMPBELL SCOTT'S *IN THE VILLAGE OF VIGER*

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Duncan Campbell Scott's *In the Village of Viger*, published in 1896,[1] is the first instance in Canadian fiction of a short story cycle, the form that has become something of a sub-genre within the continuum of the Canadian short story.[2] Readers need only call to mind such works as Stephen Leacock's *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town* (1912) and *Arcadian Adventures with the Idle Rich* (1914), F.P. Grove's *Over Prairie Trails* (1922)[3], George Elliott's *The Kissing Man* (1962), Mordecai Richler's *The Street* (1969), Margaret Laurence's *A Bird in the House* (1970), and Alice Munro's *Who Do You Think You Are?* (1978) to appreciate that much of the best in Canadian short fiction has been achieved in the genre of the short story cycle, and to agree with W.H. New that Scott's *Viger* stands at the head of a rich tradition indeed.[4] My purpose in this article is twofold: briefly to build on what New has said about the form of *Viger*, and then to focus attention on the primary thematic concern of this story cycle—the threat that the advance of metropolitan modernity poses to the traditional conception of the family and, by extension, to the ideal of community itself. I am not arguing that the small Quebec community of Viger figures as a haven of some naive (Victorian) family ideal in opposition to the nefarious city, only that Scott tellingly displays the accelerated breakdown of the family and community in Viger concurrent with the advance of modern metropolitanism, thereby suggesting one cause—and it may yet be a first cause—for that critical breakdown. Although very much the conservative in all areas of his life—private and public, as government official[5] and as poet—Scott was not so reactionary as to dream of somehow turning back the clock. Rather, the stories of *Viger* show how deeply ap-

prehensive of materialistic definitions of progress he was, while they suggest his hope that the fictional representation of what was being threatened, lost, and precariously preserved might slow that modern clock enough to allow for a more reasonable progress, one that would carry with it into the future those familial and communal values at the centre of his conservatism.[6]

Viger deserves more critical attention, then, not only because it stands at the head of the tradition of the Canadian story cycle but also because it presents an instance of a good writer's use of the form to express his fears and hopes at that period in history (roughly 1880-1920) when the nineteenth century became the twentieth. Viewed in this added light, the Duncan Campbell Scott of *In the Village of Viger* can be seen in the company of those late nineteenth-century "antimodernists" whom T.J. Jackson Lears describes "as some of the most educated and cosmopolitan products of an urbanizing, secularizing society . . . the 'point men' of cultural change. They experienced and articulated moral and psychic dilemmas which later became common in the wider society."[7] At times in *Viger* Scott, like his friend Archibald Lampman (especially the Lampman of such poems as the dystopian "The City of the End of Things"[8]), seems to despair of any good coming from modernity and urbanization; at other times he, like his contemporary Bliss Carman (who thoroughly enjoyed city life while cautioning against the detrimental effects of over-civilization[9]), is more willing to refashion his idea of family and community in view of the inevitability of progress. As will be seen especially in the discussion of *Viger's* concluding story, "Paul Farlotte," Scott was able to envision the possibility of a new order emerging, in which such concepts as "family," "community," and "normal" would have been redefined without having lost their traditional functions of conserving and transmitting values.

Much of Scott's poetry and prose suggests that his attitude toward developments around the turn of the century—the whole ethos of positivism, materialism and progress—was complex and ambivalent. Here again Jackson Lears proves helpful, as his description of the antimodern attitude so accurately describes the Scott implied by *Viger:*

> The antimodern impulse was both more socially and more intellectually important than historians have supposed. An-

> timodernism was not simply escapism; it was ambivalent, often coexisting with enthusiasm for material progress. . . . Far from being the nostalgic flutterings of a "dying elite," as historians have claimed, antimodernism was a complex blend of accommodation and protest which tells us a great deal about the beginnings of present-day values and attitudes.[10]

In the Village of Viger should be read, therefore, within the contexts of its seminal role in the literary history of the short story cycle and as an expression in fiction of turn-of-the century North American antimodernism. Considerations of the book that ignore these contexts either view *Viger* as, at best, an interesting example of the local colour vogue in Canada, or argue, at worst, that any importance attaching to it is a fabrication of some conspiratorial academic community.[11] Both positions short-change the book's currency; in terms of Jackson Lears' more complex reading of similar texts, such simplifications render mute *Viger's* real ability to speak to present-day readers about their history and the formation of their values (or lack thereof).

The ten stories of *In the Village of Viger* appear in this order:

1. The Little Milliner
2. The Desjardins
3. The Wooing of Monsieur Cuerrier
4. Sedan
5. No. 68 Rue Alfred de Musset
6. The Bobolink
7. The Tragedy of the Seigniory
8. Josephine Labrosse
9. The Pedler
10. Paul Farlotte

W.H. New has argued that *Viger* actually comprises two story cycles within a cycle, with each story of the first cycle—stories one through five—having its echo in the second—six through ten—so that "The Little Milliner" is echoed in "The Bobolink," "The Desjardins" in "The Tragedy of the Seigniory," and so on in a sequence of repetition with variation.[12] But New's compelling analysis does not apply so convincingly when we consider (to take but one example) that Paul Arbique of the fourth story, "Sedan," has his most obvious counterpart in the eponymous Paul Farlotte of the tenth and last sketch; both Pauls are fixated

on France and both experience visions that lend their names biblical resonances, especially in terms of the Old Testament dispensation of vengeance (for Arbique) and the New Testament law of love (for Farlotte). An at least equally convincing argument could be made for an organizing principle of alternation in *Viger.* The first story, "The Little Milliner," concerns an outsider, Mademoiselle Viau, who at one point rejects the offer of Vigerian love; the third story, "The Wooing of Monsieur Cuerrier," concerns the marriage of a Vigerian, M. Cuerrier, to an outsider. The second story, "The Desjardins," is about family madness associated with France (Charles' Napoleonic delusions of grandeur), while the fourth, "Sedan," concerns madness resulting from an obsession with the fate of France in the Franco-Prussian war. The fifth story, "No. 68 Rue Alfred de Musset," inversely parallels the refusal of romance in the first story,"The Little Milliner," and offers a dark variation on the comic romance of the third, "The Wooing of Monsieur Cuerrier." And so on. This organizing principle of alternation more accurately expresses "the dynamic patterns of recurrence and development" that Ingram sees as definitive of story cycles.[13] Or perhaps "symphonic" would be a better (if yet another) term to describe the organization of *Viger.* This latter suggestion has the added virtue at least of according with Scott's oft-quoted remark that "all art, as Walter Pater points out, is constantly striving towards the condition of music."[14] (And Scott, the accomplished amateur pianist, composed a number of poems on musical models or subjects.[15]) *Viger* is a story cycle full of parallels, inversions, doublings, and mirrorings, of recurrent motif and leitmotif, and, most appropriately, of echoes and resonances, of strings answering sympathetically to other strings. In its bold opening announcement of theme in the first paragraph of "The Little Milliner"—the effects of the advancing big city on the small community—and in its related stories of different lengths and tones, stories that provide contrapuntal variations on its theme, *In the Village of Viger* can be seen to offer the literary equivalent of a musical suite. Its dominant theme—the deleterious effects of twentieth-century urban expansionism, and of modernity itself—is developed through resonance and echo to find crescendo-like climax in the concluding story, "Paul Farlotte," a story that brings together the themes dealt with in the preceding nine.[16]

The form of *In the Village of Viger*—the story cycle—is especially appropriate to its content. The realistic nineteenth-century novel, the most likely alternative formally, would not have been as well-suited as the cycle to portraying the subsumption of the small community of Viger by the expanding metropolis and, along with that subsumption, the fragmentation and disintegration of those conservative, humanistic values that Scott held, those very nineteenth-century, antimodern values whose relevance seemed threatened by the new age: organicism, romantic love, duty and responsibility, tolerance, literature, and family, especially family. The discontinuous narrative of the story cycle, with its hint of a formalistic challenge to unity and the master narrative of the nineteenth-century novel of social and psychological realism, provided Scott with a form ideally suited to the fictional depiction of the breakup, dissolution, and tentative reconstitution of what may be called Vigerian virtues and vices.[17] This would appear to be Scott's purpose in *Viger:* to catch the diversity within unity and the richness of the small community even as that community is passing out of existence, to commemorate the worthwhile and to preserve it in something of a new literary form[18] (though it has been argued, by John Barth and others, that story cycles are as old as story-telling itself[19]).

"Transition" is in fact the theme of much of Duncan Campbell Scott's writing, whether in such well-known poems as "The Height of Land" and "Chiostro Verde"[20] that consider the coming modern world and wonder whether humanity and its arts are poised on the brink of genuine progress or retrogression and disintegration, or in poems about half-breeds who embody the violence that ensues as European-Christian civilization is, in Scott's view, in the process of assimilating Indian culture.[21] In *Viger* this literature of transition displays the personal and public displacements that result from, or are accelerated by, the confrontation between the swelling twentieth-century metropolis and the beleaguered nineteenth-century small community.[22] As has been stated, *Viger's* most telling manifestation of the effects of this present confrontation between past and future is the fracturing of the traditional conception of family. Fractured families can be viewed as the sounding board for the various themes played out in *Viger's* stories: madness, dislocation, New world versus Old World, dark romance, betrayal. Repeatedly *Viger* depicts the dis-

solution or absence of what may be called the natural family—father, mother, children—as the chief threat to the survival of those humanistic, conservative values that Scott apparently felt were threatened by modernity.

I would like first to look in detail at *Viger's* opening paragraph with its bold announcement of the book's theme of transition:

> It was too true that the city was growing rapidly. As yet its arms were not long enough to embrace the little village of Viger, but before long they would be, and it was not a time that the inhabitants looked forward to with any pleasure. It was not to be wondered at, for few places were more pleasant to live in. The houses, half hidden amid the trees, clustered around the slim steeple of St. Joseph's, which flashed like a naked poniard in the sun. They were old, and the village was sleepy, almost dozing, since the mill, behind the rise of land, on the Blanche had shut down. The miller had died; and who would trouble to grind what little grist came to the mill, when flour was so cheap? But while the beech-groves lasted, and the Blanche continued to run, it seemed impossible that any change could come. The change was coming, however, rapidly enough. Even now, on still nights, above the noise of the frogs in the pools, you could hear the rumble of the street-cars and the faint tinkle of their bells, and when the air was moist the whole southern sky was luminous with the reflection of thousands of gas-lamps. But when the time came for Viger to be mentioned in the city papers as one of the outlying wards, what a change there would be! There would be no unfenced fields, full of little inequalities and covered with short grass; there would be no deep pools, where the quarries had been, and where the boys pelted the frogs; there would be no more beech-groves, where the children could gather nuts; and the dread pool, which had filled the shaft where old Daigneau, years ago, mined for gold, would cease to exist. But in the meantime, the boys of Viger roamed over the unclosed fields and pelted the frogs, and the boldest ventured to roll huge stones into Daigneau's pit, and only waited to see the green slime come working up to the surface before scampering away, their flesh creeping with the idea that it was old Daigneau himself who was stirring up the water in a rage. (19)

The ten stories that follow are illustrations of and variations on the theme announced in this opening paragraph: what Viger was, what it is "in the meantime," and what it may become.

Employing rhetorical strategies that feature irony, litotes, and misdirection, Scott shows in this opening paragraph that Viger, rather than being the isolated mock-Arcadia he will describe in the opening of "Sedan" (37), is a hamlet on the doorstep of a city about to "embrace" it—"not a time that the inhabitants looked forward to with any pleasure." (Readers might immediately wonder just how the city will "embrace" Viger. Lovingly? Possessively? Protectively? Suffocatingly?) Ironically, this opening paragraph subtly reveals that Viger is, in the narrator's present time, already lost to the city, that the time of the ensuing fiction is "the meantime" (a phrase that is repeated in the concluding sentence of "The Little Milliner" [26]). The time of the ensuing stories is, then, the interval between what Viger was and what it has become, an intermediate time, a time of violent transition—a *mean* time.

The details of the opening paragraph also reveal that Viger's flour mill—a small community's formative institution—will remain shut down, presumably because flour is produced more cheaply in the city. Thus Scott introduces the theme of dislocation resulting from technological progress—modern production methods—a theme that figures centrally, as will be shown, in the organic-versus-mechanical opposition of the concluding story, "Paul Farlotte." The ominous advance of such metropolitan/ modern changes are signaled further in this opening paragraph by the foreboding "rumble of the street cars," and in the portrayal of the city as a sort of Pandemonium on the horizon, advancing northwards and lighting up the "southern sky . . . with the reflection of thousands of gas-lamps."[23] (The north-south axis often provided a moral-ethical analogue in Scott's work, with the north suggesting a place of potential spiritual renewal—in a manner that anticipates such Canadian modernist poets as A.J.M. Smith and F.R. Scott, such contemporary poets as Al Purdy,[24] such fiction writers as Leacock who in "L'Envoi" locates his Mariposa well north of the city, such painters as Lawren Harris, and such historians as the W.L. Morton of "The North in Canadian Historiography"[25]—and with the south being best characterized in those lines from Scott's "The Height of Land": "The crowded

southern land / With all the welter of the lives of men."[26]) Scott's apprehensiveness about the effects of the modern world on Viger is figured next in a catalogue of emphatic, repetitive negations that place the figure of Viger under effective erasure. After the embrace of the city, there will be "no unfenced fields," "no deep pools," "no more beech groves," and "the dread pool . . . would cease to exist." The first two negations obliterate Viger spatially along horizontal and vertical axes, with psychological repercussions of narrower and shallower lives; the next two figure temporally as a loss of memory, which shuts off access to realms of edenic innocence and darker experience, with the whole constituting a loss of what might be expressed in the useful cliché, "fullness of life." The ugliest image in this paragraph, the "green slime" that comes "working up to the surface" of Old Daigneau's pit—an abandoned gold-mine shaft—might be seen further as proleptic of the evil effects of the pursuit of material wealth, which is a theme that figures throughout *Viger,* and centrally in such dark stories as "No. 68 Rue Alfred de Musset" and "The Tragedy of the Seigniory." In losing Old Daigneau's pit Viger is deprived not only of a communal site for memory and a scene for supernatural invention—significant positive linkages—but also of a kind of stigmatic reminder of its own human fallibility and incipient tendency to behave contrary to its own best interests.

Interestingly, in losing its frog population (and note that frogs are mentioned no fewer than three times in this opening paragraph), Viger symbolically loses further a means of access to the heart of nature, both outer nature and inner human nature. For as much as frogs were "breathers of wisdom" for Archibald Lampman,[27] they are in one of *Viger's* few happy, if problematic, stories, "Josephine Labrosse," Vigerian messengers of good tidings. In that story the ironically named city clerk, Victor, cannot remember that his new-found love, Josephine, lives in Viger. At the nadir of despair, he has a dream:

> He dreamed that he was sailing down a stream which grew narrower and narrower. At last his boat stopped amid a tangle of weeds and water-lilies. All around him on the broad leaves was seated a chorus of frogs, singing out something at the top of their voices. He listened. Then, little by little, whatever the word was, it grew more distinct until one huge fellow opened his mouth and roared out "VIGER!" (87)

The frogs, doomed to extinction locally, still function affirmatively in the subconscious of the city clerk, directing him away from his dehumanizing office life towards Viger and his future wife and family. (Given Scott's lifelong devotion to Lampman's work, I suspect here, too, a kind of inter-textual wink to Lampman's sonnet sequence "The Frogs." It is also worth observing the similarity between this dream of return to Viger and the dream-vision in the closing sketch of Leacock's *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town*, "L'Envoi, the Train to Mariposa," wherein the imaginary train arrives in the Mariposa station to another small- caps announcement, "MARIPOSA! MARIPOSA!" just as the would-be returnees are drawn back into the leather chairs of their Mausoleum Club. In *Sunshine Sketches* the attempted return to the threatened small town fails literally buts succeeds literarily;[28] in *Viger* it succeeds, though only for the lover, Victor, and only temporarily, since, as the opening paragraph of *Viger* indicates, it is to an ultimately doomed Viger that Victor dreams his way.)

Thus, in the opening paragraph of *Viger's* first story, Scott informs his reader that Viger's radical transformation is certain and proceeds to suggest what the loss of "Viger" portends literally and figuratively on a number of levels.[29] The following stories portray the throes of Viger "in the meantime," with disintegrative modernity first fracturing the integrity of the family, the nineteenth-century, or Victorian, family. Perhaps it is for these reasons that the houses of Viger are portrayed in the opening paragraph as clustering for protection around the defiant "slim steeple of St. Joseph's, which flashed like a naked poniard in the sun," for St. Joseph, as well as being the patron saint of workers and of Canada itself, was the protector of the Holy Family and remains the patron saint of fathers of families.[30] It may be, therefore, that the name "Viger" is intended to connote the French words *vigilance* and *vigie* (look-out man). (Readers who consider these suggestions torturous might ponder the aptness of such a touch as the name "Josephine"—a female Joseph—in one of *Viger's* more affirmative story, "Josephine Labrosse.")

In accordance with the theme announced in its opening paragraph, the first story, "The Little Milliner," proceeds immediately to offer an instance of metropolitan intrusiveness in the person of the pathetic Little Milliner, Mademoiselle Viau. Her house is built on what had always been open ground, so that

there is a suggestion of, if not violation, at least crowding of Vigerian space. As Milliner she competes successfully with Viger's resident seamstress, Madame Laroque, who as the local gossip is a kind of *spiritus loci.* The Little Milliner lures away Laroque's younger clientele—with attendant implications for the future of Viger—thereby revealing the changing tastes within Viger for metropolitan styles and materials, for city *things.* (Scott may have in mind here a version of the Carlylean philosophy of clothes, whereby the plainer dress more favourably expresses the uncontaminated Vigerian spirit.) Against community, the Little Milliner lives privately (driving the busybody Laroque to distraction). She rejects a Vigerian suitor (21), precluding symbolically the possibility of a harmonious union between the small community and herself, the first emissary from the city, by literally shutting her door on a potential romance which, in the Vigerian scheme of things, would have led to marriage and family.

Most relevant for present purposes, though, is one of the Little Milliner's suspect family relationships. She has an unnamed, unspecified male relative who is a thief. (It would seem that some in the city are compelled, again significantly for unspecified reasons, to steal, and are shot for doing so.) Although the Little Milliner is admirable for her devotion to family (in light of *Viger's* emphasis on the central value of family), and though she is certainly much more demure victim than corrupting victor, it is nonetheless her family connection *in the city* that makes her life miserable and her stay in Viger transient. In terms of what her family connection in the city implies, the Little Milliner *is* symbolically a corruptor of Viger. As the Widow Laroque finally fumes, criticizing the transience and anonymity that reveal one important characteristic of the coming metropolitan modernity: "'It will not do!' said the widow. 'Somebody builds a house, no one knows who; people come and go, no one knows how . . .'" (26) much, it might be observed, as could be said of life in the Lego-like suburbs of any contemporary Canadian city.

The concluding paragraph of "The Little Milliner" begins with a temporal shift of "three years," with a movement, that is, into the present time of the narrator wherein the story began. There is a strong impression in this concluding paragraph of decay and death, of "white curtains pulled down" and dead geraniums, and in the picture of the Little Milliner's abandoned

cottage an image of the sort of death-in-life temporal suspension epitomized in Miss Havisham of Dickens' *Great Expectations*. Nonetheless, the final sentence of this concluding paragraph contains images of both a sinister and a promising nature: "In the meantime, in every corner of the house the spiders are weaving webs, and an enterprising caterpillar has blocked up the key-hole with his cocoon" (26). The weaving spiders now successfully occupy the place of the unraveled Little Milliner, while an enterprising caterpillar is undergoing an occluding metamorphosis. There is, to be sure, a sense here of the natural/organic order reclaiming the violated space of Viger. But there are also in these images suggestions of entrapment and portentous change. Granted, the temporal shift and the repetition of "in the meantime" from the opening paragraph contribute to a comforting sense of the story's having come full circle (as the stories of local colour fiction often do, returning the calamitous inhabitants of small communities safe and sound to where they began: think of the excursion of the Mariposa Belle, or the numerous adventures of Anne Shirley). But it is more disturbingly likely that the changes symbolized in the Little Milliner's cottage abandoned to spiders and cocooned caterpillars signify that Viger will not be allowed to shut out the influence of accelerated modernity. "It seemed impossible that any change would come," as the opening paragraph of the story puts it: "The change was coming, however, rapidly enough." Metamorphosis, recall, is distinguished biologically for the rapidity of the morphological change it affects, as Kafka's Gregor Samsa woke to realize. Despite the difficulties that must remain in determining a final interpretation of these highly suggestive images, there should be little doubt that the opening story depicts the introduction of trouble into "Viger," both village and book—trouble in the form of crowding, transience, alienation, and violence—trouble introduced in association with a disturbed city family.

It is perhaps enough to observe that the second story, "The Desjardins," concerns inherited family madness. Adèle and Philippe Desjardin, already recalling and amplifying the (perhaps) mistaken familial devotion of the Little Milliner of the first story, care for their mad brother Charles. In what may be the first use of the device, Scott gives us in Charles Desjardin a madman who finally believes he is none other than Napoleon Bonaparte.

Charles is a pathetic figure who parodically suffers the seasonal vicissitudes of the hero's career as summers of triumphant campaigning are followed by dark Russian winters: "The sleet dashes against [Charles], and the wind rushes and screams around him, as he ascends the little knoll. But whatever the weather, Philippe waits in the road for him and helps him dismount. There is something heroic in his short figure." Scott contrasts the false heroism of the deluded madman to the true heroism of the caring brother, Philippe, whose devotion to an ideal of familial responsibility almost compensates for his and his sister's sacrifices, and who possesses, ironically, the Napoleonic "short figure." Certainly the conjunction of the two views of heroism and responsibility, opposed within the one family in this very short story, suggests at least that Scott's understanding of family is not congruent with the idyllic picture of the sentimental fiction of the turn of the century.

Finally, it should be noted that once again the unnatural demands of a fractured family—two brothers and a sister, with no mention of a mother, but with a mad paternal line into the past—again preclude budding romance, in this instance the romances of Philippe and Adèle Desjardin with members of the Vigerian community. The Desjardins, an old family, live on the perimeter of Viger; family madness prevents their entrance into the full life of the community and, consequently, the continuance of their family name. That family name, by the way, would be translated into English as "of/from the garden." The humanist Scott may be suggesting that there is a fault in the family of man, an ineradicable flaw that has its roots in *the* Garden and is also associated with the wrong kind of hero-worship, an (as it were) original social sin which, from a Christian humanist's point of view, can be endured only with the kind of familial caring practiced by the loving Philippe Desjardin.[31]

In "Sedan" Viger is shown to have the sunny town's dark underside of intolerance bordering on racism, and the display of this unattractive characteristic is depicted again within a fractured family. Paul Arbique, a type of *miles gloriosus,* and his resentful wife have no children: "They had only had one child, who had died when she was a baby, and this want of children was a great trial to Paul. They had attempted to fill her place by adopting a little girl, but the experiment had not been a success,

and she grew to be something between a servant and a poor relation working for her board"(38). Because she leads this limbo-like existence within the Arbique family and Viger itself, Latulipe (the adopted daughter) sympathizes with, and eventually marries, the German Hans, the other outsider in Viger who is her adoptive father's sworn enemy and symbolic killer.[32] Of course, the absence of Arbique children already suggested figuratively that Paul had no future, and in this respect his fate parallels romance-foiled, family-fractured Viger itself.

"No. 68 Rue Alfred de Musset" concerns yet another fractured family, a sister and her dying brother. The sister, Eloise, schemes to get out of Viger at any price; symbolically she prostitutes herself to do so, and in the execution of her plan exhausts what little physical strength remains to her brother. Eloise's "career" (as the story's closing sentence sardonically labels her future life: "This was the beginning of her career" [49]) inversely parallels the Little Milliner's diminished life: the one desires to reside quietly in Viger, the other will do anything to get out; the one rebuffs romance from within Viger, the other schemes to marry well and out; the one's downfall results from her tangled family ties, the other ruthlessly exploits her sick brother to launch her gold-digging career. Scott would have us make such comparisons: notice that he associates both women with the floral symbol of folly, the geranium (20, 44). He would have us appreciate that Eloise's overriding ambition to go to the city is but the present expression of an inhuman ruthlessness teased into the open, especially as that inhumanity affects none other than the last of her immediate family. In having Eloise's devoted brother pretend a kind of madness in order to serve his sister's inflamed ambition, Scott may even be hinting that Eloise is actually the one maddened by her obsessive desire for a career in the sick city, suggesting that she has been infected by the modern disease whose chief symptom is the insatiable desire for an excitement that Viger does not, can not, and should not afford. Perhaps we have in this story Scott's intimation of the more general diseased desires born fitfully of an industrial capitalism truly beginning to find its gigantic stride in the swelling cities of the turn of the century—those consumptive longings for a vaguely understood satisfaction, needs created by a system that dislocates to disin-

tegrate, then creates a craving for fulfilment and knows a real purpose for infinite deferment.

The theme of fractured family can be seen to figure varyingly in all the other stories of *Viger*, sometimes simply in the absence of any form of family. "The Bobolink" deals with a lonely old man and a blind girl who form a tenuous bond and find only an impermanent understanding apart from their families. "The Tragedy of the Seigniory" echoes "The Desjardins" in tracing the last of a noble Vigerian family that is corrupted by greed associated with a city lottery. "The Pedler," a kind of seasonal folk tale, is, like these other two, not directly relevant to the theme of fractured family (though, it can be said again, no natural family appears in this story either); it shows instead how incipient materialism—Henri Lamoureux's passing of a counterfeit coin to purchase a red purse (68)—puts an end to a communal Vigerian ritual (and in so doing illustrates again the mnemonic significance of losing Old Daigneau's abandoned gold-mine shaft).[33] Even in such an ostensibly happy story as "Josephine Labrosse," the family unit is fractured, the father being dead and the family facing penury. In fact, the two stories of *Viger* that end happily, and in traditional comic fashion with the promise of restorative marriage, are problematic, perhaps heavily ironic. The future husband of Josephine Labrosse has to some degree been tricked into proposing, and the conclusion of the story is disturbing in its association, through the repetition of a song, of the heroine with her wild relative, François Xavier Beaugrand de Champagne (66). The comic tale of Monsieur Cuerrier winning the fair Césarine is also to be read as an unpromising May-September romance, as the story's opening sentence suggests: "It had been one of those days that go astray in the year, and carry the genius of their own month into the alien ground of another" (31). It is to be doubted that Cuerrier's marriage will be a fruitful one. Significantly, too, in this story Césarine is an outsider who deprives Madame Laroque of Cuerrier, and in so doing sets up yet another sympathetic vibration with "The Little Milliner," with that note which showed the new seamstress taking trade from the Vigerian stalwart. The culminating story of *Viger*, "Paul Farlotte," also explores the dominant theme of fractured family, but now in concert with with a number of the other themes of the preceding stories of the cycle: madness, romance, industrialization and progress.

Like the final story in the best cycles (for example, Leacock's "L'Envoi: The Train to Mariposa,"[34] Joyce's "The Dead,"[35] and Alice Munro's "Who Do You Think You Are?"[36]), "Paul Farlotte" acts as peroration to *Viger,* returning to the story cycle's dominant theme and restating it in a powerful, because cumulative, refrain-like manner. (This principle of return is also often enacted literally, as in Leacock's and Munro's concluding stories.)[37] The introductory paragraph of "Paul Farlotte" describes "two houses which would have attracted attention by their contrast, if for no other reason. One was a low cottage, surrounded by a garden, and covered with roses. . . . The other was a large gaunt-looking house, narrow and high . . ." (70). In a process of binary opposition the two houses are linked closely by their radical differences (in fact, the two are linked literally by the shadow—an ironically ominous adumbration—of a roadway tree, which "seemed, with its constant movement, to figure the connection that existed between the two houses" [70]). The low cottage suggests humility, and its associations are with the organic order and the traditional floral symbol of love; the other building hints at spiritual emaciation and, as the ambitious pride of its male occupants soon proves, a mechanical Babel. In these two houses live two very different kinds of family, though both are fractured families: Paul Farlotte, living in the low cottage, is an alienated bachelor; the orphaned St. Denis children, occupying the gaunt-looking house are cared for by their eldest sister, Marie. The St. Denis men, like members of many another family in *Viger,* are cursed with a form of madness, obsession-compulsion; the deceased St. Denis *père* was, and his living son Guy becomes, wholly absorbed in perfecting a matchbook-making machine, a machine which comes to be represented solely by a mechanical "wheel" (73-75) whose perfect realization quickly becomes an end in itself. Ironically, the realization of this mechanical nightmare would destroy a Vigerian cottage industry whereby the locals—among whom are numbered the St. Denis females—earn small cash making matchbooks. Thus the situation in this closing story echoes the theme of mechanical-industrial displacement that was implied by the reference to the flour mill in the opening paragraph of the first story, "The Little Milliner." It is possible that Scott is also lamenting here the fracturing—ultimately a form of maddening—of the human sensibility itself that results from the enforced drudgery of

modern industrial methods of production. If this is the case, he was participating in a critique of the separation of work and culture that had been made from the Romantic revolution onwards, and especially by the Thomas Carlyle of *Past and Present* (1843), the John Ruskin of *The Stones of Venice* (1851-53), and the Matthew Arnold of *Culture and Anarchy* (1867).[38]

Paul Farlotte's family still resides in France, and his dream is to return for a visit with his old mother before she dies. But each time he is about to realize *his* dream, his financial resources are spent instead on the St. Denis family, who are repeatedly threatened with destitution because of the absorbed obliviousness of their natural male providers dreaming their nightmare of mechanical perfection. Paul Farlotte loses his dream of return to his natural family because he assumes responsibility for his neighbour's family: he loves his neighbours as he—*more* than he—loves himself. The St. Denis men strive obsessively to realize an apparently unattainable dream of perfection—something mechanical and inhuman, or anti-humanistic, as perfection must remain[39]—to the exclusion of all concern for their natural family. And it bears repeating in other words: the St. Denis men shirk that which Paul shoulders—familial duty—and Scott underscores the contrast by having Paul sacrifice his natural family ties and assume the family responsibilities of the St. Denis men.

Farlotte's decision to become surrogate father to the St. Denis, which entails relinquishing his old dream of return to France, is summarized in terms of a resolute dark night of the soul:

> All night long Monsieur Farlotte walked in his garden, patient and undisturbed, fixing his duty so that nothing could root it out. He found the comfort that comes to those who give up some exceeding deep desire of the heart, and when next morning the market-gardener from St. Valérie, driving by as the matin bell was clanging from St. Joseph's, and seeing the old teacher as if he were taking an early look at his growing roses, asked him, "Well, Monsieur Farlotte, when do you go to France?" he was able to answer cheerfully, "Next year—next year." (76)

Farlotte knows he will never return to France, but he no longer desires or needs to go. After a whole night alone—"undisturbed" referring to his solitary vigil and not to any simple nocturnal

inner peace won without a quest—after a night of focusing on his duty, "he was able to answer cheerfully," which suggests that he has endured a dark night indeed. (Interestingly, and ironically, St. Denis, or Denys, is the patron saint of France; perhaps even more interesting, hagiographic legend traces Denis, the first bishop of Paris, back to St. Paul.[40]) Moreover, the above passage's allusions and references to Gethsemane, "duty," sacrifice, St. Joseph, and "growing roses" suggest in the complex manner of dense fiction that Paul Farlotte has found in the new world, by re-creating it, the essence of what he has "cheerfully" given up: homeland, love, and family. He "[fixes] his duty so that nothing could root it out," in effect putting down new roots in the new world. These allusions and references also suggest that the unarticulated reasons for his decision devolve from both hard-won humanistic beliefs and a Christian vision of community that literally find expression in his love for his neighbour.

There are, it can now be said, two sorts of family madness in "Paul Farlotte": the hyper-rational pursuit of perfection by mechanical means, a fixation which leads to obsessive-compulsive neurosis (thus echoing the Desjardins' nominal reminder that perfectibility is not possible for fallible man); and Paul Farlotte's vision-haunted madness that leads to his relinquishing a lifelong dream for the sake of others—the "madness" of irrational, though quite reasonable, love. Paul Farlotte's love reconstructs family where family had been disintegrating; his love is the glue that bonds a fracturing family one to another and (the application of glue being what it is) to himself. Thus he is the gardener who cultivates the best roses in the country (70), symbolically providing an alternative to those other isolated and withering gardens in *Viger.* Thus he becomes also a surrogate St. Joseph protecting another "Marie" and her "children," another "holy" family. They are holy not because they are especially blessed but because they comprise that rarity in modern *Viger,* a family. Nonetheless, Scott does administer an authorial blessing by having his narrator echo God the Father's approval of Christ's baptism when, at the conclusion of "Paul Farlotte," the apparition of Paul's mother looks upon her son's decision to give up his dream of visiting her and smiles, "as if she were well pleased" (77)[41]; and note too that we are dealing here with another Paul who is waylaid by a vision on the road to a mistaken destination).

Read in this way, "Paul Farlotte" can be seen to offer one possible answer to the question that Scott implicitly asks throughout his *fin-de-siécle* fiction: What is "family" to mean in the alienating, dislocating, mechanical-industrial, metropolitan, mad and *modern* world that is coming? The concluding story suggests that if "family" is to maintain meaning in the New World and modern times, exclusive definitions of the word must be broadened to include (or properly embrace) neighbours such as the St. Denis, community such as transitional Viger, the city even, and, ultimately, the family of man—enlarged in an ever-increasing (to borrow the title of Scott's last book) "circle of affection." Certainly Paul Farlotte's act of charity and love, enacted at home, and the foregoing reading of that act, would be congenial to the moral-aesthetic of the Scott who wrote the following in his "At the Mermaid Inn" column of 19 March, 1892:

> The promptings to kindness result in a greater humanity, to abstinence in a more sublime self-control. And who shall measure the effect, or set a bound to the force of the objective value of service? The washing the disciples' feet, the acts of tenderness and mercy start at once a thousand roots of peace and promise in the heart. By these present virtues we communicate with the millenium; we are part of that circle of goodness and beauty which shall widen out into eternity. By this service we are linked to the past and its throes are triumphant in us. So between the two abysses we stand conservators of the past, pioneers of the future. But we are most of all pioneers, the function of our service is one for progress, for advance; by these acts of humanity and usefulness we increase the store of the beauty and goodness of the race. No individual excellence was ever lost; today we are protected by the valour of one of our ancestors, who stood in the breach of the wall and would not let the enemy pass. And will we not by our present self-control make the task of life easier for someone who is to come after us. Beauty is not a term of form alone, it is the secret and ever-present essence of the spirit of absolute truth, of supreme goodness, so that each service, each stroke of kindness, each expression of geniality is one more beauty."[42]

By way of concluding I observe just how apt was Scott's choice of fractured family as sounding board for the various expressions of disintegrative modernity played out in *Viger*.

Because the institution of family is the intermediary between the individual and society, and the relay between past and future—those "two abysses"—with dark roots into the past and green shoots into the future, it would have been for the conservative Scott the primary social organism for countering the denial of individual and collective meaning that time (modernity) and space (the encroaching city) threaten. To fracture the institution of family is, therefore, to disrupt that which facilitates the transmission of values and cultural continuity itself. To trace the causes and expressions of that fracturing and then to refashion "family" as Scott does in *In the Village of Viger* is a notable achievement of imagination informed by memory and hope.

NOTES

[1] *In the Village of Viger* (Boston: Copeland and Day, 1896; rpt. Toronto: Ryerson, 1945; rpt. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart-NCL, 1973). All further page references are to the NCL edition. Interestingly, on June 5, 1944 Scott wrote E.K.Brown that he had given thought to writing another story cycle "with Welly Legrave as a centre." See *The Poet and the Critic: A Literary Correspondence Between D.C. Scott and E.K. Brown*, ed. Robert L. McDougall (Ottawa: Carleton UP 1983) 108. Welly Legrave is the hero of Scott's "northern" short story, "A Legend of Welly Legrave," in *The Witching of Elspie: A Book of Stories* (Freeport, N.Y.: Books for Libraries, 1923) 178-97.

[2] See Gerald Lynch, "The One and the Many: English-Canadian Short Story Cycles," *Canadian Literature* 130 (Autumn 1991): 91-104. For my understanding of the short story cycle, I am indebted to the following studies: Forest L. Ingram, *Representative Short Story Cycles of the Twentieth Century: Studies in a Literary Genre* (Paris: Mouton, 1971); Susan Garland Mann, *The Short Story Cycle: A Genre Companion and Reference Guide* (New York: Greenwood, 1989); Robert M. Luscher, "The Short Story Sequence: An Open Book," in *Short Story Theory at a Crossroads*, eds. Susan Lohafer and Jo Ellyn Clarey (Baton Rouge: Louisiane State University, 1989) 148-67; see also John Barth, "Tales Within Tales Within Tales," in *The Friday Book: Essays and Other Nonfiction* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1984) 218-38, "The Ocean of Story," 84-90, and "Don't Count On It: A Note on the Number of The 1001 Nights," 158-81; and *Writing Saskatchewan: 20 Critical Essays*, ed. Kenneth G. Probert (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 1989) 155-79.

[3] See Rudy Wiebe, afterword, *Fruits of the Earth*, by Frederick Philip Grove (Toronto: NCL McClelland and Stewart, 1989) 351-59, for a discussion of the cyclical form in Grove's writings.

[4] See W.H. New, *Dreams of Speech and Violence: The Art of the Short Story in Canada and New Zealand* (Toronto: UP, 1987) 42, 48.

[5] Scott, born and raised in Ottawa, enjoyed a highly succesful career in the Department of Indian Affairs, eventually rising to assume the position of Deputy Superintendent General; early in his career he was one of the Department's chief treaty negotiators, and later the principal authors of the government's policy statement, *The Administration of Indian Affairs in Canada* (Toronto: The Canadian Institute of International Affairs, 1931).

[6] Scott's Arnoldian understanding of the relation between literature and material progress is expressed in "Poetry and Progress: Presidential Address delivered before the Royal Society of Canada, May 17, 1922," in *The Circle of Affection (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1947) 123-47.*

[7] Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture 1880-1920* (New York: Pantheon, 1981) XV.

[8] In *The Poems of Archibald Lampman*, ed. Margaret Coulby Whitridge, *Literature of Canada* 12 (Toronto: UP 1974) 179-82.

[9] See D.M.R. Bentley, "Carman and Mind Cure: Theory and Technique," in *Bliss Carman: A Reappraisal*, ed. Gerald Lynch (Ottawa: UP, 1990) 85-110.

[10] Lears xiii.

[11] See John Metcalf, *What is a Canadian Literature?* (Guelph, Ont.: Red Kite Press, 1988) 45-87.

[12] See New 184-85.

[13] Ingram 20.

[14] *At the Mermaid Inn: Wilfred Campbell, Archibald Lampman, Duncan Campbell Scott in* The Globe *1892-93*, Literature of Canada 21, introd. Barrie Davies (Toronto: UP, 1979) 254, column for 4 February, 1893. Scott here cites Pater in reference to Gustave Flaubert's struggle to marry form and content, speculating that "perhaps Flaubert was born with a musician's idea of form and was constantly searching for the absolute fusion of form and context which is found in no other art." For a fuller account of Scott's ideas regarding music, see "Poetry and Progress" in *The Circle of Affection* 139-40.

[15] A look at the Contents pages of *The Poems of Duncan Campbell Scott* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1926) finds the following titles: "Night Hymns on Lake Nipigon," "The Piper of Arll," "Powassan's Drum," "Dirge for a Violet," "On the Death of Claude Debussy," "Improvisation on an Old Song," "Adagio," "Words After Music," "At the Piano," and a host of others with the word "song" in the title.

[16] Musical metaphors and analogies seem to lend themselves espeically well to discussions of the formal aspects of story cycles; consider Luscher's definition of the form, p. 149: "As in a musical sequence, the story sequence repeats and progressively develops themes and motifs over the course of the work; its unity

derives from a perception of both the successive ordering and recurrent patterns, which together provide the continuity of the reading esperience."

[17] See New 49.

[18] See Scott's remarks, in "Poetry and Progress" 142, on the relation between modernism and poetric forms: "The desire of creative minds everywhere is to express the age in terms of the age, and by intuition to flash light into the future. Revolt is essential to progress, not necessarily the revolt of violence, but always the revolt that questions the established past and puts it to the proof, that finds the old forms outworn and invents new forms for new matters."

[19] See Barth entry in note 2 above.

[20] "The Height of Land," *Selected Poetry of Duncan Campbell Scott*, ed. Glenn Clever (Ottawa: Tecumseh, 1974) 52-55; "Chiostro Verde" 99-101.

[21] See Gerald Lynch, "An Endless Flow: D.C. Scott's Indian Poems," *Studies in Canadian Literature* 7:1 (1982): 27-54.

[22] See S.L. Dragland, introd., *In the Village of Viger and Other Stories* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1973) 12.

[23] See *Paradise Lost* I.726-30.

[24] Purdy describes his experience of the north as "like being again into a world so different from the fat South . . ." "Aklavik on the Mackenzie River," in *No Other Country* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1977) 146.

[25] In *Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada*, series 4, vol.8 (1970): 31-40.

[26] *Selected* 53.

[27] Lampman, "The Frogs," *The Poems of Archibald Lampman* 7. See D.M.R. Bentley, "Watchful Dream and Sweet Unrest: An Essay on the Vision of Archibald Lampman," Part II, *Studies in Canadian Literature* 7:1 (1982): 6-15.

[28] See Gerald Lynch, *Stephen Leacock: Humour and Humanity* (Montreal, Kingston: McGill-Queen's UP, 1988) 111-120.

[29] See Clark Blaise, "To Begin, To Begin," in *The Narrative Voice: Short Stories and Reflections By Canadian Authors* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1972) 22-26. Blaise shows the ways in which a short story's opening paragraph can contain the entire story.

[30] See *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, 2nd ed., ed. David Hugh Farmer (Oxford: UP, 1987). St. Joseph is also the patron saint of all who desire a holy death (thus the high number of St. Joseph's hospitals). Is Scott suggesting that a holy death is the most that can be hoped for Viger? And if that suggestion is entertained, it can be joined by another that also sees in the name "Viger" a root shared with "vigil." I am indebted to D.M.R. Bentley for suggesting the importance of St. Joseph to me.

[31] I have in mind Erwin Panofsky's definition of humanism as "an attitude which can be defined as the conviction of the dignity of man, based on both the

insistence of human values (rationality and freedom) and the acceptance of human limitations (fallibility and frailty); from these two postulates results—responsibility and tolerance." *Meaning in the Visual Arts* (Chicago: UP, 1955) 2.

[32] See New 183: "Arbique's Franco-Prussion quarrel with Hans over the motherland masks a deeper quarrel—over the 'possession' of Latulipe—that is sexual in origin, if political in expression, something which he sublimates past the point of recognizing."

[33] The character "the grinder man" in George Elliott's story "The Way Back," in the story cycle *The Kissing Man* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1962) 125-36, bears a striking resemblance to Scott's pedler. The major difference between the two is that the grinder man facilitates the reintegration of someone into the small-town community, whereas the pedler points up a characteristic—materialism—that will contribute to the spiritual subsumption of Viger by the city.

[34] In *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town* (1912; rpt. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1989) 181-86.

[35] In *Dubliners* (1914;rpt. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977) 175-223.

[36] In *Who Do You Think You Are?* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1978) 189-206.

[37] This convention of the concluding stories of story cycles may owe something to the "envoy" in the tradition of the French *ballade*, which supposition throws some light on Leacock's use of "L'Envoi" as title for the concluding story of *Sunshine Sketches*. Another exemplary instance of the convention is George Elliott's "The Way Back," *The Kissing Man*, referred to in note 26 above.

[38] See Michael Fischer, *Does Deconstruction Make Any Difference? Poststructuralism and the Defense of Poetry in Modern Criticism* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana UP, 1985) 4-5.

[39] In its concern with the potentially destructive consequences of the obsession for "scientific" perfection at the expense of what may be called the "human" element, "Paul Farlotte" resembles any number of stories by Nathaniel Hawthorne, but see especially "The Birthmark," *Hawthorne's Short Stories*, ed. Newton Arvin (New York: Knopf, 1946; rpt.New York: Random House-Vintage, n.d.) 147-65.

[40] See *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints*.

[41] *Cf.* Matt. 3:17.

[42] *At the Mermaid Inn* 37.