DIMINISHING VOICE IN BUCKLER'S *THE MOUNTAIN AND THE VALLEY*

John C. Van Rys

> *Silence tortures. It is the husk of speech forever falling short of the wall that the voice crying beneath it knows it can never penetrate or reach over.*
>
> Ernest Buckler

Since its publication in 1954, Ernest Buckler's story of David Canaan's life in the Annapolis Valley, *The Mountain and the Valley*, has gradually established itself as a touchstone of Canadian Modernism. Its continuing presence in Canadian Literature courses and its effect on such writers as Margaret Laurence and Alice Munro attest to its power as a novel exploring imaginative experience. Nevertheless, the critical debates on Buckler's masterpiece remain somewhat unstable. Variously read as a regional pastoral idyll, a *bildungsroman*, an ironic portrait, and a tragedy, critics continue to wrangle over the novel's meaning. In doing so, they've resorted to various polarities to explain Buckler's intention: the creative mind versus the inarticulate community, city versus farm, the "male mountain" versus the "female valley" (Tallman 61). These dualities have been used primarily to explain David's dilemma and turn it into a universal of the imaginative person's struggle with a hostile Canadian community.

Critics have focused particularly on the novel's ending, debating whether David transcends the frustrations of his life or fails tragically to live up to expectations. To this end, critics have examined David as both a potential artist and as a moral being in order to understand the final day of his life. Interestingly, while critics disagree about the positives and negatives of the ending, they seem unanimous in their faith that Ernest Buckler has written the novel that David was unable to complete because of his death on the mountaintop.[1] These issues (the ending and its re-

lationship to the novel Buckler has written) need, I believe, clarification. First, the novel David anticipates writing is drastically different from the novel that Buckler has written. Second, Buckler demonstrates throughout *The Mountain and the Valley* that David's problems are not just artistic and moral but are related to his understanding of being and his manner of being, and those problems remain unresolved at the end. And third, Buckler expresses David's ontological dilemma primarily through his (David's) struggle with voice—his inability to hear correctly the voices around him, enter into a genuine dialogue, and generate his own voice.

According to Mikhail Bakhtin, language comes to life only when it is used to construct utterances. "The word," he argues, "is not a material thing but rather the eternally mobile, eternally fickle medium of dialogic interaction. It never gravitates toward a single consciousness or a single voice. The life of the word is contained in its transfer from one mouth to another" (*Dostoevsky* 202). Bakhtin sees the life of language as inseparable from the lives of those who speak it. Indeed, he argues that "with a creative attitude towards language, there are no voiceless words that belong to no one" (*Speech* 124). In his writings, Bakhtin explores several consequences of this idea about voice: its relation to life for the individual, the social forces operating within voice, and its need for responsive understanding. In defining voice, Bakhtin states that it "includes a person's worldview and fate. A person enters into dialogue as an integral voice. He participates in it not only with his thoughts, but with his fate and with his entire individuality." And in this context, says Bakhtin, "the single adequate form for *verbally expressing* authentic human life is the *open-ended dialogue*," and "in this dialogue a person participates wholly and throughout his whole life" (*Dostoevsky* 293). Moreover, every voice finds itself embroiled in what Bakhtin calls "heteroglossia," the "contradictory and multi-languaged world" (*Dialogic* 275). This is the fray that the individual speaker enters; his or her voice creates utterances, for better or worse, within this social ocean. Finally, because the utterance is a social phenomenon concretely tied to history and heteroglossia, the speaking voice exists as a response and seeks response. "Our thought itself," writes Bakhtin, "is born and shaped in the process of interaction and struggle with others' thought, and this cannot but be reflected in the forms that verbally express our thought as well" (*Speech* 92). For Bakhtin, a person's

voice is an arena, and the novel as genre is that arena artistically represented.

If we examine closely Buckler's project of voice in *The Mountain and the Valley,* we begin to sense that David's dilemma and his death are tied up in his difficulties with the utterance as the basic unit of communication. For example, the first pages of the novel, the prologue, establish in the brief dialogue between David and his grandmother Ellen the ontological tone of David's life as it reaches its end. David's situation, briefly, is one in which his voice has been reduced to rote responses to questions. In the novel's first dialogue, Ellen asks David what he is doing, and he does not reply; she then asks him what he's looking at, and he answers "Nothing" (8-9). Buckler then takes us into *Ellen's* interior voice, not David's, her thoughts as she hooks her rug. Returning to a dialogue between grandmother and grandson, Buckler narrates a brief and frustrating exchange: what do you see? what are you doing? is someone coming? have you fed the hens? where are you going? will you be warm enough? Ellen's repeated questions bring often repeated answers from David: "'It's not dark yet.' He said it as if he were repeating a lesson. He had said it yesterday and the day before and the day before that" (11). The prologue establishes David's voice and thus his being and relationships, remarkably with a few brief exchanges.

And that is indeed the remarkable quality of this novel, that it asks us to listen to the depth behind the surface words, the being and ideas and conflicts at play. Virtually all things have a voice in this novel; even silence speaks. The farmhouse kitchen of the prologue contains a voice deeper than silence:

> The afternoon stillness simmered soundlessly in the kitchen. The soft flutter of flame in the stove, the heat-tick of the stove itself, and the gentle rocking of the tea kettle with its own steam, were quieter than silence. The mat hook which his grandmother held in her right hand made a steady staccato like the sounds of seconds dropping, as it punctured the meshes of the meal bag, to draw up loop after loop of the rag she held in her left hand beneath. (7)

Appropriately enough, the narrator proceeds to connect the "quieter than silence" of the kitchen with David, his complete emptiness: "He stood absolutely still. He was not quiet with

thought or interest. It was simply that any impulse to movement receded before the compulsion of the emptiness: to suspend the moment and prolong it, exactly as it was, in a kind of spell" (8). David's silence is voiceless; his only urge on the last day of his life is to suspend time, in effect to exit the temporal-spatial world, the heteroglot world that Bakhtin describes and this novel explores.

The Mountain and the Valley, from this beginning, proceeds to narrate the disappearance of David's voice from the multi-voiced world he inhabits. Many critics have created a polarized opposition between David's imaginative articulacy and the valley's inarticulacy, suggesting that in that inarticulacy lies David's tragedy.[2] However, Buckler's comments on rural life do not support this negative view of the valley's inhabitants. For Buckler, rural life is rich with what Bakhtin would call polyphony. In a 1973 interview with Donald Cameron, Buckler points out that as a writer "you subsist on people who really live, who are not looking at what they are doing all the time," and he proceeds to elaborate this point:

> You don't have to wander all over the bloody world and explore every niche and cranny in it to find out how people behave. In a small community like this even, you have a representation of every kind of action, of every kind of psychological mode. The whole thing, the whole macrocosm, is here in microcosm. You don't have to know any more people than these to know what is going on in the human psyche.
>
> (Buckler, "Oyster" 7-8)

The Mountain and the Valley celebrates this microcosmic world by celebrating its heart. As Buckler states later in the same interview, "Heart is what we live by; I don't think we live by mind, I think we live by heart" (11). Buckler's purpose in the novel, then, is to embody the heart's speech in an array of characters. As Claude Bissel notes in *Ernest Buckler Remembered*, "The 'heart' for Buckler is the imagination in action binding one man to another, clarifying the fundamentals. It enables man to live close to mortality and see it as part of the mainstream of life" (Bissel 130).

That heart is voiced in the novel's many voices, the polyphony within Buckler's Annapolis Valley, Buckler's means and method of exploring the psychology of the valley. Throughout the novel, Buckler is concerned with showing consciousness in relation to others, whether that be through actual speech or through

inner dialogue, through sound or silence. Indeed, he would have us hear time and place this way. In contrast to the silence of the prologue, "Part 1—The Play" begins with noise: "A caucus of hens outside the window wakened David" (13). In this fashion, the narrator continually tunes us into the voice of this place, even when that voice is so tantalizingly hard to understand. At the beginning of "The Valley," a section of the novel exploring the complexities of approaching adulthood, the narrator translates the voice of the October day:

> This was the day when, all sentience fled, all things of the country shed the last light of after-memory. Its unwithheld entirety stained as quietly as a shadow. It claimed, by its drawing stillness, that you know it so perfectly and so possess it; as you could not. It beckoned you, by its very demanding, to touch what was unreachable. It asked you, because it had no heart or tongue, to feel you knew not what and to find words for what was inexpressible. (113)

Such a passage underscores the complexity of Buckler's verbal universe, for here is the heartless and tongueless land speaking to its inhabitants and staking its claim on them.

Buckler's rendering of the inhabitants' voices is no less complex. First of all, Buckler's narrator takes great pains to articulate the voices of both primary and secondary characters. He wants us to hear fully the polyphonic texture of the valley people. Moreover, he wants us to sense the deeper voice behind the bland surface discourse. The narrator provides voice prints for the most inarticulate of characters, particularly Joseph, Martha, and Chris. Even Bess Delahunt's and Rachel Gorman's voices become real to us, revealing the psychological motivations behind speech and action within their specific society. But the complexity of these "heart voices" beneath inarticulacy is most fully explored and revealed through the succession of arguments between Joseph and Martha: the brief encounter over Bess's pie, and the more thorough explorations of arguments taking place during the potato harvest and while they dress the pork. The play of inner and outer speech, of unifying and torturing silences that lead to Joseph's death, powerfully conveys the collapse of that vocal harmony that Buckler lauds earlier in the novel. The voices of Christmas, the conversations that Martha carries on with her kitchen, Joseph's dialogue

with his land, the community's togetherness in the wake of Spurge Gorman's and Pete Delahunt's deaths—all these initial indications of harmony evaporate as the action of the novel proceeds.

For example, initially as Joseph and Martha dress the pork for storage in the cellar, they are knit together by their combined silences and straightforward speech. The implication is that their inner voices are tuned in to each other, each participating in an unspoken dialogue. Joseph's mentioning of Bess's name, however, disturbs this dialogue and deflects Martha from it:

> Sometimes, most times, Bess's name would fall from Joseph's lips as harmlessly as any other. She never knew when or why these spells would strike her. She was never prepared for them. But now Bess's name was like a rock thrown into the morning's surface.
>
> Her mind ceased to work sensibly before she could examine the cause and discard it. She felt the instant sense of isolation, forsakenness. Her perceptions converged inwards. The fascination of speechlessness settled on her like a weight. Her own hands, the overall jumper of Joseph's she was wearing, his clumsy rubbers on her feet, were like things seen on another woman—someone outside herself. (206)

A single word shatters Martha and alienates her from not only Joseph but also herself, so that she succumbs to a torturing speechlessness. Rachel's words about Joseph and Bess return to Martha, even though she hadn't believed them, and as Joseph (having dropped her and their work together) is speaking to Milledge Bain about a heifer, her sense of abandonment deepens. When Joseph returns with his good news about selling the heifer for $40, Martha rejects opportunities to speak and heal the jagged silence and separation. After the silence explodes in anger on Joseph's part, he attempts to think through Martha's silence and seek the words that will heal it, only to redirect his anger at himself for his "womanish softness" when he imagines another man hearing his thoughts ("And she'd speak first, by God, if he had to keep quiet the rest of his life" 212). As Martha watches him yoke the oxen to head back to the mountain, "silence seemed to puff out from the separateness, the singleness, of everything she looked at. It settled inside her. Her own speechlessness leeched at her brain" (212). Only after her brief fainting spell does her anger, emptiness, and separateness dissipate; then, we learn, "she felt like speaking.

She went to the door and called to him, 'Joseph, will you be late?' But he didn't hear her. The wind was blowing away from him" (212-3). The argument, of course, remains unresolved as Joseph is silenced by death. As this example demonstrates, however, Buckler's concern is to articulate the voices of the inarticulate, to give even silence a voice in his novel's verbal universe.

If Buckler so lovingly and carefully delineates the voices of these characters, this polyphony of the valley, the question that remains to be answered is, "What happens to David?" Is David simply a failed version of Buckler? Is his imaginative voice confronted with and overwhelmed by the inarticulateness of the valley? Is he a speaker without a listener? As the novel relates the events of his life from childhood to adulthood, we witness David withdraw himself from the polyphonic world of the valley in search of, in essence, transcendence through a meta-language divorced from the dialogue of life. Circumstances, events, and deliberate choices lead David in this direction of vocal isolation. Bakhtin argues that "the idea of testing the hero, of testing his discourse, may very well be the most fundamental organizing idea in the novel" (*Dialogic* 388). This characteristic describes the structure of *The Mountain and the Valley* precisely, for David's discourse and speaking are continually tested in episode after episode. In an essay on the *bildungsroman*, Bakhtin also suggests that this genre is a "novel of emergence," and he adds that "problems of reality and man's potential, problems of freedom and necessity, and the problem of creative initiative rise to their full height" (*Speech* 24). These problems are clearly the ones David himself faces in his struggles with articulation. As John Orange puts it, "Once [David] realizes how powerful words can be, he (characteristically) relies on them to perfect his every experience. The words equate the subjective self and the objective world in ecstatic moments, but they also serve to separate David from others" (47).[3] When these problems and struggles are traced through the parts of the novel, a pattern of childhood unity giving way to adult isolation emerges. This pattern, of course, is no surprise, but what may be surprising is the paradoxical disappearance of David's voice as he becomes more and more obsessed with language. Rather than becoming articulate in the sense of constructing actual dialogues with actual people, David withdraws into internal dialogue, monologue, and eventually silence.

As a child, David's voice at first appears to be a constructive agent, and there's a healthy play in his relationships with others. He clearly has a gift, and he uses it to create harmony. Part One of the novel dramatizes effectively the powers of David's discourse as well as its problems. The fishing trip portrays a child engaged with those around him and teeming with the inner voices of imagination. Here, David uses his voice to create harmony between Chris and himself and to sympathize with his sister Anna, who is left behind. David's joke about the Jersey cow brings laughter, and the narrator adds, "he could always bring them close again, with what each one liked to laugh at, every time" (16). The trip back to the mountain contains its balanced harmony and solitude. David contemplates the road, thinking that "today they'd walk on it, farther and farther into the deep, sad, unfathomable, magically-sleeping woods. The voices from the houses would be soundless and far off. The only sound would be the soft undulant hush of darkness" (13). Moreover, thinks David, "having his father and Chris *with* him would make him more securely alone with his mind's shining population than ever" (14). David's inner voices are brimming over, but these voices are not irreparably separated from his community, only temporarily. Nevertheless, even this childhood episode reveals David's ontological dilemma in small. We hear this first in his relationship with his father:

> When he was alone with his father, he didn't know what to say. The quick things in his mind sounded foolish even to himself. Not that Joseph would laugh at them. There'd be an anxiety in him almost, to listen and to understand. But somehow David would be struck shy when he started to talk; and then, when he didn't speak true to his thoughts, he'd feel as if he were keeping a secret from the person he could most trust. (21)

Clearly, both David and Joseph desire dialogue here, but the apparent disparity of their voices erects a barrier that David as a child feels unable to overcome.

Moreover, the fishing trip ends a failure. "The food," says the narrator, "was warm in David and the sun was shining and no part of the day had begun to decline and they were crossing the bridge to start to climb the mountain, when they heard the voices" (23). The voices of the valley disrupt David's imaginative dream; they

usurp his shining population, at least temporarily, with news of Pete Delahunt's and Spurge Gorman's deaths:

> The men were mostly silent. But now and then they spoke about their work, the season, even a smirking joke that had to do with women. This had no relation to the shock that was basic in all their minds, but David didn't understand that. He didn't know that adult speech was merely an instrument of disguise. Their remarks seemed heartless to him. He didn't see how they could talk at all. (35)

As a child, David is unable to enter into and understand this dialogue, with its depth of feeling behind the surface. He is confronted with a further disappointment, or rather a puzzle, when he is finally alone with Effie. David, as he does throughout the novel, plans dialogues, giving himself and his addressee set speeches arranged in a perfect order, but he constantly discovers that discourse in life cannot be governed in this way, and so it is with Effie:

> He was tongue-tied. You planned how it would be with someone, seeing ahead how their part must go as certainly as your own. Then when the time came, they started off with an altogether different speech or mood, and your part became useless and wooden. (39).

Again, David discovers that his inner voices, creatively organized, run up against the real discourse of living voices, and the result is confusion and disappointment.

The rest of Part One juxtaposes the intense harmony of Christmas with the disaster of the play. At Christmas the sense of communal dialogue is so intense for David that even "the silence amongst them was itself like a kind of visiting, one with the other" (69). At first, the play seems to offer the same opportunity for community, with David as the unifying voice speaking the magical words. The narrator says of David, "He commanded the silence now, surely, masterfully," and speaking from David's perspective,

> "Oh, it was perfect now. He was creating something out of nothing . . . . Oh, this was perfect. There was a bated wonder coming from their faces: to know that this was David, but a David with the shine on him (they'd never suspected!) of understanding and showing them how everything was" (74-5).

Of course, David's mastery of the silence with his play voice fails when Jud Spinney makes a homespun joke about David's kissing

Effie. The results are radical and set up a pattern for his use of discourse in many situations that follow. More precisely, he first feels "the shame of having spoken the foolish words in this goddam foolish play" (76); then as he runs home his own voice and the play's voice are replaced by anger that hums inside him "louder than any information of feeling" (77); he comes to despise "the foolish treacherous part of himself that listened to books" (77); finally, he shuts out all of his family by refusing to speak and by refusing to let them speak; even when the anger subsides, he is unable to act or say anything to make the situation right (77-80). The conflict between his shining population, his inner dialogue, and the real world of discourse leads to David's withdrawal. His voice, which can unify him with others, can be an instrument of control and violence as well.

The pattern of sought unity but eventual withdrawal is repeated in subsequent sections of the novel, but the isolation from polyphony and the evaporation of his shining population intensify. This play of his discourse's power and its destructive inversion can be traced in his relationships with the boys at the Baptizing Pool and his mistreatment of Effie. Moreover, his pleasure in withdrawal can be seen in the fact that he takes the attic room in the new house:

> When he closed the door behind him, there was the exciting feeling of being unreachably alone. It wasn't the isolation of real severance (that was intolerable), but a cosy isolation of his own making. The sounds that came up to him were blurred beyond insistence by the height. They were just loud enough to remind him that company was to be had whenever he chose it. (115)

David chooses to place himself above and beyond the discourse of others; the sounds are enough for him, and at this point he believes he is constructing a safe isolation in which he can commune more freely with his inner voices. His relationship with Toby at first seems to offer him the opportunity to use his voice freely, but even that turns out to be an illusion. Effie dies, and David feels responsible, but "the guilt soon passed from voice to echo," and this secret guilt becomes "a possession of curious inviolability" that tempts him to collect more secrets (146). In "Part Four—The Rock," David argues openly with his father, using his voice to assault Joseph and then withholding his voice to punish his father. David listens to "the fascinating whisper" that told him "not to

move . . . to let the blow dry on his face like the muddy water. It was more grindingly sweet than anything he'd ever known" (159). In his anger, David attempts to escape the valley. While he walks away, the narrator tells us, "the things he passed had no familiar voice," at least not until the anger dies down, with "its suspension of all other voices" (160). When picked up by the couple from the city, David realizes that with these people he can truly communicate, and yet "he talked with them as they talked . . . with a bright chording soreness in his heart" (162-3). While David can speak this voice, he recognizes that it a foreign and false voice for him, a betrayal of his father. He returns to the farm, his dilemma essentially unresolved.

The same pattern is repeated in "Part Five—The Scar," this time between David and his brother Chris. At first, David's discourse unifies the men as they prepare to slaughter the pig, but by this point in the novel we realize that again David is play-acting, simply adopting the voices of the valley in an empty fashion that plays out ribald routines. His heart isn't in this discourse. But the scene explodes completely when Chris makes a simple remark about David not liking to see animals killed. As the anger brews within David, the narrator tells us that David "wished he could get hold of Chris's *voice* somehow. He'd tear it to pieces" (184). In his temporary insanity, David would like to commit the ultimate violence—destroying his brother's voice and usurping his place in life's discourse. Even Chris's "assaulting perceptiveness" that causes David's anger to "lurch" cannot stop David from following the path he has begun to walk. Even after regaining consciousness, David refuses to resolve the argument with Chris; instead, he again withholds his voice in order to punish. And as he lies in his bed, David begins to retreat within himself into the voice of his pain and the voice of books. First, the narrator says of David's pain, "he lay there, listening to it, hating it, but subtly possessing it" (189). Second, he learns from books that "there was only one way to possess anything: to *say* it exactly. Then it would be outside you, captured and conquered" (189). What follows are David's attempts to harness this power, each of them such partial successes that David's sense of an ideal is repeatedly thwarted. His sense of the ideal power of language runs up against the truth of discourse. His desire to make sweeping monological statements for the audience of his own mind takes him farther and farther away

from the reality of the valley so that by the time we reach the epilogue David has discovered the betrayal of that isolation that is partly chosen and partly the result of circumstance: "a montage of all the things he had never done with someone else flashed on the screen of his brain" (269). This is David's toppling moment of clarity.

The epilogue, then, returns us to the prologue, and David's voice reduced to hollowness. Indeed, we learn that his situation as he starts out to climb the mountain is much worse than that. "The inside," says the narrator, "was nothing but one great white naked eye of self-consciousness, with only its own looking to look at. The frozen landscape made no echo inside him. There was no tendril of interaction" (275). David has become a vacuum, empty of voices and unable to engage the landscape or people in true dialogue. Thus, when David meets Steve on the road, he simply performs an act, adopts the role that works with Steve: "David's mind deliberately suspended its own nature. It assumed the cast of Steve's. He could synchronize his behaviour with any of theirs now. He could put their thoughts into words; and hearing them spoken, they'd be as pleased as if they'd been able to find the words themselves" (277). Nothing of David himself inhabits this dialogue.

As David climbs the mountain, voices do come back to him; but with everything out of sight, he can make of the voices what he wants to: "He thought of the fields. Unseen, they no longer seemed bare. He thought of the people in the valley. Now they were out of sight, his own face moved kindredly among them. They were pliant in his mind's eye to whatever aspect he cast them in" (280-1). Distant from the people and the valley, David can again put a shine over it all without danger of its collapsing. As he climbs higher, David experiences a series of translations in which the voices of all things, of the natural world, of people, of all thoughts everywhere, of all possible thoughts swarm over him, forking and branching endlessly, until "all the voices were soaked up at once." David, himself voiceless, soaks up all other voices and finds the answer to his dilemma in telling it all: "I know how it is with everything. I will put it down and they will see that I know" (292):

> As he thought of telling these things exactly, all the voices came close about him. They weren't swarming now. He went

> out into them until there was no inside left. He saw at last how you could *become* the thing you told.
>
> It wouldn't be necessary to take them one by one. That's where he'd been wrong. All he'd have to do . . . oh, it was so gloriously simple . . . was to find their single core of meaning. It was manifest not differently but only in different aspects, in them all. That would be enough. A single beam of light is enough to light all the shadows, by turning it from one to another.
>
> He didn't consider *how* he would find it . . . . Nor how long it might take . . . . He knew only that he would do it . . . It would make him the greatest writer in the whole world. (292-3)

On the mountaintop, far from the reality of the valley, David dreams a dream of transcendence where suddenly the valley is populated by "the best people in the whole world" and he himself gives "an absolving voice to all the hurts" (294). On the mountaintop, David's discourse is torn from reality; instead, he seeks to master a nonexistent meta-language that will soak up all voices in a monologic vision. David seeks to become the *Logos*, the creator and Messiah who unlike Christ grasps at godhood.

Buckler himself has said, "The greatest novel ever written is a mere phrase, a word, a letter, if you like, in the infinite language of human relations" ("First Novel" 23). As a novelist, Buckler—unlike his creation David—acknowledges fully the polyphonic nature of existence and the limits of the novel's participation in that polyphony. *The Mountain and the Valley*, then, rejects the notion of a human power to grasp any Logocentric transcendence. As Ellen hooks the two inner circles of her rug with the red of David's cape from the play and lace white, we are reminded of the power and failure of David's voice and the whiteness of death. His voice torn from reality, David dies, having avoiding the rag and bone shop of his heart, where he could have lain down, listened, and responded to the valley's voices. By circumstances, character, and choice, David's discourse has become separated from dialogue and has dissolved into silence. Buckler's testing of David's discourse ends in catastrophe, what Bakhtin calls the revelation that points of view cannot be resolved under earthly conditions: "catastrophe sweeps them all away without having resolved them. Catastrophe is the opposite of triumph and apotheosis"

(*Dostoevsky* 298). *The Mountain and the Valley* presents us with such a catastrophe.

NOTES

[1] Most critical discussions of the novel focus on these issues, with positions ranging from optimistic to pessimistic. Clara Thomas claims that "David's quest has finished triumphantly, in his conviction over the power of the word" (85), and Alan Young suggests that David becomes an artist, having gained "the single, all-embracing and god-like vision" ("Pastoral" 225). Other critics argue for David's defeat. Bruce MacDonald, for example, states that "David is not strong enough to bear the spiritual isolation of the artist and so he dies defeated" (208), while D.J. Dooley labels the novel "a story of the failure of the moral will" (58). For similar discussions, particularly about the relationship between David and Buckler himself, see the following: Barbour (65-6, 71, 75), Seaman (173-4), Bissell (72), Fee (79), Orange (52), and Chambers (82).

[2] See, for example, Bruce MacDonald: "Buckler defines his characters through their particular modes of perception and thought and distinguishes them into two major groups—the articulate and the inarticulate" (196). Later, MacDonald argues that David's problem is his simultaneous kinship with the farm life and attraction to the world of words and abstractions (198). These comments, similar to those of many other critics, are valid and useful; however, as generalizations they tend to set up binary oppositions that simplify Buckler's sense of voice.

[3] Orange goes on to delineate David's struggles with words: "The difficulty here is that David does not know how to integrate his artistic abilities into his life in the valley. From the beginning, he relies on the power of the word for absolute release or escape, never considering that it could be put to use to knit together all the people and things around him into a regional mythology. Instead, he uses words as weapons against his father, brother, neighbours, and friends" (48). See also Barbour (67) and Dooley (56).

WORKS CITED

Bakhtin, Mikhail. *The Dialogic Imagination*. Trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Ed. Michael Holquist. Austin, Texas: U of Texas, 1981.

———. *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*. Ed. and Trans. Caryl Emerson. Theory and History of Literature 8. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota, 1984.

———. *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*. Trans. Vern E. McGee. Ed. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin, Texas: U of Texas, 1986.

Barbour, Douglas. "David Canaan: The Failing Heart." *Studies in Canadian Literature* 1 (Winter 76): 64-75.

Bissell, Claude. *Ernest Buckler Remembered.* Toronto: U of Toronto Press, 1989.

Buckler, Ernest. "Ernest Buckler: A Conversation with an Irritated Oyster." Interview in *Conversations with Canadian Novelists,* by Donald Cameron. Toronto: Macmillan, 1973. 3-12.

————. *The Mountain and the Valley.* NCL. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1989 (NCL 1961, Clarke Irwin 1952).

————. "My First Novel." In *Ernest Buckler.* Critical Views on Canadian Writers. Ed. Gregory M. Cook. Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1972. 22-7.

Chambers, Robert D. *Sinclair Ross & Ernest Buckler.* Studies in Canadian Literature. Toronto: Copp Clark, and Montreal: McGill-Queen's, 1975.

Dooley, D.J. "*The Mountain and the Valley*: The Uncreated Word." *Moral Vision in the Canadian Novel.* Toronto/Vancouver: Clarke, Irwin & Co., 1979. 49-59.

Fee, Margery. "Ernest Buckler's 'The Mountain and the Valley' and 'That Dangerous Supplement . . .'." *Ariel: A Review of International English Literature* 19,1 (Jan. 88): 71-80.

MacDonald, Bruce F. "Word-Shapes, Time and the Theme of Isolation in *The Mountain and the Valley.*" *Studies in Canadian Literature* 1 (Summer 1976): 194-209.

Orange, John. "Ernest Buckler." In *Canadian Writers and Their Works.* Fiction Series, Vol. 5. Ed. Robert Lecker, Jack David, and Ellen Quigley. Toronto: ECW, 1990. 22-75.

Seaman, A.T. "Visions of Fulfilment in Ernest Buckler and Charles Bruce." *Essays on Canadian Writing* 31 (Summer 85): 158-75.

Tallman, Warren. "Wolf in the Snow." In *Ernest Buckler.* Critical Views on Canadian Writers. Ed. Gregory M. Cook. Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1972. 55-79.

Thomas, Clara. "New England Romanticism and Canadian Fiction." *Journal of Canadian Fiction* 2,4 (Fall 73): 80-6.

Young, Alan. *Ernest Buckler.* New Canadian Library: Canadian Writers 15. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1976.

————. "The Pastoral Vision of Ernest Buckler in *The Mountain and the Valley.*" *Dalhousie Review* 53 (Summer 73): 219-26.