CONSERVATIVE SOLUTIONS: THE EARLY HISTORICAL FICTION OF THOMAS RADDALL

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In his article, "Thomas H. Raddall and the Canadian Critics," Alan Young suggests that the reputations of Raddall's novels suffered between 1960 and 1990 as a part of a larger critical "denial of historical fiction and romance . . . as [a] significant or valuable contribution to our culture" (1991, 34). Young's assertion that Raddall's texts have been ignored because "the self-appointed spokespersons of Canada's intelligentsia" were no longer interested in "regional and popular history," seems naive given the enthusiastic response of both popular and academic audiences to the historiographic fictions of Rudy Wiebe, Timothy Findley, Anne Hébert, George Bowering, and Michael Ondaatje (1991, 34). Raddall's "historical fictions" no longer attract a wide audience because the writer—as Janice Kulyk Keefer points out—expects the reader to accept his single version of events, and such monologic visions of history prove to be unchallenging: "objective truth appears to be, for him, an unproblematic concept . . . there is not only 'one story', but also one true side to that story" (105). But if critics have been understandably inattentive to the historiographic aspects of Raddall's texts, they have too readily dismissed the deeper romance structures of Raddall's narratives as formulaic and simplistic. As recent reconsiderations have demonstrated, and as this paper will continue to argue, Raddall's early texts—particularly *His Majesty's Yankees and Roger Sudden*—are not simply easy escapes into Nova Scotia's colonial past.[1] These two novels function as texts which reproduce and resist some of the central cultural tensions which characterized the author's own era.

Having left Hythe, England, with his parents and two sisters in 1913, ten-year-old Thomas Head Raddall arrived in Halifax just as

the Maritimes began its traumatic entrance into the modern age. Like many of his generation, Raddall was keenly aware that traditional Maritime cultures—which had been built around largely rural populations tied to the primary industries of farming, fishing, and lumbering—were being swept away. Raddall experienced many of these cultural disruptions first-hand, for as a youth he witnessed the Halifax explosion, and then lost his father in the battle of Amiens.[2] Indeed, if it were not such a dubious critical activity, we could speculate about the psyche of the author on the basis of his texts and suggest that his subsequent conservatism is an attempt to return to the pre-traumatic period of his childhood.

As an adult he was certainly aware that the wider society was being irrevocably changed in the decades following the First World War. A resident of Liverpool in the thirties, Raddall watched as the fisheries were modernized and centralized with the arrival of refrigeration technologies (Barrett, in Brym and Sacouman 135). While a bookkeeper for the Mersey Paper Mill, he was aware of the collapse of the small independent lumber mills and the emergence of the pulp and paper companies. Like many other Maritimers he was concerned by the exodus of young people from the region's many subsistence farms as they sought the amenities of the urban setting (Forbes *Maritimes* 44).[3] If Raddall was keenly aware that conventional lifestyles were being swept away, he also believed they were not being replaced by satisfying alternatives. Just as post-war Maritime culture hesitantly balanced between its anxious vision of an alienating industrial modern future and its memories of an earlier, more traditional social order, so Raddall tended to critique the uncertainty of contemporary life and long for the structures of the stable past. In an interview with Walter Hawkins, Raddall recalls that even in his youth he felt a strong nostalgia for the slower-paced life of the previous generation:

> the 1914-1918 war and its tremendous effects were changing everything . . . In Milton I saw the last real log drives and saw the closing of the old water-driven saw mills. Although I was only in my teens and early twenties when these things were passing I felt a pang, for they seemed to me full of the romance of another time. ("Life and Fiction" 140)

Constructed within the transformations of postwar Maritime culture, Raddall's early historical novels are more than naïve

attempts to transcend contemporary anxieties. While the escapist impulse is present, the novels also reproduce, confront, and react against the tensions which characterize this turbulent period. *His Majesty's Yankees* not only explores the complex set of events which turned the potentially revolutionary province of Nova Scotia into a loyal British settlement, but it is also a powerful reactionary text which counters contemporary cultural shifts by invoking the romance form to impose a degree of coherence and continuity on a disordered world. This first novel so overdetermines its own celebration of a stable patriarchal order and a traditional social hierarchy, that Raddall's efforts to define a conservative alternative to the postwar culture nearly undermine their own effectiveness. If *His Majesty's Yankees* fulfils the traditional role of the historical romance by longing for past securities, Raddall's second historical novel, *Roger Sudden*, is a more complex response to the modern era. The region's incomplete entrance into the postwar era is signalled by the numerous textual silences and ruptures which surround Roger Sudden's strangely vacuous character and complicate the text's conservative commitment to regional traditions. Thomas Raddall is one of the first Maritime writers to experience the region's cultural transformations and his texts consistently react to and reconstruct the tensions of this vibrant, turbulent age.

In 1940 Raddall published *His Majesty's Yankees*, a fictional account of Nova Scotia's reactions to the American revolution. This *bildungsroman* is constructed around the character of David Strang, the fourth and youngest son of a pioneer militia man, Matthew Strang. Focusing on David's maturation from adolescence to manhood, the novel examines how the whole family—a microcosm of the province—is ravaged by the revolutionary war. Alan Young and Donald Cameron have both noted that the novel "is typical of the classical model of historical fiction outlined by Georg Lukacs," in that politically extreme positions are defeated and a moderate ideology of "the middle way" is sanctioned (Young, 1983, 18). This reading notes that the third son who follows the extreme Tory position of the reactionary British, and the second son who follows the revolutionary and anarchist vision of the American privateers, are eliminated both as characters and as political alternatives. The remaining Strang men, Matthew, Mark, and eventually David, accept a "compromise" position, and find peace, stability, and equality

by returning to British rule with an agenda for reform (Cameron 542). This Lukacsian model certainly helps identify the royalist/republican political tensions of the plot, but in its search for a middle way it fails to acknowledge the powerful patriarchal master-narrative which structures the novel and fuels the text's conservative vision.4 The dominant patriarchal and conservative ideology becomes evident as we turn from Lukacs, and employ the theories of Freud and Lacan to unveil the rigid sexual hierarchies which anchor the novel.

In their articles exploring Raddall's representations of women, Michele Lacombe and Donna Smyth note that, unconsciously, *His Majesty's Yankees* is structured like a "Freudian family drama" (Lacombe 89). Freud's Oedipal narrative, about "the rebellion of the son against the symbolic Father, the King" (Smyth 66), is not only a useful tool for unveiling the text's attitudes towards the feminine, but it is also an essential part of the narrative's ideological celebration of conservative hierarchies. The master-Oedipal narrative, which plays itself out in each of the text's significant male characters, is a simple tale focusing on the transfer of phallic power from father to son. According to this model, all boys who desire to enter manhood and claim such privileges of maturity as a voice in the community and a mate, must first clear a space for their own identity and sexuality by rebelling against "the father," before eventually returning and "becoming more and more like [the father] until he is the living and breathing image of him" (Smyth 66). The resistance to and subsequent identification with the patriarch ensures that power can be transferred from one generation to another without disruption of the basic social structures. Should the child disrupt the cycle in any way, either by refusing to test himself through a period of resistance or by rebelling too energetically, the whole system could be threatened and such marginal figures are decisively excluded from Raddall's model. The conservatism of the novel becomes increasingly apparent as the text stresses that peace, stability, and language itself are possible only if the political and patriarchal hierarchy successfully reproduces itself.

John and Luke Strang represent very different political perspectives in Nova Scotia's struggle to define itself during the American Revolution, but they are identical twins in that they both rebel against the sanctioned model of patriarchal succession

and are censured for their transgressions. John is the son who attempts to assume his position of power too quickly, without first proving his strength through a period of resistance. Most of the Strang brothers are "tall," "strong," "big" fellows, but the less masculine John "had the middle size of my mother's people and the pale skin that goes with ink and books and countinghouses" (*HMY* 15). Unable to establish himself through the manly arts of his community, he transgresses the laws of the patriarchs and takes possession of a sexual prize, by raping "Joanna, the young Dutch *bound-girl*" (*HMY* 15). Ashamed of his violent deed and fearful of the consequences of his act, John absorbs himself into the "law of the father" by declaring himself a "loyalist" and taking "the king's shilling" (*HMY* 83). His career as a soldier ends in disaster and he dies of a wound sustained while defending Fort Cumberland. Having never entered the full discourse of patriarchy, his dying confession is a collection of fragmented phrases, punctuated by an overriding fear of meeting his heavenly Father with a blemish on his conscience: "O god I felt rotten . . . God doesn't have mercy on the helpless does he . . . O God let me wipe the slate clean" (*HMY* 277). John pays the price for his Tory ideals, but his politics are themselves the product of his deeper—and in this text more threatening—rebellion against the conservative social/sexual order.

If John fails to fulfil the proper forms of resistance to the symbolic father, then Luke goes too far in his rebellion by advocating nihilism. Luke's assertion that personal liberty overrides the claims of collective security is not only a radically republican sentiment, it is also a clear threat to paternal stability. When Luke is pressed into service in the King's navy, his "insolence" earns him a number of sadistic floggings. The narrator's disapproval of the "father's" excessive violence is marked by the graphic descriptions of the "blood runnin' off me," but Luke's subsequent reaction against the British precludes any future reconciliation. He turns violently against any concept of the law, and just as Colonel Eddy precipitates disaster by rejecting the British model of military discipline, so Luke hastens towards failure by rejecting even the elemental structures which would make his rebellion successful: "Order! Law and Order! . . . Well, I say that's all bilge and to hell with it! What I want is independence for us and all America. I want to see British law and order and everything elsé o' theirs rooted out and chucked in the Atlantic" (*HMY* 92-3). An overly re-

bellious son, Luke's "wild laugh" and "jeers" disrupt the stable discourses of the community, and he separates from his family to join a resolutely masculine band of privateers (*HMY* 92). When he returns to loot his home-town at the conclusion of the novel, his death is ordered by his own father whose eyes look beyond his own child towards the "twin gods Law and Order" (*HMY* 399). The execution is carried out by David who uses his father's old weapon, the Louisburg gun, the text's recurring symbol of phallic power. Luke's death is not only necessary to restore the narrative's overt vision of political moderation; it is also necessary to uphold the text's conservative-patriarchal ideology.

Of course not all the characters break themselves against the patriarchal structures of the society. Those men who successfully negotiate the Oedipal narrative achieve a favourable position in the text. Mark, the oldest Strang brother, rebels against the family norms by courting Joanna, the family maid; however, the narrator subsequently reports that this "rebellion" is actually sanctioned by the father: "So! . . . He's wenching at last–our Mark. And time! It's a sign o' health in a young man" (*HMY* 36). Mark experiences considerable anxiety around the parentage of Joanna's first child, but when David repeats John's deathbed confession, the older brother is finally secure as the head of his home and his reconciliation with his wife is cast in a near sacred light: "[Mark's] big arm was about Joanna's waist, and her head was against his shoulder with her bright hair catching the candle gleams softly" (*HMY* 331).

Richard Uniacke is a second prominent figure who manages to find the proper balance between rebellion and submission. When the British systems prove to be too strict, Uniacke is quick to reject them, as when he joins with David to fight off the violent press gang. Unlike Luke, however, Uniacke is able to keep his sense of perspective and sees that some aspects of the traditional hierarchical system must be maintained if the social system is to be modified. While others are prone to rash decisions, he repeatedly advises people to "bide their time," and he recognizes the importance of such central infrastructures as stable employment to the cause of reform: "what in hell would you fighting cocks live on, Davy Strang, if it wasn't for people like me?" (*HMY* 215). Guided by the father figure of Michael Franklin, Uniacke's energy is channelled into the existing system and he enters a language based career in law that will eventually lead him into a position of power. Uni-

acke's first speech, delivered by a surrogate lawyer, not only releases David from a charge of treason, but signals that the Irishman will re-enter the system and help stabilize the traditional social order while gradually shifting its most repressive elements.

The text plays out its master-narrative through its minor characters, but most of the novel's energy is focused on David Strang: the youth who embarks on an intellectual and sexual quest for the power of speech, an appropriate mate, and a secure position within the paternal system. So strong is David's desire for a full entrance into the ever-present phallic power of the patriarchy, and so persistent is his continual disappointment and sense of lack, that it is useful to move from the Oedipal narrative of Freud to the more intricate framework of Lacan. Lacanian terminology—which explores the necessary desire for the other and the unavoidable alienation from the law of the father—helps us understand David's repeated experience of desire and confinement. Like many romantic heroes, an anxiety about succession and a desire for a stable identity lie at the heart of the young man's struggles. Unable to negotiate his entrance into the symbolic realm, he turns from one project to another, always discovering that the promise of a stable subject and a full connection with the ever-retreating "other" has yet again slipped out of reach.[5] While a Lacanian framework facilitates our understanding of David's recurring self-assertions and retreats, this cycle is eventually suspended by the text, as it suddenly grants the hero a stable subject position within an exalted patriarchal system. David's remarkable and even miraculous self-affirmation in the closing scene confirms that even the most unstable of figures can be assigned a position within the conservative ideology.

The pattern of desire and confinement is established in the opening chapters as David momentarily enters into the fullness of the other and gains a brief sense of completion, a feeling he will spend the rest of the text attempting to recover. The first scenes recount David's initiation into manhood; his first moose-hunting expedition with his birthday gift, "the gun of Louisburg . . . its brown metal gleaming with dew" (*HMY* 2). David's acceptance into the ranks of manhood is confirmed when he kills an elusive bull—a symbol of the aging paternal order he must enter and rejuvenate—and declares himself "a man and a lord before women" as he shares the meat with Molly Dekatha (*HMY* 13). But while

David experiences a sudden sense of elation and feels that he is now able to assert himself in his society, he is acting a part which is impossible to sustain. As soon as he returns home he attends a covert meeting of potential rebels against the crown, but instead of confidently launching their own battle against the colonialist powers, the local men meet behind the covered "kitchen windows" and eventually retreat to their beds "in a silence that somehow seemed guilty" (*HMY* 37). This pattern of attempting to lay claim to the power of the "other," and the inevitable retreat to a sense of confinement, is repeated, first as David attempts to capture Fear's love, and later as he begins his own rebellion against the crown.

David's early position as a novice is clear when he courts Fear Bingley at the strawberry frolic. A character Raddall created by combining the light and dark heroines of his earlier drafts into a single daring figure (Gray xvi), Fear is the very emblem of wealth, power, beauty, and intelligence which David feels would complete his life. Of course the moment David attempts to claim her by kissing her "waiting red mouth in a mixture of fear and delight," she begins to slip away (*HMY* 41). She is a skilled speaker, capable of enticing David, and then adeptly appearing "innocent" and "calm" under the reproach of the preacher Mr. Cheever. In contrast, David proves to be an inarticulate suitor who "stammer[s]" and "splutter[s]," and later confesses, "I'm not much good at talking—not to girls" (*HMY* 45). Instead of winning his beloved, David ends up under the watchful eye of the preacher, huddled in the "coldest uttermost corner" of his kitchen engaged in the unsatisfying study of mathematics. Unable to captivate the object of his desire, he becomes a case study in sexual frustration. David is almost accidentally aligned with the rebel cause when he kills the soldier who assaults Joanna, and his commitment to the revolution is not solidified until he learns Fear has married a British officer. His ideological passion for a homeland free from the crown is clearly a supplement for his desire to have Fear Bingley free from Jack Helyer of the Royals: "Rebellion needs a hearty hatred for success. For such a business commend me to a young man crossed in love. I looked upon our America and King George in the light of Fear and Captain Helyer . . . and threw myself heart and soul into the cause" (*HMY* 147-8). Unfortunately for David, his attempts to violently appropriate the law of the father only result in repeated confinements.

Though David joins the "cause" to revenge himself against the power structures which have frustrated his youthful passion, his attempts to speak his rebellion never win him liberty. After initially carrying incomprehensible messages "like a parrot" (*HMY* 122), David is confined to "a chamber in the attic" until it is safe for him to escape from Halifax. David gradually becomes an adept intercepter of enemy communications and an appreciative listener to such orators as Franklin and Allan, but his own speaking position is limited. When the rebellion actually erupts in the violent attack on Fort Cumberland, David suffers a painful bayonet thrust which "pierced my cheek . . . and cut my tongue," and forces him to limit his communication to a scrawl on a slate. As if the loss of his voice is not castration enough, he is then forced to surrender his "gun of Louisburg," and is eventually confined in the fort's stockade and then in a Halifax jail. His masculinity is further diminished when he is put on trial for treason and his declaration that he is "a rebel! A lieutenant in Eddy's Army" is ignored, while Fear's assertions that they were having an illicit affair win him his liberty (*HMY* 312). That he is freed by Fear's words, and Uniacke's reshaping of them, is particularly humiliating since he knows all too well that their relationship is chaste. If he is to ever ascend the ladder of masculine power, it is clear that like his friend Uniacke, David must accommodate himself to the dominant order.

Within the master-narrative of the text, David's accommodation begins in the woods near Saint John when he has the opportunity to kill and presumably replace Jack Helyer. Just as he is about to shoot his rival, Helyer asserts that only he can "give [Fear] the life and position she needs for happiness," while David can never win her love for the simple reason that he is without social or economic position and owns only "the clothes you stand in" (*HMY* 341-2). David's recognition that he has no position in the law of the father not only wins Helyer his freedom, but it destroys David's interest in the cause: indeed, the narrative itself becomes flaccid. With the exhaustion of David's rebellious spirit, the dramatic power of the following four chapters falter as they present a cursory review of the youth's retreat from Maine to Boston and trace his gradual disillusionment with the American experiment in democracy. When David loses his desire, the text loses its power to interest the reader.

Without his "rebellion," David is a reduced version of his former passionate self. When he is reunited with Fear, and forced to "bundle" with her on their return trip to Lunenburg, he is unable to act on his desire. Nor is it necessary to refer to Raddall's puritanical disdain for the sensuousness of the modern novel, to explain David's inability to "perform." Until the prodigal son reconnects with his family and is reinstated into the paternal order, he is essentially impotent; a condition signalled by his continuing inability to speak. Fear attempts to prompt him into an emotional commitment demanding, "is that all you have to say to me?", but David thinks only of his inadequacies and remains silent: "What could I offer her now? I was penniless, I hadn't even a trade now that shipping was ruined . . . I knew what my father thought of her" (*HMY* 383).

Only after David reaffirms his place in the traditional order by obeying his father's command to kill his rebel brother is he able to consummate his relationship with Fear. After taking up the magical gun of his father, and killing the rebellious version of himself in the person of Luke, David is granted an immediate—and within the Lacanian system miraculous—sense of oneness with the "other." In the wake of the battle, David seeks "comfort and release" in his woman's arms and is able to "babble" "magnificent nonsense" and articulate that "I could wait no more and would wait no more" (*HMY* 405). Fear says "not a word" to his proposal, and, like Joanna, returns to the mute feminine discourse of the body by "lifting her head" and submitting to a kiss. The ascension of the masculine assumes the subordination of the feminine and Fear's sudden subservience is recorded without a trace of irony. Although "rebel" David's union with "tory" Fear signals a political compromise within the novel's overt political allegory, the closing pages have little to do with political moderation. The final paragraphs re-enforce the master narrative as the narrator sings a hymn to the enduring and miraculous power of the father's rule. Following his father's order "take her to bed," David at last "belong[s] in [his] father's house," and in a prolyptic moment the narrator looks into the future to celebrate the masculine virtues of his future sons who will do their part to reproduce the Strang heritage:

> There would be sons, as my father prophesied. They would be tall and hard of hand and voice, granting friendship spar-

> ingly but giving with it a loyalty unshakable and ready to fight, suffer, endure anything for the sake of it. (*HMY* 409)

Alan Young suggests that *His Majesty's Yankees* is a "fine historical novel because it transcends the mere historical. What strikes one is a sense of the universals of human behaviour" (1983 26). In the final pages the narrator certainly attempts to transcend the confines of his own era to suggest that the "courage" of the paternal line is as timeless as the "eternal rock . . . the clear singing rivers . . . [and] the deep-rooted forest itself" (*HMY* 409), but the vision of the text is far from universal. As a novel which is seamlessly devoted to the master-narrative of patriarchal succession, the text responds to the uncertainties of contemporary Maritime life by reproducing a masculinist conservative ideology which focuses exclusively on the necessity of maintaining a stable social/sexual hierarchy. The Fear Bingleys and Luke Strangs of the narrative may occasionally disrupt that hierarchy with their spirited language, but ultimately everyone is returned to their "proper" station.

Written during a period of social and cultural disruption, *His Majesty's Yankees* engages its readers with a clarion call to halt the forces of modern chaos, and return to the traditions and structures of conservatism. With its conservative solutions the text enters into contemporary political debates which occurred as Maritimers attempted to grapple with the challenges posed by industrial modernization. While Raddall certainly would have found a large and sympathetic audience among Maritimers who longed to return to traditional structures, it is important to note that he is not simply parroting the sole ideology of the region. As E.R. Forbes has repeatedly noted, the conservative reputation of the Maritimes has been exaggerated, and the emergence of the Halifax suffragists, the social gospel movement, the Farmers-Labour Union, and even the attempts of provincial governments to establish relief programs during the depression, all speak to the currency of democratic liberalism in the east.[6] Raddall is not just a conservative writer, but a conservative who is so intent on his ideological solution that he is willing to risk overdetermining his strident novel in order to contribute to a larger political debate. Indeed, as the text reinforces its conservative stance through every major and minor character, the novel sacrifices some of its subtlety and complexity to its overriding ideological determination. Such a

univocal endorsement of a single position is rare in prose fiction, and while it may give the novel a certain rhetorical force, it results in a less challenging text than Raddall's next narrative, *Roger Sudden*, which offers a more interesting response to the cultural tensions of the day.

Roger Sudden, published in 1945, is an ambitious novel constructed with a double plot. Set between 1749 and 1759, thirty years before *His Majesty's Yankees*, much of the narrative focuses on the evolution of the new colony of Nova Scotia as it emerges from chaos and disorder into a state of social, political, and military stability. As he re-presents the genesis of Halifax, Raddall examines and evaluates the social structures of different races and nations, and once again he places his faith in the conservative ideology embedded in the emblems of British discipline and class structure. In addition to its investigation into "the birth of a nation," the narrative develops a romance quest by tracing the personal growth and maturation of its title character as he sets out to discover the meaning of his life. Roger undergoes a rite of passage after he lands in Halifax, is kidnapped by the Micmacs, rises and falls as a merchant king, and finally matures when he recognizes his love for Mary Foi and the importance of self-sacrifice for the health of his nation. Yet in the end, Roger proves to be a strangely empty figure, and his emergence as a fluctuating, unstable individual stands in stark contrast with the narrative's celebration of social order and security.

A clear vein of conservatism emerges from the novel's representation of Nova Scotia's early years: the "philistine" Micmac, Acadian, and French social systems are carefully considered and evaluated, but inevitably dismissed, before the narrative returns to celebrate the virtues of the common people from London's Tooley street. The first culture rejected by the narrative is that of the Micmacs. In his introduction, J.R. Leitold praises Raddall for portraying the Micmacs as an "exploited and oppressed race caught up in a dynamic struggle in which they have no stake" (*RS* v). Alan Young agrees with Leitold and suggests that Raddall presents the native culture with sympathy and understanding. To some degree it is true that when a negative stereotype of the Micmac is presented, it is balanced by a dissenting voice of equal or greater credibility. When Barney, the American guide, condemns the natives as barbarous cannibals, he simultaneously notes that "they

didn't gather scalps till the white nations offered rewards for 'em" and did not torture with fire "till the French rangers and mission Injuns come down from Quebec and showed 'em how" (*RS* 96). Though Roger is originally repulsed by the hardships of Micmac life and scorns their "guttural and monotonous" speech (*RS* 137), he later admires the "effort of will" with which they endure physical hardship, and after learning their language he says it has both "the pith and simple dignity of, say, the English of the King James Bible" (*RS* 140).

If the narrative avoids some typical stereotypes about natives, however, it ultimately portrays the Micmac nation as an inferior society and race. More than any other group, the natives are represented by the narrator through the use of animal imagery and metaphors which emphasize their lesser status. They tend to appear as homogenous groups rather than distinct individuals: the men "swarm" (*RS* 132), the children run "howling down the banks" (*RS* 132), and the women torture like a "swarm of red hot wasps" (*RS* 145). On the few occasions when the natives are presented in a positive light, the colonialist mentality is still in place. When Wapke ends her mourning for Peyal and appears "entirely nude" before Roger, the narrator describes her "bronze body" in greater detail than any other woman in Raddall's early fiction. While Raddall disliked the frank eroticism of modernist literature, the narrator is comfortable appropriating the native woman's sexuality and dwells on Wapke's "breasts neither large nor small, pink nippled and erect . . . like the green fruit turning soft and ripe and drooping a little on the vine" (*RS* 164-5). Yet if the narrator is unusually intrigued with the physical beauty of the native woman, there is no hint of irony when Roger refuses to "mate with a wild thing" (*RS* 166).[7] The narrator does not critique Roger's eugenic horror at "produc[ing] hybrid things, half beast, half himself" and the racial/racist hierarchy constructed by the text is thus reinforced.

The unsuitability of the Micmac's communal society as a model which the new English settlers could adopt is confirmed as the narrative traces the decline of tribal customs. The Micmac culture is symbolically extinguished near the end of the novel when Roger defeats the sadistic Koap in a native wrestling match by using an old "Cornish" throw. The subsequent displacement of the fish totem by the crucifix as the dominant cultural symbol, and Wapke's execution of Koap while citing a biblical text, confirms that the now

pacified Micmacs will be subject to the ideologies of the emigrating Europeans. Roger may admire and even assimilate Micmac traditions, but there is no suggestion that the larger British culture needs to learn from the indigenous people in order for the settlements to succeed.

The Acadian and the French cultures are also represented as inherently flawed, having squandered their opportunity to explore and "civilize" North America. The narrator's tone is condescending as seventeen pejorative adjectives are used in a single page to describe the Acadians of the Annapolis Valley. They are labelled as "none too clever," "indolent," "extremely ignorant," "hospitable in their own poor fashion," "half savage," "primitive," and possessed by an "insatiable greed" (*RS* 223), so it is not surprising that the narrator supports the decision to cleanse the land of people whose resistance to good English rule is brought to the foreground. The text insists that the tragic expulsion of the Acadians was justified, and in an unusual metalyptic shift the narrator, focalizing through Roger, becomes self-reflexive: "What would posterity think of all this? . . . He wondered how many would make an honest search into its causes and stab their pens where the guilt lay most" (*RS* 229). By effacing such astonishing technological achievements as the construction of the dykes, and by ignoring such contemporary reassessments of the expulsion as J.B. Brebner's *New England's Outpost* (1927), Raddall represents the Acadians of the Annapolis valley as lacking the inherent self-discipline, organizational skills, and desire for social controls which characterize Halifax (Moody 142). Like the Indians, the Acadians are a doomed culture. Unable to establish an effective defense against the expulsion despite their superior numbers, the Acadians are banished from the valley, and the narrative excludes any reference to their subsequent wandering return.

An overview of anglophone, fictional representations of Acadians suggests that while Raddall was not alone in attacking the Acadian culture, his pejorative view was not the only position in circulation. Louis Arthur Cunningham's *Tides of the Tantramar* (1935) anticipates Raddall's attitude, and this romance tends to present the long established Labrettes as greedy, tyrannical, domineering, and dangerously obsessed with their family and cultural history. The only Acadian figures validated by the text are the pretty young heroine Manon Labrette who gives up her heritage in order to marry the anglophone Lynn Wescott, and her elderly grandmother

who supports the marriage because it undermines the absurdly proud Pierre. In contrast with these cultural stereotypes, Evelyn Eaton's *Quietly My Captain Waits* celebrates the energetic, rebellious, and enduring spirit of Madame de Freneuse, whose romantic and political transgressions are sometimes scandalous, but whose ultimate faithfulness to Capt. Bonadventure recasts her as the symbol of the loyal Acadian who loves her people and her land. Such texts as Eaton's tended to be in the minority, however, and as recently as the fall of 1994 the editorial pages of the New Brunswick *Telegraph Journal* were running letters which condemned the recent Acadian Congress as an "illegitimate" and "nefarious" attempt to rewrite history.

If Raddall's Acadians are unstructured and disorganized, then the French of Louisburg prove to be overly burdened with a desire to maintain the Old World class systems. While the garrison town lives on "Codfish and rotten olive oil," the rich merchants smuggle "wine and spirits, vinegar, sugar, coffee, [and] tea" (*RS* 178, 185). The French army is similarly corrupt, as rogues like Jamie Johnstone live in luxury and then abandon their underequipped footsoldiers. Sudden uses a masculinist sexual metaphor to suggest that their inflexibility prevents them from stepping beyond the boundaries of the fort's walls and cultivating the new environment: "Only a handful of *coureurs de bois* and priests had ever penetrated the continent" (*RS* 357).

After all the other cultures presented in the text have been discredited, only the English are left to inhabit the top rung of the text's hierarchy as the rightfully dominant race. Initially, the English culture also seems to be deteriorating. As Roger travels from New Rommey to London in the first of the novel's four parts, he learns that the heart of the British empire is increasingly turbulent and disordered. The common people whom Roger encounters on the streets of London are all discontented with their station, and the country's legal system is ineffectual: Tom Fuller pursues his career as a footpad in the very shadow of his friend's executed corpse, whose face had been tarred "to preserve it for the purpose of the law" (*RS* 22). Indeed, the government's only hope of social stability is to ship its excess population off to America where they can found their own "new tribe" (*RS* 51).

Yet if the Old World is in crisis, the values of the British culture find new power when transplanted into Nova Scotian soil. The British alone are able to organize themselves into a conquering force, and the key to their success lies in their disciplined, communal nature and their Tory, hierarchical class structure. When the settlers disembark they are not a promising crew. The cockneys complain "about the food, the lack of shelter, the flies, the climate, and the land itself," and they are slow to work for the collective good unless their own selfish interests can be served (*RS* 95). Some settlers die, and many others lust after what the narrator disapprovingly calls "alley rat freedom" and depart for the New England colonies to take up their old trades. If a few of the English are inept, most, like Tom Fuller, are willing to fulfil their station in life and accommodate themselves to the new order. The people of Tooley Street, who become an increasingly positive metonym for the British folk, have no "natural" desire for self determination, and "they seem . . . to expect someone to tell them what to do" (*RS* 101). Unlike the characters of Charles Bruce's *The Channel Shore,* who are driven to establish their own independence, Raddall's characters prefer to be interpellated into a collective structure. Tooley Street seeks a leader to follow, and however unwillingly he accepts the role, Roger soon sets "them to work with axes and billhooks from the commissary" (*RS* 98). Seeing Roger's model of leadership, Colonel Cornwallis organizes the whole settlement on a hierarchical, military model. The ship's passengers are organized into companies, captains through whom orders and supplies are issued are elected, and one of the first official acts is the erection of a "whipping post and a pair of stocks," the signifiers of a rigid system of discipline intent on establishing a central authority (*RS* 102). Cornwallis, himself, is an object of parody as he stands "swollen with fly bites and beaded with sweat," but the reinstitution of a hierarchical system proves beneficial. While recording the miseries associated with the toil of cutting a forest, the narrator ascends to a poetic voice and three paragraphs listing the problems "they" endure are concluded with the prophetic phrase "the clearing grew" (*RS* 104). As *His Majesty's Yankees* ends with a hymn to the conservative paternal order, so the nationalistic narrator of *Roger Sudden* celebrates the "common people" of England:

> They were the people of England, the common people of England . . . simply the common people of England, set down upon a wild shore in the West. The wilderness had purged them swiftly and terribly. The weak had died, the shiftless fled. In Halifax there remained only the unconquerable. (*RS* 358)

The text confirms that the individuals themselves are not remarkable, but have been made powerful by their strong communal structure.

Raddall's confident conservatism is evident as he constructs a society which is hierarchically organized, racially pure, and ideologically stable. Yet when he turns his attention to the emergence of the subject, in the form of Roger's personal romantic odyssey, we discover his representations are less assured. Roger relies on his strength, masculinity, and sexual/financial prowess as he embarks on his quest towards a secure position in the phallocentric order. However, as the quest proceeds, ruptures and inconsistencies appear which undermine the signifying potential of his pilgrimage. Roger Sudden is a character for whom certainty is impossible, and when his quest is concluded his climactic moment of transcendence sounds a hollow note which echoes Raddall's own personal unease about the deep cultural tensions which plagued the Maritimes during the Second World War. In the end, conservatism cannot address all the world's problems.

From the opening chapter, Roger is the very picture of an alienated individual unable to find meaning in any dimension of English culture. He retreats from his home feeling "troubled [by] his own uncertainty" and "lost": "He had thrown away the loadstone of the Stuart cause . . . Suddenholt was impossible. Oxford had given him a smattering of learning, no more . . . There was no answer" (RS 20). Fleeing from his vacuous past, Roger searches the cultures and systems of the New World to find a secure identity. His strangely modernist quest for a stable subject position is captured in his desire to find his own private version of the Holy Grail; in his case the "great golden woman, many breasted like one of those heathen Hindu goddesses" (*RS* 39). But like everything else in Roger's world, this emblem of a "golden woman" resists certainty and functions as a floating signifier. She is repeatedly redefined to represent each new territory Roger hopes to subdue, but her significance as a positivist centre to which he can

cling always shifts before the hero attains his goal of security. Like David Strang, Roger Sudden experiences a series of reversals which prevent his fusion with a transcendental signified, but unlike Strang, Roger is not granted a final, miraculous sense of completion.

Roger's inability to create a stable subject position is first apparent when he is kidnapped by the Micmacs. Initially he finds a brief sense of belonging when he successfully repairs a broken musket and like David Strang fulfils the role of "hunter" with the declaration, "I have killed meat and am a man" (*RS* 158). Roger even attains a formal place in the linguistic structures of the family as he ascends to the place of "*cheenum*," the "precise word" for a man. But if he is momentarily tempted to merge with the native world by reading Wapke as the physical manifestation of his "Golden Woman," Roger's sense of racial difference asserts itself and he rejects the idea of sensual fulfilment through her as a "preposterous thought" (*RS* 165). Refusing to fulfil his duties as Wapke's mate, Roger restarts his quest for an acceptable self-image and reenters European society, reinterpreting his ideal of the golden woman as an emblem of financial success. He immediately pursues his next incarnation as a business man, attempting to "wring the breast" of the economic golden idol, and again secures a tentative identity within the financial world by amassing a huge fortune. But once he fulfils his quest for wealth and becomes a cold independent trader, he again experiences a sense of dissatisfaction. The hero is no sooner established in a resolutely masculine residence whose mantels are decorated with "the horns of a caribou he had shot himself," than he realizes his life is emotionally empty (*RS* 251). As suddenly as his name, Roger abandons the rich business prospects of Halifax and throws himself into his last quest for fulfilment in the form of an enduring commitment to the enigmatic heroine Mary Foi.

After his many alienating experiences, Roger emerges in the fourth section as a mature romantic hero, having supposedly established a stable vision of himself by recognizing the importance of emotional commitment and patriotic selflessness. With this new ethical center, Roger is able to give up his fortune to join Mary in Louisburg and is even able to sacrifice his life in the defence of his countrymen. His final cry of "Invicta"—"unconquered"—is supposed to refer not only to the future of the conservative English colonists, but is also to signal that Roger has finally achieved a sense of personal and cultural security as he reconnects himself with

the great "common people" in Halifax. This celebration of patriotism and self-sacrifice is appropriate in a text written during the Second World War, and Keefer notes the novel is "as much . . . about the Battle of Britain as it is of the Seven Years' War" (Keefer 105). But if these concluding scenes are patriotic, they are also problematic. Roger's final reinscription of himself as a romantic hero is as unstable as his previous representations of self.

The final sections of the novel repeat the traditional structures of the romance, but as these patterns are reproduced there are recurring moments of irony and overdetermination which undermine Roger's redemption. The final section begins to ironize the traditions of the romance as soon as it employs them. For example, in order for Roger and Mary to establish their relationship, Roger must first destroy Mary's "blind loyalty to the Stuarts" (*RS* 234-5). When they meet in Louisburg, Roger blasts Mary's romantic illusions about Bonny Prince Charles by informing her that he is "a drunken vagabond, wandering Europe in disguise with Tina Walkinshaw"(*RS* 279-80), and further undermines the ideal of a romantic hero by revealing that her brother, Captain Johnstone, is a selfish and vain traitor.

Having sounded a note of scepticism about the patterns and rhetoric of romance, the narrator is increasingly unable to effectively employ those conventions while tracing Sudden's final development. After his fish talisman and his materialistic quest are shattered and Roger commits himself to the ideals of love, the text slips into awkward cliches and hyperbolic tropes to capture his emotional rebirth: "My God, I haven't noticed a flower at the wayside or heard a bird sing for five years! What's been the matter with me?" (*RS* 320). The reader cannot help but sense the narrative's discomfort as its main character grasps after romantic certainties. Father Mailland comforts Roger saying, "you lost every thing. . . Yet you have gained something . . . Your soul." But again the external narrator casts an ironic light on the value of this spiritual vision: "With his soul then, and weaponless, Roger walked . . . toward that sinister rumble of giants" (*RS* 322). Even at that moment when Roger and Mary confess their mutual love, the narrative recognizes the futility of such commitments, and the hero echoes his earlier existential sentiments that his life experience is without meaning: "What a pity to find her and to lose himself . . . He was calm, even detached, marvelling at the feckless-

ness of life, which wasted so much passion, so much hope and struggle for no end" (*RS* 342).

Given the ironic subtext which conditions Roger's quest for security, it is difficult to accept his final, and supposedly definitive cry of "Invicta! Invicta!" as a complete affirmation that his identity is unconquerable. Raddall presents the conservative/hierarchical English colony of Halifax as undefeated, but it is more difficult to determine exactly what is unvanquished in the character of Roger. Throughout the novel, Roger is defined not by the positive values he stands for but by the many things he spurns. He is constructed through a series of negations and at the end of the text he emerges as an unstable, vacuous figure; an empty hole into which the romance structure threatens to collapse. While he rejects Le Loutre's label of "infidel," he serves no religious or philosophic code. He loves Mary Foi, but admits that love in their context is futile. He rejects almost all community contacts, abandoning his life among the Micmacs, scorning John Foi's devotion to France, and rejecting allegiance to the England's "King George" (*RS* 220). Even his momentary commitment to a broader ideal—as he helps the English forces land in Louisburg—is possible only because Roger recognizes the instability of differential signs, rejects the conventional reading of the emblem of the "white horse" on the "English grenadiers" caps as the symbol of the Hanoverian house, and then reinterprets the device in a personal way as an "ancient symbol of . . . the land of Kent" (*RS* 340). Roger is motivated to help his friends by a nostalgic recollection of his homeland; a homeland from which he has been exiled by his criminal past. His gesture alludes to an idealized image of the past, not a stable sign which could rule his present or future, and his brief nationalist impulse does not reflect any longstanding heroic code or ideal at the core of his character. Before he dies he has a sudden insight into the strengths of the English people, but Roger did not live by those ideals or even attempt to integrate into that community. Ideologically the firing squad which executes Roger Sudden is aiming at a blank space.

Roger Sudden is thus a divided text. The narrative is resolutely conservative in its celebration of the English social structure, and its faith in discipline, social stratification, and hierarchical authority. Raddall's world view seems stable and secure if only his depiction of the new English colony is examined. The individual character of Roger does not directly contradict the text's dominant

conservative assumptions, but the instability and uncertainly surrounding this atypical romantic hero reveals Raddall's growing awareness of the uncertainties of the human condition and his increasing acknowledgement of the differing ideologies of his own era. Raddall's second "historical" novel is not as reactionary as his first. It is produced within and reproduces the defining tensions of Maritime postwar culture—in *Roger Sudden* the celebration of a conservative system is fused with a modernist anxiety about the failure of conventional signifying practises and the instability of traditional social values. *His Majesty's Yankees* may be a more uniform and decisive romance, but Roger Sudden is the more challenging narrative and its explorations of alienation make it a more interesting reproduction of the tensions dominating the Maritimes in the middle of the century. When taken together, these historical romances contribute to our understanding of how "simple" fictions are engaged with and contribute to the ideological shifts of their day.

NOTES

[1] In recent years, Raddall's fictions have been productively re-examined in the light of feminist and ideological critical perspectives. A number of fresh and innovative rereadings of Raddall can be found in the conference proceedings of the first "Thomas H. Raddall Symposium" of September 1990: Young, R. Alan. Fredericton: Acadiensis Press, 1991.

[2] Raddall's experience of the Halifax explosion was immediate and traumatic as he helped soldiers establish a temporary morgue in his school's basement, and watched as the first of several hundred "gashed and bloody" bodies were brought into the building (Raddall, 1976, 30).

[3] *The Nymph and the Lamp* certainly functions as a stern warning to any youth who would contemplate leaving the secure, traditional worlds of Sable Island or the Annapolis Valley in the mistaken hope of finding happiness in the crowded and alienating environment of Halifax.

[4] While there are many varieties of conservatism, a conservative ideology almost always includes the following three assumptions. First, while individualism is important, conservative ideologies invest great importance in social order, stress collectivist models, and insist that people must come together to form a cooperative unit, whether it be as a family, a village, or a nation (Cantor 279 Horowitz 144). Second, this communal society is inevitably hierarchical and stratified. Equality of oppor tunity, rather than equality of condition, becomes the central principle, and thus people—presumably the best and the brightest—climb the social ladder, while the less gifted fall. The more conservative the ideology, the more rigid are these economic, sexual, and racial hierarchies (Cantor 271). Third, in order to ensure the en-

durance of the collective bond, conservatism advocates a strong sense of ethnic or national identity, and tends to celebrate a core of cultural traditions. A strong faith in the practises of the past helps defend against changes and reforms which might threaten the established structure. While *His Majesty's Yankees* tends to focus on the need for stable social hierarchies, Roger Sudden expands the ideological discussion and affirms the importance of communal groups, class hierarchies, and racial/national identities.

[5] Within Lacan's framework the emergence of the subject from the imaginary (pre-Oedipal) stage is characterized by its simultaneous desire for and alienation from the Law of the Father, the imposing symbolic force which promises a return to complete presence even as its own function as a linguistic construct betrays this promise. This law of the father, this tantalizing "Other," maintains the subject's desire for presence in the midst of prohibition, and as Lacan insists ultimate satisfaction is impossible: "Demand constitutes the Other as already possessing the "privilege" of satisfying needs, that is to say, the power of depriving them of that alone by which they are satisfied. This privilege of the Other thus outlines the radical form of the gift of that which the Other does not have, namely, its love" (Lacan 286).

[6] E. R. Forbes examines each of these movements in his collection *Challenging the Regional Stereotype: Essays on 20th Century Maritimes*. The essay "In search of a Post-Confederation Maritime Historiography, 1990-1967" contains his most direct attack on those historians who have repeatedly relied on the stereotype of the region as a bastion of conservatism, in order to avoid "the difficult, expensive, and probably frustrating task of trying to locate the materials necessary to develop a genuine appreciation of the region" (64). Forbes does not claim that conservatism was not a powerful force in the region, but only that its hold over the culture was not exclusive.

[7] E. J. Weins, in his article "The Lumpenproletariat in *The Golden Dog* and *Roger Sudden*," is correct to identify Roger's attitudes as racist, but mistaken in his assertion that such behaviour is inconsistent with his character. Presented as a figure who is constantly searching for a way to ascent the social and political ladder, it comes as no surprise that Roger's psyche should be governed by a variety of clearly defined hierarchical assumptions, including hierarchies which evaluate and rank the various races and nations in the new world.

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