Disguise and Masquerade in Canadian Literature: The Works of Frederick Philip Grove and Robert Kroetsch

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Verkleidung und Maskerade in der kanadischen Literatur: Die Werke von Frederick Philip Grove und Robert Kroetsch

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List of Abbreviations and Notes on the Referencing System

Works by Frederick Philip Grove

ASA *A Search for America* (1927)
FE I *Fanny Essler*, Vol. I (1905; 1984)
FE II *Fanny Essler*, Vol. II (1905; 1984)
FTAE "Flaubert's Theories of Artistic Existence." (1904; 1986)
FTE *Fruits of the Earth* (1933)
INTBS *It Needs To Be Said* (1929)
ISM *In Search of Myself* (1946)
MM *The Master of the Mill* (1944)
MMH *The Master Mason's House* (1906; 1976)
OPT *Over Prairie Trails* (1922)
TY *The Turn of the Year* (1923)
SM *Settlers of the Marsh* (1925)

A crucial memoir by FPG's German partner, Baroness Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven:
BE *Baroness Elsa* (1923-26; 1992)

Works by Robert Kroetsch

A *Alibi* (1983)
ALS *A Likely Story: The Writing Life* (1995)
BAW "On Being an Alberta Writer" (1983)
BL *Badlands* (1975)
BN "Beyond Nationalism: A Prologue"*
BWE *But We Are Exiles* (1965)
CFN *Completed Field Notes: The Long Poems of Robert Kroetsch* (1989)
CJ *The* Crow *Journals* (1980)
CP "The Continuing Poem" (1984)
CS "Contemporary Standards in the Canadian Novel"*
CV "Carnival and Violence: A Meditation"*
CW "The Canadian Writer and the American Literary Tradition"*
DU "Disunity as Unity: A Canadian Strategy" (1989)
EP "The Exploding Porcupine" (1989)
FW "The Fear of Women in Prairie Fiction: An Erotics of Space" (1989)
GI *Gone Indian* (1973)

GS "The Grammar of Silence" (1985)
HRK *The Hornbooks of Rita K* (2001)
LH "Learning the Hero from Northrop Frye" (1989)
LS *Letters to Salonika* (1983)**
LTW *The Lovely Treachery of Words: Essays Selected and New* (1989)
MD "The Moment of the Discovery of America Continues" (1989)
MFC *The Man from the Creeks* (1998)
NN "No Name Is My Name" (1989)
P *The Puppeteer* (1992)
PE "For Play and Entrance: The Contemporary Canadian Long Poem" (1989)
PRK "The Poetics of Rita Kleinhart" (1995)
PRK2 "from 'The Poetics of Rita Kleinhart'" (1996)
RSH *The Red Shale Hornbooks* (2000)
SC *Seed Catalogue* (1977)**
SHP *Stone Hammer Poems* (1975)
SHM *The Studhorse Man* (1969)
SP *The Sad Phoenician* (1979)**
TL *The Ledger* (1975)**
UH "Unhiding the Hidden"*
WIW "Why I Went Up North and What I Found When He Got There" (1995)
WCS *What the Crow Said* (1978)
WMR *The Words of My Roaring* (1966)

*Essays that originally appeared in *Robert Kroetsch: Essays*. Special issue of *Open Letter* 5th ser. 4 (Spring 1983) and are reprinted in Robert Kroetsch, *The Lovely Treachery of Words: Essays Selected and New* (1989). All references are to this new selection (LTW).
**Reprinted in *The Completed Field Notes: The Long Poems of Robert Kroetsch* (1989). All references are to this new edition (CFN).

LV Shirley Neuman and Robert Wilson. *Labyrinths of Voice: Conversations with Robert Kroetsch.*
Maze "Tr(e)ading Traces in a Maze: Robert Kroetsch in Dialogues." Interviews with Robert Kroetsch. By Markus Müller.

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Markus M. Müller

"Where does the self begin and end?"

Milan Kundera, *The Art of the Novel*

»Penser la métamorphose, c'est penser la Vérité.«

Edmond Jabès, *Un Étranger avec, sous le bras, un livre de petit format*

"A man never coincides with himself."

Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*

Jeder tiefe Geist braucht eine Maske: mehr noch, um jeden tiefen Geist wächst fortwährend eine Maske, dank der beständig falschen, nämlich *flachen* Auslegung jedes Wortes, jedes Schrittes, jedes Lebens-Zeichens, das er gibt.

Friedrich Nietzsche, *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*

I speak in figures,
well enough, the dresses
you wear are figures also,
we could not meet
otherwise.

William Carlos Williams

Disguise marks a discourse through which ideals of ethopoetic origins and goals and theories of social and individual interaction confront each other. In this view, disguise works as a central motif for representing the cultural dialogism, rather than any particular thesis, of selfhood.

Lloyd Davis, *Guise and Disguise: Rhetoric and Characterization in the English Renaissance*

Preface

This doctoral dissertation goes back to my being puzzled by the presence of specific clothing, unusual garments, and a variety of disguises as well as role-plays in the works of Robert Kroetsch (*1927). I wanted – and still want – to learn more about the relevance of that particular presence for his writing, especially in the context of a Canadian literature seeking to emancipate itself from oppressive models. The first provisional result of my interrogations was submitted to the English Department (Faculty of Arts) at the University of Trier on 23 December 1996 as an M.A. thesis titled "Disguise and Masquerade: On a Genealogy of Identities in / of Robert Kroetsch's Texts." Generally, that study is informed by current theories of postmodernism and, to a lesser degree, postcolonialism and poststructuralism. In particular, it takes recourse to some of the acknowledged influences on Kroetsch and his thinking, notably Michel Foucault (archaeology / genealogy), Roland Barthes (erotics of text and performative reading), Jacques Derrida (speech as a form of writing and language's being impregnated with traces), and Mikhail Bakhtin (the subversive power of the carnivalesque and the dialogic).

Supported by their theories as methodological tools, the motif of disguise and masquerade provides access to questions of identity in Kroetsch's works and unveils a high awareness of epistemological and ontological problematics. Putting to trial the notion of a fixed and stable self, he consistently positions his characters and texts in boundary situations where the traditional categories of identity and genre are questioned, resisted, and transgressed. If identity "is formed at the unstable point where the 'unspeakable' stories of subjectivity meet the narratives of history, of culture" (Hall 44), then Kroetsch can be regarded as one of the most versatile Canadian writers to date to capture this sense of discursive self-formation in their writing. As an artist very much concerned with a people's sense of place and history, he has been functioning as an alert listener to and trickster-like archivist of the oral tradition of the Canadian West.

In this capacity, he has repeatedly acknowledged the influence of the immigrant writer Frederick Philip Grove (1879-1948) as one of his forefathers (cf. Munton, *Robert Kroetsch* 34). Douglas O. Spettigue's discovery of Grove's original identity as the German translator, poet and novelist Felix Paul Greve triggered not only a wave of amazement in the Canadian literary world of the early 1970s, but also led to an

intensified revision of who figured in this world and what it consisted of; the discovery of Grove's past coincided with the gradual emergence of a new self-confidence in Canadian writing represented by authors like Margaret Atwood, Michael Ondaatje, bpNichol, Mavis Gallant and Robert Kroetsch.

Similar to the case of the English-born Archibald Stansfeld Belaney who as Wa-Sha-Quon-Asin (that is: Grey Owl) became the epitome of Canada's wildlife-preserving Indian, Grove underwent a radical metamorphosis upon entering the New World in a famous *passage à l'acte*. Like Grey Owl, he stands out as one of the country's prime literary impostors. He has come to symbolize the fate of the immigrant who faces the necessity as well as the chance to engage in the project of (repeated) self-construction. The man who liked to refer to himself as FPG – a habit which critics have readily taken up and which informs this study as well – had been trained, during his European years, in the art of self-fashioning through his dandyish imitations of decadent writers (especially of Oscar Wilde) and their stances. Also, at that time, he was steeped in German naturalism, the writings of the decadents and the realists. It was in Canada, however, where from 1912 onward he found the perfect soil to grow new self-images and new texts, in an intimate exchange of personal masquerade with the young country's need for literary reflection and transcendence. For the hard-working and pioneering society of the Canadian West, FPG created portraits that captured the essence of the land and, to a lesser degree, its inhabitants.

Grove was an odd mix of hermit and public man. He liked the solitariness of the writer in rural isolation, but his psyche kept demanding nourishment for the *persona* of an immigrant desperate to become a Canadian man of letters. The time of his greatest public presence was during the late 1920s, when after the success of his semi-autobiographical *A Search for America* (1927) he embarked on two nationwide lecture tours (published as *It Needs To Be Said*; 1929) and could deem himself "'the biggest thing there is in Canada'" (see Pacey, *Letters* 123; Chapter 2.1). Whereas the depression and a number of failed enterprises made him almost extinct in the public eye, his fascination for the clothing motif and the related use of disguise kept informing his writing; they were an essential part of his conception of characters and narrative structure as well as palimpsestic technique of self-referencing.

Although Kroetsch does not stylize himself publically in any fashion similar to Grove's, his method of reflecting on his own *œuvre* through multiple essayistic commentaries resembles Grove's palimpsestic technique. As is generally the case with

Kroetsch's essays, the practices he reflects upon in other writers are often indicative of his own approaches. Hence, when he comments on the erasure of names as a typical experience for immigrants in Grove's *In Search of Myself* (1946), he adds "And that erasure becomes palimpsest, it leaves its trace [. . .] that would enable us to complete the task of renaming that he had initiated" (GS 92). Renaming, un-naming and tracing form crucial elements of Kroetsch's writing and are expressions of a dynamic interaction with Grove as one of his literary predecessors.

Whereas both authors are part of the Canadian literary canon and have attracted a great number of critical essays and some monographs, little has been said about the motif of disguise in either author's work. This is particularly striking in light of the interaction of Kroetsch's with Grove's *œuvre* and with regard to the motif's effect of mirroring and pushing the processes of identity construction – a theme of consistent dominance in Canadian history and literature – on the levels of character and text. For if one can agree with one of this study's motti, namely, Lloyd Davis's assertion that "disguise works as a central motif for representing the cultural dialogism, rather than any particular thesis, of selfhood" (16), then both writers have explored this dialogism in paradigmatic ways. And if Grove has focused on performing this dialogism in his private textual universe, Kroetsch has extended its range and presented original variations of the motif through his indedependent and unique figures.

Hence, the aim of the present study is to trace the dialogic and textual *mis-en-scene* of disguise and masquerade in the works of Grove and Kroetsch. Although both are also essayists and poets, the focus will be on their novels / prose texts, since the motif of the mask unfolds its full dynamics in a narrative structure which it can usurp and transform in the process of its own staging. In order to prepare the analytic chapters, this study first presents a theoretical secion in two parts headed "New Takes on Identity: An Affair of / in Stages." Chapter 1.1 outlines a genealogy of identity concepts from the early Greeks to a contemporary notion of performance and alternative identities. Chapter 1.2 moves the gaze to disguise and masquerade in literature, to deliver a brief survey of the motif and its transfer to North America. This is done by looking at another, fragmentary and inexhaustive, genealogy of related samples which include classical texts and Renaissance plays and concentrate on two American adaptations as well as the first important Canadian disguise novel which provides the basis for the discussion of both Grove and Kroetsch.

In a second section, this study presents "Two Canadian Authors: An Immigrant from Germany and an Albertan in New York State." In each of the two chapters, the attempt to render a portrait of the respective author's personal history (or *Mentalitätsgeschichte*) in its relation to his *œuvre* is central. Chapter 2.1, by stressing FPG's many aliases and the process of his palimpsestic self-construction, reflects the fact that a strictly literary assessment tends to be overshadowed by psycho-biographical examinations of and a host of speculations about his life. Chapter 2.2 approaches the generic and technical versatility of Kroetsch by placing him tentatively in the context of Canadian postmodernism and as a prairie figure who in rewriting the quest for home and the dream of origins gives voice to generations of Westerners.

The third section, "FPG Relocated: The European Prelude and Transfer to the New World," discusses two of Grove's most important novels. Chapter 3.1 demonstrates how the sartorial enterprise titled *Fanny Essler* (1905; 1984), his first German novel published under the name of Greve, laid the foundations for his frequent use of the clothing motif. Its transfer to and autobiographical subtexts in *Settlers of the Marsh* (1925) are illuminated in Chapter 3.2.

The fourth section is titled "From Grove to Kroetsch: The Imperatives versus Playfulnesses of Masquerades" and presents comparative analyses in three chapters. On a one-to-one basis, different texts are discussed to show how similar thematic approaches – as in the use of Homer's *The Odyssey* as intertext in Chapter 4.1 – result in different forms and functions of the motif of disguise. While the use of clothing as instrument for identity-constitution in the New World as dressing-room is considered in Chapter 4.2, the topos of confession provides the focus for an analysis of textual masquerades in Chapter 4.3.

The fifth section "Kroetsch's Transgressions: Crossing / Reversing Gender and Text," illustrates what the previous sections were supposed to indicate as well – namely, that Kroetsch, on top of sharing similar approaches with his forefather Grove, goes far beyond the latter's achievements and transcends the motif of masquerade into a new realm of narratological and generic experiments. Chapter 5.1 traces the performative and iconic shift from disguise to guise in *The Puppeteer*, while Chapter 5.2 makes use of the fractal structures inherent in *The Hornbooks of Rita K* which transgress the text and its figures into an 'autopoetobiographical' sketch.

A brief Afterword (Chapter 6) will tentatively sum up the major findings of "Disguises and Masquerades in Canadian Literature: The Works of Frederick Philip

Grove and Robert Kroetsch" – a study I still consider provisional – before its *deutsche Zusammenfassung* (Chapter 7) will be presented and an interview with Robert Kroetsch appended. The original interviews were conducted on 20-22 July 1996, in Victoria, B.C. where the author was living at the time. I am aware that this long series titled "Tr(e)ading Traces in a Maze: Robert Kroetsch in Dialogues" is almost six years old by now and worthy of revisions; if I were I to do it again; I would definitely employ a different vocabulary and talk a lot less. However, I have reproduced it in full because it forms an important basis for my approach and is used throughout the following chapters to add the author's personal perspective to my arguments.

On top of these interviews, this study has been informed by archival material including the authors's personal notes, correspondence as well as unpublished versions of the texts analyzed in this study. Permission to quote from The Robert Kroetsch Papers has been granted by the Special Collections Division, University of Calgary Library, and by Robert Kroetsch (26 September 1994); permission to quote from The Frederick Philip Grove Papers has been granted by the Department of Archives and Special Collections, Elizabeth Dafoe Library, the University of Manitoba (June 1998).

This leads to a few comments on the critical material used for this thesis. Generally, there was little theoretical material availabe which would specifically discuss the motif of masquerade in contemporary writing. Presently, most impulses seem to be coming from two different branches. The first is feminist criticism with its concern for reevaluating and deconstructing the construction of gender. In that field, Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990) has proven the most provocative work; similarly, studies like Marjorie Garber's *Vested Interests: Cross-Dressing and Cultural Anxiety* (1993) and Catherine Craft-Fairchild's *Masquerade and Gender: Disguise and Female Identity in the Eighteenth-Century Fictions by Women* (1993) provide useful insights but have little to contribute to a discussion of most of the works in this thesis. The second branch is the currently flourishing area of Renaissance Studies, which has brought about a great number of essays and books on masquerade, such as Lloyd Davis's *Guise and Disguise: Rhetoric and Characterization in the English Renaissance* (1993). These works's specific focus on actor-spectator-dynamics and the nature of staged performances is not often applicable to an examination of 20th-century narratives. Laurence A. Gregorio's *The Pastoral Masquerade: Disguise and Identity in "L'Astrée"* (1992) is one of the few full-length studies to shed light on a post-Renaissance author, albeit in a genre of little relevance for both Grove and Kroetsch.

Terry Castle's *Masquerade and Civilization: The Carnivalesque in Eighteenth-Century English Culture and Fiction* (1986) reads the collective dimensions of temporary and sanctioned identity-exchanges under sartorial contract as empowering acts for women – a position which Craft-Fairchild criticizes as one-sided and too idealist. Ulf Poschardt's study socio-historical study of the world of fashion as a drama of human protest and adaptation, *Anpassen* (1998), presents a wide-ranging discussion of clothing as communicative instrument and mediator between various images of self; likewise, Richard Sennett's *The Fall of Public Man* (1974) illuminates the historical development of public personae in an increasingly theatrical world which has unlearned the ease of playful, cultivated interaction and leads into estrangement and a narcissistic *cul-de-sac*. The fact that information on the motif of disguise is generally scattered across various periods and disciplines accounts for this study's long bibliography.

While approaching two Canadian authors, a number of essay collections and monographs have been particularly useful. Douglas Spettigue's *FPG: The European Years* (1973) is still an informative account of FPG's formerly unknown life and reads like a detective story; as it focuses on Grove's early years in Manitoba and on his Canadian works, Margaret Stobie's *Frederick Philip Grove* (1973) is a thoroughly researched book which draws from interviews with the author's former pupils. Paul I. Hjartason's edition of *A Stranger to My Time: Essays by and about Frederick Philip Grove* (1986), with several previously unpublished texts, has proven to be most useful. Likewise, Hjartason and Spettigue's edition of the memoirs of Greve's German lover, *Baroness Elsa* (1992), afforded new insights into the author's persona, his travels, work habits and whereabouts before his arrival in Canada in 1912.

In contrast to that, Klaus Martens's heavily-documented and 400-page-long *Felix Paul Greves Karriere: Frederick Philip Grove in Deutschland* (1997) has been a problematic source for various reasons: Repeatedly, the author creates the impression of being the first scholar to prove the identity of Grove with Greve (cf. 27) – and this twenty-six years after Spettigue's discovery! Furthermore, Martens displays a tendency to belittle and condescendingly criticize the interpretations and findings of a vast array of scholars who have been in the field before him, whereas he appears to have incorporated their opinions into his arguments without giving them due credit. In the field of Grove studies which has lamentably become an arena for appropriative battles, however, Martens must be credited for shedding new light on FPG's activities in 1900 / 1901 (see his 1996 article, "Nixe on the Rhine"). Very recently, his German book has

appeared in English translation (published by the University of Alberta Press, 2001), which for lack of time I have not been able to compare with the original but which is said to have corrected some of the former defects and the appropriation of discoveries that in fact have been made before by other scholars. As a consequence of this odd situation, I will restrict myself primarily to citing Martens to elucidate the period for which he has researched and presented genuninely new material.

Two special issues of Canadian journals deserve mentioning. Frank Davey's edition of *Open Letter* 9th ser. 5-6 (Spring-Summer 1996) titled *Kroetsch at Niederbronn* and Charlene Diehl-Jones's edition of *New Quarterly: New Directions in Canadian Writing* 18:1 (Spring 1998) titled *A Likely Story. The Writing of Robert Kroetsch* both were useful as collections of new essays on Kroetsch. Donna Bennett's "Weathercock: The Directions of Report" (1984) is, in my eyes, still the profoundest foray into Kroetsch's techniques as a writer. Ann Munton's monograph *Robert Kroetsch: His Works* (1992), which fuses biography with a broad analytical survey of his poetry, proved helpful, and Shirley Neuman and Robert Wilson's *Labyrinths of Voice: Conversations with Robert Kroetsch* indispensible.

Some parts of this thesis have appeared and will appear in earlier versions as articles in the following publications: "Disguise and Masquerade: On a Genealogy of Identities in / of Robert Kroetsch's Texts," *Europe Looks at Canada* (1999); "Tuning In – And Freaking Out? Quests for Voice in Canadian Prairie Writing," *Giving Voice: Canadian and German Perspectives* (2001); and "Felix Paul Greve, Alias Frederick Philip Grove: Some Observations on His Personal Process of Palimpsest," Markus Müller, Robert Chr. Thomsen, and David Parris, eds., *Passages to Canada: Eighteen Essayistic Routes* (2002).

As a general observation, it should be mentioned that the critical discourses on both Grove and Kroetsch often take place within communities or intersecting circles of critics, teachers, and writers who are more often than not well-acquainted individuals and friends. As they share the interest / joy in producing and promoting (Western) Canadian literature, they partake, by necessity, of a general tendency to review and evaluate each other's works in positive terms. In light of my personal acquaintance with a number of these people as well as with Kroetsch himself, and out of a self-critical fairness, I cannot claim to be exempt from that tendency; I have tried, however, to transcend it as much as possible.

A brief note on my use of English translations: I am aware of the implicit problematics and inaccuracies by using translations instead of German originals. But for the sake of possible monolingual coherence I have decided to provide a translation whenever possible. Also, some texts were – according to time and / or location of my research – only available in English translations, as was the case with Martin Heidegger's *Identity and Difference*. Unless indicated otherwise, all English translations of German origin are mine – and I apologize for the many mistakes they must entail. French sources, in general, are put in the text proper and complemented by an English translation in footnote whenever necessary or possible. Italicized emphases in quotations are from the original source, unless indicated otherwise. This thesis was formatted according to the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, ed. Joseph Gibaldi (5th ed.; 1999).

Finally, I am aware of a number of inherent problems and shortcomings. For one thing, Grove is not primarily viewed in light of modernism, even if his biographical dates and a modernist play with his self might suggest to do that, and although Kroetsch is comparatively examined in his capacity as a postmodern writer. Moreover, this study is not concerned with post-colonial issues, although Grove had his say on notions of nationhood and assimilation, while Kroetsch keeps advocating the need to emancipate a Canadian writing from both British and American ways of thinking and to allow for a multiplicity of voices instead. Also, the binary of self and other so popular in recent theoretical discourses tends to be reductive in light of a potential for plural identities or self-conceptions that are distinctly other than 'other.' Although I am not satisfied with the terminology of self / other, I have decided to apply it nonetheless, for lack of a better alternative – while knowing that the notion of absolute otherness is only an illusion.

Chapter 1.1

On a Genealogy of Identity Concepts: From Unity of Self to Performance as Other(s)

> What a piece of work is a man! How noble in reason, how infinite in faculty, in form and moving how express and admirable, in action how like an angel, in apprehension how like a god – the beauty of the world, the paragon of animals! And yet to me what is this quintessence of dust?
>
> Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*

> The historian offers this confused and anonymous European, who no longer knows himself or what name he should adopt, the possibility of alternate identities, and more individualized and substantial than his own. But the man with historical sense will see that this substitution is simply a disguise. Historians supplied the Revolution with Roman prototypes, romanticism with knight's armor, and the Wagnerian era was given the sword of a German hero – ephemeral props that point to our own unreality. [. . .] The new historian, the genealogist, will know what to make of this masquerade. He will not be too serious to enjoy it; on the contrary, he will push the masquerade to its limit and prepare the great carnival of time where masks are constantly reappearing.[. . .] Taking up these masks, revitalizing the buffoonery of history, we adopt an identity whose unreality surpasses that of God who started the charade.
>
> Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History"

In *As You Like It*, Shakespeare's melancholic commentator Jacques ruminates on the seven phases in a man's life and quips: "All the world's a stage, / and all the men and women, merely Players; / They have their exits and their entrances, / And one man in his time plays many parts / His Acts being seven ages" (2.7.147-51). Jacques's famous speech epitomizes the Renaissance notion of the play within the play and underlines the motif of *theatrum mundi*, a motif which was changing drastically in the early modern period: From the image of only one spectator of human society as theatre, "a God who looked on in anguish from the heavens at the strutting and the masquerades of His children below" (Sennett 34), there emerged a society which was itself becoming both actor and audience in the play. This progression is one of the striking similarities which link the Renaissance with 20th-century cultural developments. The importance of the fomer period's stage for a current understanding of identity lies in the simultaneous affirmation and questioning of a fixed, stable self as well as in the superimposition of gender connotations (see boy actors in female apparel) that Shakespeare dramatizes.

Moreover, this period expresses and begins to transgress "a general fear of blurred social and sexual boundaries, of roles and costumes adulterating the essences that God has given us" (Orgel 26). From the concept of a theatrical self which still seems to adhere to a sense of essence, to the (post)modern performances of plural identities which have replaced the notion of a unified self and are screened in small public arenas as well as big spaces of media networks, there is not much of a gap. In between, one finds in the history of what Greenblatt calls "self-fashioning" the ritualized form of the masquerades which were particularly popular in the eighteenth century; in *Masquerade and Civilization*, Terry Castle describes their sense of almost floating interplay:

> The masked assemblies [. . .] were in the deepest sense a kind of collective meditation on self and other, and an exploration of their mysterious dialectic. [. . .] New bodies were superimposed over old; anarchic, theatrical selves displaced supposedly essential ones; masks, or personae, obscured persons. [. . .] One became the other in an act of ecstatic impersonation. (4)

Pondering this collective meditation, Robert Kroetsch maintains that it "is a wonderful phrase, because [. . .] one only has a self, some of us would argue, in the context of others" (Maze viii). By enacting what is built into the human beings's anthropological setup,[1] these collective enterprises made very visible that 'by nature' the appearances of identity always verge on and slide over into a disguise and masquerade. Presenting the notions of *essentia* and *apparentia* so playfully and more in conjunction than in opposition, these collective meditations simultaneously suggested these appearances as tools for accessing and problematizing the dramatic processes of identity construction on the levels of individual and society. For do not disguise and masquerade, which figure prominently as a motif in literature, announce from the very beginning identity's being-other-than-itself? Can they ever only be affirmative of the self they hide and conceal? Or do they, in the end, stage an alterity which is always already inscribed but has, due to cultural pressures, continuously been repressed and hidden for the sake of maintaining the notion of a fixed self?

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[1] Cf. Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play-Element in Culture* (1944), who argues that "dressing-up" and being disguised / masked reflect the human being's impulse to play and are most strongly enacted by the anarchic child who tests himself in different roles to enrich his experience (13-26).

From the Renaissance onward, the notions of interdependent role-playing, impersonation and improvisation have perpetuated themselves as integral part in the cycles of Western societies, so that currently a real drama is being performed. Its subject is the ubiquitous search for (both alternative and traditional forms of) identity as a reservoir and indicator of meaning in life. In addition to that, the countless debates about and the inflationary use of the mere term 'identity'[2] are taking place in a complex *nexus* of often incoherent discourses which increasingly employ the vocabulary of the theatre – the result of an autogenerative gesture towards self-dramatization. Odo Marquard, in his seminal essay "Identität: Schwundtelos und Mini-Essenz" ("Atrophy of Telos and Miniature-Essence") contends that through "the current discussions of identity, the theatre which is originally theatre becomes the theatre which is and fashions reality itself" (Marquard 368).[3]

Hence, in a world where the poetics of drama becomes the poetics of identity,[4] the concept of the *persona*[5] presents an interface. In psychological terms, C.G. Jung defines *persona* as "a mask that simulates individuality" and as a kind of screen for its employer's psyche to the world, thus serving to protect the 'true' nature of a human being (*Beziehungen* 45-47). Traditionally, critics have paid a lot of attention to what a *persona* in its entirety – which includes, when viewed as a tool of social interaction, general conduct, gestures of speech, manner of dress, etc – possibly conceals. To better understand the complex dynamics between the projection and its origin(s), however, it is important not only to look *behind* but also *at* this mask through which the 'voice' is speaking.[6]

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[2] The confusion adhering to the notion of identity is reflected, for instance, in social psychology's formal equation of identity with the qualities of 'autonomy,' 'constancy' and 'character.'

[3] The German original talks of "die aktuelle Identitätsdiskussion: in ihr wird aus dem Theater, das Theater ist, das Theater, das die Wirklichkeit selber ist und macht" (Marquard 368). In spite of its being more than twenty years old, Marquard's essay – subtitled "Bemerkungen zur Genealogie einer aktuellen Diskussion" (1979) – proved to be most valuable for this chapter's discussion of identity.

[4] Cf. Marquard (367-369), who discusses the screening of identity performances. He quotes Ralf Dahrendorf (who also cites Shakespeare), underlines the frequent usage of words like person, character, mask, and reasons that sociologists working on identity have made a pact with the poetics of the theatre ("die Identitätssoziologie paktiert mit der Poetik des Theaters").

[5] See the origins of the mask in Greek theatre, in which a facial device of stylized expression was also used to amplify the sound of the actors's voices – which came through the mouth hole of this mask, *persona*. According to etymological theory, the latin word for mask thus infiltrated the Germanic language and thus became the origin of the English word 'person' (see also Chapter 1.2).

[6] Cf. Robert Kroetsch in our interview: "Instead of trying to look *through* the disguise, what we have to do is look *at* the disguise" (Maze ix).

Etymological and psychological glances at the mask further underline the topical analogy between clothing and language as communicative conventions.[7] For the mask and its double, the disguise, have traditionally been viewed as a kind of discourse, and in turn "language [as] the 'dress' of thought" (Castle 55). If a voice is a semantic position, according to Bakhtin (see PD), a means of locating a personality among other personalities within a social discourse, the dress and disguise have the analogous function of positioning their wearer within the discourse of human appearances. As major elements of representation, language and clothing are central to a poetics of identity and have been investigated in a number of recent studies which focus mostly on the socio-cultural construction of gender identity (as opposed to sex as its biological determinant).[8]

An intensified examination of language *per se* as the ground of identity has been undertaken by the exponents of poststructural theory and text analysis. In *Of Grammatology*, Jacques Derrida deconstructs speech as a form of writing, and posits that both forms of communication hide meaning through absence and create indeterminacy. Arguing that "the Western concept of language [figures] as the guise or disguise of a primary writing," he uses this disguise to question language as a "system of 'hearing (understanding)-oneself-speak'" (OG 7). As a critique of traditional Western metaphysics, Derrida's deconstructionist approach aims at unmasking the notions of single as well as stable meaning and identity, revealing underneath and on the text's surface a multiplicity of significations.

Replaced by a sense of performativity which narrates metonymic versions of self, the *Cogito, ergo sum* of the Cartesian subject has become a trace of the past. To try and understand why and how human beings (presently) tend to define themselves through role-play and linguistic performance, and to foreground some of the related forms and functions of disguise and masquerade in the next chapters, it is necessary first to trace some concepts of identity formations back to their own 'origins' and causes. This tracing seeks to follow Foucault's concept of genealogy and of an *épistémè* which aims at a history of knowledge's "conditions of possibility" (*Order of Things* xxii). Highly indebted to Friedrich Nietzsche's critical thinking, like many of the 20th-century philosophers, Foucault reasons in "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History" that the function of

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[7] See, for instance, Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media* (1968), Roland Barthes, *Système de la mode* (1967) and *The Pleasure of the Text* (1975), and Ulf Poschardt, *Anpassen* (1998), who discuss the ubiquitous and elaborate functions of clothing as language.

[8] Butler's *Gender Trouble* and Garber's *Vested Interests* are two of the most prominent examples.

genealogy is "to reveal the heterogeneous systems which, masked by the self, inhibit the formation of any form of identity" (162).[9] With this function in mind, a simplified genealogy – combining socio-historical, psychological, and philosophical theories – will demonstrate some of the possibilities that have conditioned and changed the metaphysics of the subject. As summarized by Marquard, these metaphysics move towards the dissolution of teleology and shift the very concept of identity into the position of self-referentiality without inherent essence (358-59).[10] What results in contemporary philosophy is the notion of personal existence preceding essence.

Possible Early Sources

At the beginning of philosophical identity concepts is the notion of essence determining identity. This is effected by the idea of complete – identical – equation, expressed in the formula A = A. Not to be confused with absolute resemblance, identity consists when one 'entity' – things, words, complex thoughts – remains the same, regardless of context and independent of all thinking-operations applied to them. By way of analogy, the Greek philosophers transferred this model to the human being. Plato's concept of being as "that which is identical" was expanded by Aristotle, who in his metaphysics as the study of '"being *qua* being" examined the general conditions which any existing thing must satisfy. Equating the problems of identity and substance (which for him is

[9] Philosophical and (feminist) literary criticism has repeatedly and appropriately accused Foucault of a limited genealogical method which is primarily concerned with the derivation of power. For example, Butler criticizes his "overdetermined status of the juridicial law" that he would see as an "effect of productive power" – a distinction "clearly rooted in Nietzsche's analysis of the self-subjection of the will [to power]" (161; fn. 30). She also remarks that in *The History of Sexuality, Volume I*, "Foucault appears to locate the quest for identity within the context of juridicial forms of power" (106). For this chapter on a genealogy of identities, however, Foucault's sense of tracing provides a useful methodological tool, as does his method of questioning origins and causes for the sake of avoiding their equation with the effects of institutional practices and cultural discourses.

[10] Marquard opposes traditional metaphysics, where an individual's identity "is determined by his substantial being [*Wesen*]: by his *essentia*, *natura*, which were assigned to him by his Maker," with the "bankruptcy of the traditional notion of substantial being"; he reasons that the "notion of identity enters into its modern career as a surrogate description for essentia and as a term which designates a surrogate quota for teleology: In other words: the modern loss of substantial being demands as its minimal surrogate identity, and the modern 'atrophy of telos' establishes as telos of atrophy the identity" (358-59). The German original: In der traditionellen Metaphysik "ist [die Identitiät des Individuums] festgelegt durch sein Wesen: durch seine essentia, natura, die ihm durch den Schöpfer vorgeschrieben ist" (1979: 359); dagegen steht der gegenwärtige "Konkurs des traditionellen Wesensbegriffs." Der "Identitätsbegriff macht modern seine Karriere als Ersatzbegriff für essentia und als Begriff des Ersatzpensums für Teleologie. Anders gesagt: der neuzeitliche Verlust des Wesens verlangt als sein Minimalsurrogat die Identität, und der neuzeitliche 'Telosschwund' etabliert als Schwundtelos die Identität."

manifested in concrete, particular forms), he led to a definition of the *principium individuationis*.[11] This caused the Greeks to think of identity as the non-other or non-different; Parmenides, according to Heidegger, formulated the corresponding "principle: to every being as such there belongs identity, the unity with itself" (*Identity and Difference* 11).[12] A prediscursive ideological wholeness of the subject is projected.

The problem inherent in this conceptualization, and prominent to the present day, is how really to unite the idea of substance – a non-changing quality within the thing itself – and that of the individual's identity as exposed to the change in time. Can 'substance' itself exist if both material and form of a thing / being change with time? Focusing on the individual's existential value as an *entitate tota*, Leipniz tried to solve the problem of identity definition in relation to substance, comparability and exchangeability. Introducing a mathematical approach, he stated that two entities are indistinguishable and a single unit if every postulate true for the one part is also true for the other, and vice versa (see Heinrich 138).

Kant, departing from this narrow-minded stance, granted substance only the status of a mental structure given – *a priori* – to the human subject; this substance is only relevant for the thing as appearance, but not for the thing-in-itself. Kant's deconstruction of rational psychology and of substance as being-without-qualities ventured as far as downgrading identity to a mere signifier for difference, as a signifier that does not deserve the status of a principle in ontology.[13] Influenced by Empiricism, which put the stress on the consciousness of the thinking subject as mere or only location of individual identity, Kant's *Aufklärungsphilosophie* (Philosophy of Enlightenment) rests on his belief in the data of experience: The mind imposes its categories of time and space and causation on the flowing stream of sensorical input and gives it shape.

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[11]See Dieter Heinrich, "'Identität' – Begriffe, Probleme, Grenzen" ["Termininology, Problems, Limits"] (137); cf. Marquard (353).

[12] Note that Heidegger himself, although in this statement associating with the Greeks and their notion of unity which implies transcendence, breaks away from traditional metaphysics and 'inaugurates' his "Epoché des Seins" ('Epoché of Being'; see later).

[13] See Marquard (356), who outlines the problems of Kant's notion of identity as incapable of representing what worldly experience would project as 'soul': His "Identitätsbegriff einer 'Substanz ohne Eigenschaften' [. . .] ist nicht in der Lage, dasjenige zur Sprache zu bringen, was traditionell lebensweltlich am Begriff 'Seele' hängt; denn er ist [. . .] eine apriorisch abstrakte Identitätsforderung nur an 'Erscheinungen'"; Heinrich (138) summarizes Kant's (ab)use of identity as a terminological tool for marking differences: "Einzeldinge sind nicht aus dem Begriff der Substanz aufzuklären"; "'Identität' ist [. . .] für Kant nur ein begriffliches Hilfsmittel dafür, Unterscheidungen zu markieren, und kein Prinzip, das einen Platz in der Ontologie haben kann."

Locke, differing from Kant, was the most prominent thinker of empiricist Enlightenment and laid the foundations of empirical psychology. Close to his colleague Hobbes's Nominalism (in which the name as well as consistent reasons and groundings function as major emblems of identity), he continued the dematerialization of the idea of substance (derived from the material of knowledge gained from sense experience and reflection) by stressing a relational system operating in our consciousness (see Heinrich 139). While reasoning that ideas and "nominal essences" can be grasped directly, Locke also argued that it is impossible to attain knowledge of those ideas "whose archetypes are without them" – that is, those ideas which do not exist in objects except as they affect observers (like colour, taste, or smell) as opposed to other ideas which represent perceived qualities (like size, shape, or weight). In a further move away from Aristotelianism, identity was now more strongly related to the human being's interior:

> To find wherein personal identity consists, we must consider what *person* stands for; – which, I think, is a thinking intelligent being, that has reason and reflection, and can consider itself as itself, the same thinking thing, in different times and places; which it does only by that consciousness which is inseparable from thinking, and, as it seems to me, essential to it. (Locke 448-49)

Physical change was of no importance for Locke; thinking and the capacity to memorize – the conscious act of psychologically locating oneself in time and place – were indispensable elements of his theory, in which "consciousness always accompanies thinking" and thus results in

> personal identity, i.e. the sameness of a rational being: and as far as this consciousness can be extended backwards to any past action or thought, so far reaches the identity of that person; it is the same self now it was then; and it is the same self with this present one that now reflects on it, that that action was done. (Locke 449)

This concept of coordinates was to have a long-lasting impact on the cultural life both on the British Isles and beyond; only with the 20th-century's appearance of postmodernist thinking did this formula become exposed to a gradual dismantling. Locke's coordinational formation of identity through experience and reason was at the core of the Age of Enlightenment and became constitutive for the English 18th-century novel. Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), by thematizing a character's self-reflexivity in relation to a particular environment and time, is a paradigmatic text. Mostly written in

the form of a journal, it draws heavily from intro- and retrospection, consciously weighing the pros and cons of its protagonist's fate on the remote island; it achieves exemplary resolution through Robinson's process of maturing along the lines of individual perfectibilism and philanthropic idealism.

Whereas Defoe pretends at utmost authenticity through an overwhelming amount of details and the technique of reporting his "just history of fact" (Defoe 7), Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones* (1749) attempts to present the totality of its protagonist's internal and external experiences through the voice of a playful omniscient narrator. As with *Robinson Crusoe*, the reader of *Tom Jones* can witness the character's development; in addition to that, Fielding sensitivizes his reader for the new novel technique, displays reality from a humourist perspective, and mirrors society on the world-as-stage. He is one of the first novelists to elaborate on the motif of *theatrum mundi*, problematizing the various roles his *picaro* goes through in the context of a possible change – or concretization – of identity.[14]

On the plane of philosophical investigations, however, the continuous attempt to equate unity of consciousness with identity – while abandoning its relation to things – led to a split of 'original' unities and thereby into a theoretical *cul-de-sac*. If one looks closely enough at formal, epistemological problems on the one hand, and those of identity constructions on the other, it appears quite obvious that both are, at times, in rivalry (Heinrich 140). If the latter problems were, for a long time in human history, primarily an effect of the former, this is most likely due to the notion of transcendence, to the supposed presence of a higher authority 'out there' that endowed all human beings with *telos*.

This notion of transcendence, originating in the Greek idea of *universal* identity, transformed radically through biblical theology: In focusing on the one, unique, superior being that is different-from-all – God – human beings gained identity through believing in this *particular* entity (Marquard 354). Naturally, this left the subject highly dependent and exposed to a metaphysics that had completely abandoned any physical experience, but was solely concerned with principles of being in the here-after (hence the shift in meaning of the prefix *meta* – from 'after' in a temporal sense to 'here-after' in a spiritual one).

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[14] According to the 17th-century tradition, the figure of the *picaro* / *picara* goes through a series of adventures without much character development. *Tom Jones* and Defoe's *Moll Flanders* (1722) are exceptions to the paradigm.

Such a state of metaphysics was bound to be synonymous with one of the first major crises of the human subject. Its culmination occurred when the notions of universality and particularity of identity were forced to converge in God: "Medieaval metaphysics attempts to fulfill this quota of identification through excessive postulations of identity[, which resulted] in everything being identical with God": being and thinking, cognition and action, reason and will, etc. (Marquard 355).[15] By way of logical consequence, such an over-identification with God inevitably led to 'His' loss of identity / authority; in modern times, the play of human identity became thoroughly enhanced by the sudden notion of the demise of God.

A Major Ceasure

The 19th-century progress in technology and science propelled the dethronement of the transcendental authority. With an Industrial Revolution radically changing the working and living conditions of the masses towards an explosive rise in urban populations and what Marx termed *Selbstentfremdung* (self-alienation), and with Darwin discovering the origin of species, humankind was subjected to a drastic rupture in their view of themselves and the world. Although Darwin compared making public his knowledge to committing murder, in *The Descent of Man* (1871) he would finally dare to voice what he had been developing as a scientifically-based theory for decades: "The main conclusion arrived at in this work, namely that man is descended from some lowly-organized form, will, I regret to think, be highly distasteful to many persons. But there can hardly be a doubt that we are descended from barbarians" (qtd. in *Norton Anthology of English Literature* 1574-75). Joseph Conrad was to thematize this descent in his *Heart of Darkness* (1899; 1902), a liminal text bridging into modernity as well as a psychological and epistemological journey into an archetypal setting towards man's primitive origins.

In this drama of far-reaching impact for the history of Western civilizations, a hypochondriac revolutionary, Dionysian Romantic full of paradoxes, and son of a priest played one of the leading roles: Friedrich Nietzsche, who can be regarded as the most representative figure of the breakdown of traditional metaphysics in literature and

[15] "Die mittelalterliche Metaphysik sucht, dieses Identifizierungspensum durch exzessive Identitätssetzungen zu erfüllen[, so] daß in Gott nachgerade alles identisch wurde" (Marquard 355).

philosophy. His description of a profound crisis prefigures a shift which enacts the movement away from epistemology shaping identity towards identity concepts shaping a sense of the world. This shift is still *en procès* while the loss of *telos* has triggered the inversion of the hierarchy.

Accordingly, by proclaiming that "God is dead," Nietzsche sought to fill the void that came out of the loss of transcendence by placing the human subject *en lieu* of the old authority. Particularly in *Also sprach Zarathustra* (1881-85) and in *Ecce Homo: Wie man wird, was man ist* (1888; *How One Becomes What One Is*), Nietzsche – in both an impressive and confusing manner – called for a new human being (condensed in the formula of the *Übermensch*, the Superhuman) freed from all traditional limitations imposed by religion and culture.[16] By inscribing himself – the poet-thinker who sees and understands 'beyond' but stays 'here' in order to educate his people[17] – as the exemplary model, he simultaneously inscribed a notion of narcissism that was increasingly to dominate all further discourses on identity.

Moreover, Nietzsche's general tendency towards *critique* does not only target metaphysics in the stricly religious sense, but also the relations between power (as generated through language and institutions) and the subjects who are both governed by and governing it in a false-hearted, inauthentic, almost 'inhuman' pursuit of truth.[18] In

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[16] See Nietzsche, *Also sprach Zarathustra* (14). Starting from his claim, "dass Gott todt ist!," Zarathustra descends from his mountain and addresses the people: "*Ich lehre euch den Übermenschen*. Der Mensch ist etwas, das überwunden werden soll. Was habt ihr gethan, ihn zu überwinden?" In the course of his aphoristic ruminations, Zarathustra stresses the importance of returning to a childlike naïvety and to anarchism.

[17] A letter of Nietzsche's (dated 5 January 1889) to his former colleague at the University of Basel, Jacob Burckhardt, is revealing both in terms of his metaphysical ambitions and of his failing sense of reality induced by progressive paralysis: "Lieber Herr Professor, zuletzt wäre ich viel lieber Basler Professor als Gott; aber ich habe es nicht gewagt, meinen Privat-Egoismus so weit zu treiben, um seinetwegen die Schaffung der Welt zu unterlassen." This role-play – mad poet / philosopher become human God by way of sacrifice – is as personally tragic as it is symptomatic of its time, in the face of an almost helpless human subject's being thrown onto itself by the dissolution of transcendence. – Quoted in Walter Jens (103) who manages to capture the essence of Nietzsche's narcissistic works, starting with *The Birth of Tragedy*, by speaking of a "Summe von Selbstauslegungen" ("a sum of self-exegeses"); he acutely remarks: "Nietzsches Gespräche waren Bücher-Gespräche. [. . .] [Er] inszenierte eine Maskerade in der Bibliothek: Nietzsche als Sokrates. Nietzsche als Zarathustra. Nietzsche als Jesus. Nietzsche als Wagner" ("Nietzsche's dialogues were dialogues with books. He staged a masquerade in the library") (104).

[18] This points again to Nietzsche's call for the *Übermensch*, his amalgamation of all new values which are most narcissistically extrapolated in his *Zarathustra* and *The Will to Power* (1906, posthumous; arbitrarily manipulated by the 'editors' and tragically become a kind of 'field-Bible' for soldiers during the First World War). In this context of new values and their embodiment in the superhuman figure, it is useful to quote Jacques Derrida, "Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences" (110), where he links the German philosopher with a "disruption" in human sciences that suddenly brings forth the rethinking and repetition of "the structurality of structure"; Derrida values and describes the effects of "the Nietzschean critique of metaphysics, the critique of the concepts of Being and truth, for which were

Zur Genealogie der Moral (1887), the German philosopher ponders over moral phenomena by opposing master and slave morality, and by examining bad conscience, 'guilt' and 'ascetic ideals'. According to Rosalyn Diprose, his text demonstrates that "the operation of morality [testifies] that there is no *essential* corporeal value behind the mask to be retrieved and affirmed" (Diprose 79). With this key-text, he diagnosed a lack of essence behind the appearance of either institution, idea, or individual, and departed from preconceived notions of the illusory complex of truth, reality and identity. In his typically aphoristic style, he condenses his critical stance in the preface of the *Genealogy*: "We are unknown to ourselves, we men of knowledge – and with good reason. We have never sought ourselves – how could it happen that we should ever *find* ourselves?" (15).[19]

In his two sentences – a statement and a question, both enhanced by a 'supercomma' in a clever rhetorical sequence – Nietzsche sums up the ontological predicament which has been haunting Western civilization to the present day. At the same time, this caption reflects the essence of the new scientific branch which started a large-scale introspection of the 'piece of work' which Shakespeare's Hamlet had lamented and the 'philosopher of masks' advocated: psychoanalysis. As its founder and protagonist, Sigmund Freud – who described himself as a *conquistador* by temperament rather than a man of science – established a groundwork which was at once a theory of the human psyche, a therapeutical framework for the relief of its ills, and a looking-glass for the interpretation of culture and society.

Although historically, early forms of psychology had cared to stress the experience of continuity and sameness of the 'I' as grounded in itself and in time, Freud himself shook this paradigm with his structural categorization of the psyche into three conflicting instances (*Schichtenmodell*) – the Id, Ego, and Super-Ego (see *Das Ich und das Es*; 1923). Based on close readings, particularly of the tragedy of *Oedipus Rex*, his exploration of complex personality structures and of human sexuality revealed the endless struggle between chaos and order characterizing every individual. By accessing this psychological terrain through his path-breaking dream analysis, he provided a *via regia* to knowledge of the unconscious and a hermeneutics for the unmasking of the dream's disguise (see *Traumdeutung*, 1899; 1900).

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substituted the concepts of play, interpretation, and sign (sign without present truth)." In other words, he highlights Nietzsche's importance for postmodern concepts (including poststructuralism).

[19] "Wir sind uns unbekannt, wir Erkennenden, wir selbst uns selbst: das hat seinen guten Grund. Wir haben nie nach uns gesucht, – wie sollte es geschehen, dass wir eines Tags uns *fänden*?" (KSA 5: 247).

Thus, what Nietzsche was on the stage of philosophy,[20] Freud was on that of psychology. The 20th-century's dominant self-image of 'psychological man' is to a large extent due to the impact of Freud and, to a lesser degree, of Nietzsche; both were highly indebted to their profound knowledge and interpretation of literature. In terms of how they promoted the deconstruction of the metaphysical subject around and after the *fin de siècle*, they might therefore be regarded as *alter egos*.

Heidegger, influenced by Nietzsche as well as Kierkegaard, Dilthey and Husserl, figures as the next genealogical link towards contemporary conceptions of identity. With his unending contemplations of the basic senses of the verb "to be," he tried to establish a Hermeneutics of Being in a 'post-metaphysical thinking' by stressing ontological difference – particularly in *Identität und Differenz* (1957; *Essays in Metaphysics: Identity and Difference*; 1960) and *Sein und Zeit* (1927; *Being and Time*). His phenomenological approach was inspired by his critical view of a one-sided technical development which effected both alienation and a "highly inauthentic way of being" (see *Sein und Zeit* 39). Rather, man should aspire to the form of deepest knowing as a matter of *phainesthai* (Greek: "to show itself" or "to be in the light") and thereby understand his being continually a pro-ject (*Ent-wurf*). In this view of identity, man stands out (*ex-sists*, not merely *ex-ists*) from things, is never completely absorbed by them, but nevertheless nothing (no-thing) apart from them. Thus, identity is for Heidegger a kind of "belonging-together" of man as a being thrown into things, being-there (*Da-sein*): "Philosophy represents this belonging together as *nexus* and *connexio*, the necessary connection of the one with the other" (*Identity* 29). As a pro-ject, man can be submerged in things (either periodically or normally) to such a degree that he is temporarily absorbed (*Aufgehen in*), thus being nobody in particular and lacking the individual characteristics of a being 'there' in the sense of *phainestha*.

As an existentialist, Heidegger voiced the notion of personal existence preceding essence: "Being-there is grasped *a priori* and unsaid as already-present" (see *Sein und Zeit* 114).[21] His enunciation of the "Epoché of Being" (*Geschick des Seins*) was

[20] Cf. Nietzsche's *Zarathustra* (19): "Ich sage euch: man muss noch Chaos in sich haben, um einen tanzenden Stern gebären zu können. Ich sage euch: ihr habt noch Chaos in euch." ("I'm telling you: one has to have chaos inside oneself to be able to give birth to a dancing star. I'm telling you: you still have chaos inside yourselves.").

[21] "Dasein ist unausgesprochen im vorhinein als Vorhandenes begriffen" (*Sein und Zeit* 114). Due to his very peculiar style of language and many private metaphors, Heidegger's existentialist notion of identity is hard to outline and follow; he designates identity by speaking of "Das Wer," and defines it like this: "Das Wer ist das, was sich im Wechsel der Verhaltungen und Erlebnisse als Identisches durchhält und sich dabei auf diese Mannigfaltigkeit bezieht. Ontologisch verstehen wir es [. . .] als das *Subjectum*.

inseparable from his own grounding of philosophy in a possibly rooted and meaning-giving language (see also *Poetry, Language, Thought*; 1971). By relying heavily on the grounding of identity in (his own) language, Heidegger paradoxically side-stepped and weakened his post-metaphysical concept. His position in "On the Way to Language" tied the subject to language in a way similar to its formerly having been tied to transcendence: "In order to be who we are, we human beings remain committed to and within the being of language, and can never step out of it and look at it from somewhere else. Thus we always see the nature of language only to the extent to which language itself has us in view, has appropriated us to itself" (134).[22]

Heidegger's conceptualization would allow the human subject to be 'there,' i.e., in the present of now and here, but would simultaneously render it the object of language as "the house of Being" (135): "We dwell in the appropriation inasmuch as our active nature is given over to language" (*Identity and Difference* 38). The human subject is incapable of avoiding its own objectification through language, of simultaneously finding and losing himself both in and behind words: "The essence of identity is a property of the event of appropriation" (39). Although Heidegger's phenomenological method with its often abstruse terminology ultimately projects a grandiose illusion, it provokes mankind into questioning their own ways of Being. He has shed more light on the relation of *Da-sein* and language which his predecessor Nietzsche outlined in his typical ambiguity: "Every philosophy also conceals a philosophy; every opinion is also a hiding-place, every word also a mask" (*Beyond Good and Evil* 197).[23]

This is the point where identity in both 'real life' and literature[24] becomes a topos of meta-linguistic self-reflexivity, enters the stage that dissolves the boundaries between 'real' and 'fiction'. Modernism, with its breaking apart of traditional metaphysics, and by

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Dieses hat als Selbiges in der vielfältigen Andersheit den Character des *Selbst*. [. . .] Substanzialität ist der ontologische Leitfaden für die Bestimmung des Seienden, aus dem her die Werfrage beantwortet wird." (*Sein und Zeit* 114) This last sentence, by granting substance a central position within ontology, underlines Heidegger's difference from, for example, Kant and the Anglo-Saxon relational theories.

[22] The German original reads: "Weil wir Menschen, um die zu sein, die wir sind, in das Sprachwesen eingelassen bleiben und daher niemals aus ihm heraustreten können, um es noch anderswoher zu umblicken, erblicken wir das Sprachwesen stets nur insoweit, als wir von ihm selbst angeblickt, in es vereignet sind" ("Der Weg zur Sprache" 254).

[23] The original in *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* (1886) reads: "Jede Philosophie *verbirgt* auch eine Philosophie; jede Meinung ist auch ein Versteck, jedes Wort auch eine Maske" (KSA 5: 234).

[24] This problematic distinction is invoked only insofar as it should help distinguish between scriptured texts in a strict sense ('literature') and all other forms of representing, storing, thematizing and making-conscious aspects of human existence. The tentative use of this distinction does not reflect a belief in 'texts' as necessarily more fictitious than any other form of communicating a sense of who and what human beings are.

introducing psychoanalysis, delivered the necessary tools. Modernist writers – the (Anglo-)American ones in particular – set out to stage both literary and personal identity as difference, playing with various roles behind a multitude of masks.[25] Inspired by Baudelaire's groundbreaking poetic anarchism, by Dostoevsky's unprecedented "narcissistic atomism" (Nicholls 24),[26] and, likewise, by Rimbaud and his famous assertion, "*Je* est un autre," these writers creatively transformed the failure of metaphysical values. Eliot's Prufrock, for instance, speaks of "a patient etherised upon a table" and admits, "It is impossible to say just what I mean!" ("*The Waste Land*" *and Other Poems* 5; 10). Prufrock testifies to modernity's being in a state of numbness and to his own inability to communicate properly. Since around the *fin de siècle* "a coincidence between self and world [could no longer] be achieved through sociality and a shared language" (Nicholls 24), new forms of writing and of placing the self had to be experimented. Pound's stance of "making it new" (1914) poignantly expresses this need.

As a result, these authors managed to "stylize themselves as 'professionals' by adopting masks of the craftsman [Pound], of the engineer [Williams], and of the natural scientist and experimenter [Eliot, Pound, Williams]" (Irmscher 396). In their "incessant staging of their own identities as forever different," and in "viewing the author's own role" through theory (essays and monographs), these writers and their roles became a 'theatrical event' (in the original sense of the Greek 'theoria')" (396). In spite of their projected associations with traditional and honorable professions, these modernist writers engaged primarily in an elitist art. It demonstrated the high degree to which the modernist self – thrown into chaos by rapid changes in technology, science, religion, humanities and, above all, a First World War which questioned the validity of existence itself – was fragmented, subjected to crises, and split off from society. Thus, they were perpetuating a tendency which had been begun by the French *symbolistes* and would later be tackled by the postmodernists: "Writing turns in on itself in a profound act of narcissism, but always troubled and overshadowed by the social guilt of its own uselessness" (Eagleton 140).

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[25] See Christoph Irmscher, *Masken der Moderne: Literarische Selbststilisierung bei T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, Wallace Stevens und William Carlos Williams* (13; 21; 29; 54; 303).

[26] In his second chapter, "Breaking the Rules: Symbolism in France," Nicholls outlines the major stances and strong influence of French Symbolism for the successive modernist movements; he highlights the necessity of art's having to break free from tradition, to discover the unknown and the other, to grant language playfulness and ambiguity, and to foreground alternative modes of writing through bodily expressions (24-41).

From *modo* to *post* and Feminism

The (Anglo-American) modernists's narcissistic theatricality surfaces in the successive stages of the postmodernists's sense of investigative performance. Generally, though, the connections and differences between both phases in the history of the humanities are a matter of unending debate. One way of differentiating them is by viewing the latter period as a phenomenon which resists clear definition through its insistence on being amorphous, in / a process and playful;[27] paradoxically, philosophers like Jean-François Lyotard can view it as a reaction to and reshaping of the former phase.[28] He suggests to ponder the referential term's "paradox of the future (*post*) anterior (*modo*)" and speaks of an "amazing acceleration" of modernist generations which "precipitate themselves" by mutually challenging their own artistic expressions. Lyotard sees continuation instead of disruption: "A work can become modern only if it is first postmodern. Postmodernism thus understood is not modernism at its end but in the nascent state, and this state is constant" (*The Postmodern Condition* 79-81).[29]

Another philosophical approach which is representative of the challenges exerted and faced by postmodernism and of its inherent paradoxes is Foucault's concept of *épistémè*. If his *épistémè* "of the 19th and the early 20th century is the persistent attempt at exploring the invisible deep structure beneath the visible surface of things" (Hoffmann / Hornung / Kunow 20), this concept of placing ideas and the subject outside of any fixed frame of "the universalizing assumptions of humanism" (Hutcheon, *A Poetics* 7)[30] would underline a sense of historical continuity. Even if "a radical gap between modern and postmodern literature [may be] reflected in the opposition of two *épistémès*: subjectivity versus loss of subjectivity" (Hoffmann / Hornung / Kunow 20),

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[27] Cf. Robert Wilson, "The Discourse of Museums: Exhibiting Postmodernism" (98): "The role of play, the scope and significance of human playfulness, clamorously proclaims itself to be the centripetal issue for any discussion of postmodernism."

[28] Most critics engage in a double strategy by both marking the differences and the similarities between modernism and postmodernism. See, for example, Ihab Hassan's *Orpheus* (1982), and his substantial article, "POSTmodernISM: A Paracritical Bibliography" (1971), in which he puts the stress on the changes and transformations exerted by more recent forms of modernism and simultaneously lists their characteristics in the column attributed to postmodernism.

[29] This much-cited passage is from the concluding essay "Answering the Question: What is Postmodernism?" which did not appear in the original publication (1979), but only from 1984 onward.

[30] Although Hutcheon's *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction* (1988) is cited, it should be noted that in her discussion of the complex 'nature' of postmodernism she occasionally smoothens contradictions and fuses incoherent, diverse stances into easy-to-digest pieces of appealing information.

another problem of an epoch insisting on its own right is the continuing dependence on language.

The poststructuralist, deconstructionist and post-Freudian psychoanalytical approaches to language and identity have intensified the problem of definition. Émile Benveniste, in his much-quoted essay "Subjectivity in Language," describes a subject's enunciation in terms of self-realization and as a fundamental linguistic process: "It is in and through language that man constitutes himself as a *subject*, because language alone establishes the concept of 'ego' in reality, in *its* reality" (224).[31] This subject, as Barthes summarizes, "can never be distinguished from an 'instance of discourse', [because] Benveniste establishes [. . .] the identity of subject and language" (*Rustle of Language* 146). Simultaneously, that equation poses a problem for the self-definition of "postmodern theory and practice [in which] it is language as *discourse* that is foregrounded" (Hutcheon, *A Poetics* 168) *and* deconstructed. Paradoxically, the Derridean post-structuralist critique of Logocentrism, with its attack on traditional metaphysics and its problematization of the absence / erasure of subjectivity, necessitates the employment of the very discursive tools it seeks to overcome and deconstruct.

If Lyotard can view the discursive foregrounding of the subject in terms of a "performativity [which] contributes to elevating all language games to self-knowledge" (*The Postmodern Condition* 62),[32] recent feminist *critique* projects a more serious *telos*. It seeks to emancipate the female subject from phallocentrism, in the sense of Jacques Lacan's linguistically based psychoanalytic theory[33] which is suffused with masculinist vocabulary. His notion of the woman's masking her *lack of having* the phallus – which he understands as the basis of gender identity – rests on his view of femininity as defined in relation to the man *having* this (male) sign, the "universal signifier." The construction of gender is thus a masquerade,[34] which "may be understood as the

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[31] At first sight, Benveniste's assertion might seem identical with Heidegger's ideas in "On the Way to Language." Whereas the latter sees the subject as appropriated *to* language (and thus identity almost as a linguistic function), the former conceives of subjectivity as a much more free and creative ground to be appropriated rather *from* language.

[32] Lyotard also writes "I chose language games as my general methodological approach." (15).

[33] Lacan sees the human psyche structured into the three dimensions (or orders) of the Real, the Imaginary, and the Symbolic. Of particular impact for recent discussions of ontology is his conception of the Imaginary as a dimension in which the relation of the human subject to himself and to other people is structured both by and like his relation to his mirror image; in the "mirror stage," the subject constitutes himself through the equation of self and image as reflected by the mirror (see *Écrits* 2-3; see Chapter 3.1).

[34] Lacan argues that within the dialectic of self and other and the competition for the phallus as signifier, "the woman will reject an essential part of her femininity, notably all its attributes through masquerade"

performative production of a sexual ontology, an appearing that makes itself convincing as a 'being'" (Butler 47). His assertion that "in any case, what is shown, shows itself only under a *Verkleidung*, a disguise" (*Four Fundamental Concepts* 193) is based, like all of his thinking, on the premise that the unconscious is structured like a language. This assertion highlights the fundamental relationship between subject and performative languages and addresses disguise in the psycho-linguistic, figurative and literal sense.

It is sociology which points towards the essential importance of role-playing in our modern societies. Deprived of the strong sense of community and ritualized initiations that granted a rather fixed notion of self and were characteristic of archaic societies and classical high cultures, people nowadays find themselves compelled to meet the multiple demands of institutionalized, technocratic societies by performing roles (see Luckmann 305-307). Crucial in all this is the unbridgable gap between their actions within or for institutions, and their need to identify with these actions, possibly to fabricate them into a coherent framework of meaning or sense (306) – a problematics which is exemplified by the Kafkan existential tragedy. Since their modern ways of social collaboration hardly allow them to identify with what they are doing, and since they often operate from within or behind institutionalized structures and machineries, what they perform are roles of anonymity (306).[35] The resulting dilemma is that they as subjects become responsible for the construction of their own identities (309); the ultimate challenge, or impossible task, consists in staging personal identity all by yourself *without* the possibility of identifying with a single and somewhat stable identity-constituting role-model.[36] This is further complicated in a computerized age which not only posits anonymity as a norm, but has opened up a vast uncontrollable space for creating and exchanging virtual identities.

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in order to be constructed as woman from the man's point of view ("The Meaning of the Phallus" 84). In later editions, this essay has been retitled as "The Signification of the Phallus" to stress the function of the male signifier.

[35] Luckmann also comments on the problematic role-fixation of personal identity in the context of the anonymous roles's becoming indispensible in modern societies: "Die *Rollenbestimmtheit der persönlichen Identität* kann deswegen in diesem Ausmaß erst in modernen Gesellschaften zum Problem werden: anonyme Rollen sind bis zu einem gewissen Grad für alle, erst recht aber für moderne industrielle Gesellschaftsordnungen notwendig; ein sozial weitgehend anonymes Ich muß aber Identität im Subjektiven suchen" (306).

[36] Luckmann argues about this extreme challenge: "Persönliche Identität in Eigenregie *und* ohne Rollenidentifikation auszubilden und zu halten, dürfte *den* Menschen überfordern, wie er wenigstens vorläufig in dem bestehenden Verhältnis von Leiblichkeit, Gesellschaftlichkeit und Bewußtsein festgelegt ist" (313).

Curtain Calls?

Identity has become something other than itself. Stripped of its former teleological aim, devoid of any traditional essence,[37] and traumatized by the death of the universal signifier, it appears to have become the play and result of the multiple roles human beings discursively inhabit and transmigrate between in their quotidian existence. Popular culture seems to be at ease with this 'identity-less' identity, discovers and rehearses its implicit potential, puts everything on display through narcissistic self-celebrations which easily find public outlets in an age of global media-networking. All this not only feeds an entire entertainment industry, but empowers so-called pop icons to testify to a new sense of identity which both produces and is produced by performance. It also grants them a leading role as models for young generations eager to imitate.

A prime example for an artist constituting his identity (primarily) through public imagery and performance is Michael Jackson, in spite of his increasing withdrawal from public life (due to decreasing health). The multiple surgical alterations he has gone through – most visibly in a whitening of his skin and widening / shortening of his nose – have the effect of underlining the images of androgyny and of being other-than-the-others which he consciously plays out on stage. In contrast to a transformation which correlates with the erasure of a number of essential identity-markers and which might be read as expression of a profound need for constant self-escape, for transcending the notions of race and gender category *per se*, Jackson has been seeking to stylize himself as a new Messiah (see his *Earth Song*; 1996) at the same time as he has been associated with paedophilia and engaged in a farcical second marriage to secure his progeny.

Most importantly, these recent facets of his public appearances have added to his status as a celebrated singer and dancer and figure of androgyny in a willed process of image-superimpositions. The overlapping and partly contradictory roles create

[37] See Marquard again, who summarizes the dilemma of an aborted search for lost teleology and the fruitless search for lost essence in light of the fundamental theme of 'identity' as being *en vogue*; he concludes that the terminology surrounding 'identity' has come to substitute for the lost essence and that the loss of a substantial being summons identity as ist minimal surrogate: "Wo die Suche nach der verlorenen Teleologie resigniert und die Suche nach der verlorenen essentia definitiv vergeblich wird: da – gerade da – kommt es zur Hochkonjunktur des Fundamentalthemas 'Identität'; der Identitätsbegriff – ich wiederhole es – macht gegenwärtig seine Karriere als Ersatzbegriff für essentia und als Begriff des Ersatzpensums für Teleologie. Anders gesagt: der moderne Verlust des Wesens verlangt als sein Minimalsurrogat die Identität, und der moderne 'Telosschwund' etabliert als Schwundtelos die Identität" (362).

ambiguity. They project a surplus of images. As a cultural figure and in performance, Majorie Garber argues, he "erases and detraumatizes not only the boundaries between male and female, youth and age, but also that between black and white. For Jackson [. . .] enacts the fantasy of transcendence" (185). In so doing, however, he does not engage in transvestism, which normally accompanies the transgression of binaries and which, in Lacanian psychoanalysis, is the Symbolic or what Garber calls the "third dimension," in analogy to the "third sex" and "third space" as terms indicating a non-identity with male / female gender-constructions (10-12).[38]

Jackson's capacity to transcend the gender binaries without the explicit aid of sartorial crossing-over into the "third space" renders him a particularly interesting figure;[39] in times of "cultural category crises" (Garber 185), he becomes an icon that is dressed, for instance, in black suits with white socks while carrying a crotch – items which are richly connotated. Not a cross-dresser, he nonetheless appears dressed and accoutred to cross into other categories, becoming a plane of projection for an audience who are seeking a way out of their own crisis by putting to trial the traditionally gendered identities they no longer identify with.

If Jackson represents new possibilities for identity constructions / extensions, the most successful female artist of the past two decades not only mirrors that capacity, but has engaged in a parodic citation of his style. For Madonna, a contemporary expert in theatrical self-fashioning and emblem of chamaeleon-like creator of pop-waves,[40] used a public performance of her song "Express Yourself" at a Music Video Award Show in 1991 to mimic Jackson's ways of dressing and dancing; moreover, what upset some of

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[38] In "The Meaning of the Phallus," Lacan discusses a symbolical triad in which this "third space" represents the category of "seeming," in contrast to "having" (male) or "being" (female) the phallus.

[39] An outstanding example for a male transvestite and his performance as a disturbingly attractive female is the figure of Dil (Jaye Davidson) in Neil Jordan's film, *The Crying Game* (1992). Fergus (Stephen Rea), an underover IRA-man who has been involved in the tragic elimination of Dil's soldier-boyfriend Jody (Forest Whitaker), becomes increasingly interested in 'her' but is repelled in the moment of 'truth.' With time, however, Fergus learns to transgress the boundaries of physical and cultural gender construction. He probes more deeply into human nature than he would ever have anticipated and forms a couple with Dil even while being in prison.

[40] Madonna Ciccione has also undergone some bodily alterations, though not as drastically as Jackson's. She has relied more on displaying her body – some tattoos, lots of make-up, eccentric and fashion-creating clothing which is often apostrophied as 'worst taste' – in multiple roles and poses. She has been performing and provoking as girlie, vamp, Marylin, Dietrich, whore, domina, etc. Readers have lustingly consumed her autobiography, movie and video watchers have seen her as a baseball talent, as refugee and *femme fatale*, and as cartoon image in a process of self-iconization. Her audience have been able to jump "In Bed with Madonna" and see her screened as Evita Péron, the historical figure and wife of the former Argentinian president. In that regard, critics do not neglect to observe the similarities in societal background, ambitious nature, and visual appearance between impersonated and impersonating figure, between model and imitation.

the critics was "a moment of sheer quotation [in which she] danced towards the audience and squeezed her crotch" (Garber 126) – mishandling the fetishized symbol of male potency. Hence, as a kind of "sartorial centaur," she "emblematized the Lacanian triad of having, being, and seeming"; through that empowering gesture of simultaneous imitation and transgression, "Madonna became transvestism itself" (126-27). Performing both the androgynous image of Jackson – an image which is consciously overlaid by male signification – and her deliberate parody of this hybrid as a woman in drag whose (desirable) femininity is still visible (through dress) and audible (by voice), she held up the mirror to culture's current sense of unstable gender identification.

Both Michael Jackson and Madonna, as representatives of a new consciousness which is gradually surfacing, epitomize a cultural crisis about the notions of identity and 'truth' at the same time as they perform possible ways out of a personal impasse.[41] As cultural icons, they push a little further the Shakespearean stage and its problematization of fluid boundaries, its intimated discoveries – underneath the surface of a dialogic process which combines natural disposition with strategic performance – of more than a binary framework for identity construction. Since these 'pop stars' are constantly exposed to the public, always on stage, they have become characters that can never be disguise-less. At the same time, their multiple masquerades are so self-consciously and self-revealingly applied that nothing is concealed – but something is always already (re)created and superimposed through projection. In terms of what they choose to be, they do as they like it.

Performative identities have thus become essential to the notion of what human beings are in this carnival of time where masks are constantly showing up. This correlates with Butler's notion of "gender parody [which] reveals that the original identity after which gender fashions itself is an imitation without origin" (138). If the origin of gender should indeed be a fiction, there would be sufficient cause to succumb to the emotion that Shakespeare's Jacques cultivated: As a man who bears traits of a turn-of-the-century character and is disillusioned by his many travels, he has taken to melancholia.[42] Contemporary culture – which is sophisticated in travels and has just turned to the new millennium – is staging a revised play of identity in which projection

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[41] Among other artists who also play with the notions of androgyny and gender construction are David Bowie (an older example from the 1970s and 80s), Marilyn Manson (who is male) and Marla Glen (whose 'real' sex appears a matter of dispute).

[42] Kroetsch comments that "the melancholia comes out of our sense of the connection not quite working, and the sense of all the things you don't know and can't know. Including – *including* all the traces that are operating in us" (Maze xxix).

is not so much aimed at the other but rather at the subject of masquerade himself and herself. In this dramaturgy, the exiting of the traditional self has set on stage the discoveries of plural and alternative gender identities, who are celebrating the liberation from old models with a cheerful promise of enhanced role potential and more agency. What their script is leaving out as yet is the question of who will call the curtain after the show.

Chapter 1.2

Disguise and Masquerade in Literature: A Motif in Brief Survey and Its Transfer to North America

> Whatever this masquerading is, you find yourself dissatisfied when 'tis over, and though you don't like it perhaps at the beginning, you are sure to be sorry for the loss of it when it ends.
>
> Joseph Spence, *Letters from the Grand Tour*

> Disguise, when unveiled, is perceived as profoundly anti-social; witness the persistent association between the mask and criminality, travesty and treachery.
>
> Terry Castle, *Masquerade and Civilization: The Carnivalesque in Eighteenth-Century English Culture and Fiction*

> For in always anticipating, even as it defers or denies, its final divestment, disguise reveals the ongoing process of selfhood. It is a process that, though framed by presumptions of origin and completion, enacts a dialogic, unfinished, and hybrid identity.
>
> Lloyd Davis, *Guise and Disguise: Rhetoric and Characterization in the English Renaissance*

In literature, disguise and masquerade celebrate one of their earliest and most impressive appearances in *The Odyssey* by Homer (ca. 700 B.C.). Ever since, the use of disguise and masquerade to thematize a character's presence and action between the poles of essentialist and representational notions of identity has enjoyed great popularity and become a motif. It appeals to the audiences of drama and film[43] as well as readers of fiction not only because of its entertaining value – as in the detective story, romance and Jacobean tragedy, which all rely heavily on disguise to confuse and enhance the plot – but also because of the epistemological experience it can offer, even if only on a compensatory level by way of mental exercise. For if the child, as Johan Huizinga notes in *Homo Ludens* (13), rejoices in the playful act of dressing up and "*making an image* of something different [. . .] or more dangerous than what he usually is," becoming a prince or a villain, the adult happening to live under the traditional constraints of

[43] The most successful film to thematize the motif of the mask recently, though not in an intellectually challenging fashion, is Charles Russell's *The Mask* (1994). Stanley Ipkiss (Jim Carrey), a loser figure, accidentally stumbles upon a mysterious wooden Scandinavian mask and discovers unusual powers while wearing it. Thus transformed, he performs superhuman stunts and wins the lady of his heart, Tina (Cameron Diaz), in a modern fairy tale-plot. After a series of climactic adventures, he discards the enabling device which – according to her – has brought his essence to the surface: "the guy inside the mask."

Western cultures will encounter problems when trying to act out such an impulse towards self-transcendence.

The motif's entertaining and compensatory functions help to indicate what accounts for its persistence on the scene in general. As Northrop Frye purports in *The Educated Imagination*, all of literature is structured around the unifying story of "the loss and regaining of identity" (55). Disguise and masquerade not only make visible and put into high *relief* that story in manifold ways, but can also become part of its structure. They are directly related to mimesis as one of the major functions of literature, are in fact a hyper-mimetic presence within the mimetic act and ontological questioning that is writing. In that capacity, the motif was not only brought to unprecedented heights in the Renaissance, but has continued to shape writing in Europe and North America in crucial ways – as the two authors under scrutiny in the following chapters of this thesis demonstrate.

In the attempt to outline some of the central forms and functions of the motif of masquerade, this chapter will first look at the etymologies of disguise, mask and masquerade before turning to a few literary samples ranging from early texts to the Renaissance and will then move to the New World. One of the questions is not only what aspects of the motif have been transferred from Europe to North America, but also in how far they have been transformed in that process. In that context, special emphasis will be given to the discussion of Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1885) and Herman Melville's *The Confidence-Man: His Masquerade* (1857) as illustrative American texts, before the focus will shift on what is arguably the first major example of its kind in Canada, John Richardson's *Wacousta; or, The Prophecy: A Tale of the Canadas* (1832). As a paradigmatic text that negotiates cultural, political and gender-related differences between Old and New World, and that becomes a "spectacle of resistance to the colonial order" (Jones 52), *Wacousta* can serve as a platform within an emerging literature in Canada that prepares the ground for the writings of Frederick Philip Grove and Robert Kroetsch.

Etymological Notes

In its second and revised edition of 1989, *The Oxford English Dictionary* presents the following definitions for the verb "to disguise", derived from the Old French (11th century) "desguisier","deguisier": "3. To transform; [. . .]. 4. To change the guise, or dress and personal appearance, of (any one) so as to conceal identity; to conceal the identity of by dressing *as* some one or *in* a particular garb. (Now the leading sense). [. . .] To conceal or cloak the real state or character of (anything) by a counterfeit show or appearance" (774). Since each definition in the *Oxford English Dictionary* is supported by a selection of relevant quotations from literature, this section refers, for example, to Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* (1374), verse 1570 (1577): "Yn purpos gret, Hym self lyk a Pylgrym to degyse"; and to Routledge's translation of the *Arabian Nights* (1850): "She disguised him in woman's clothes" (774).

These quotations and further definitions reveal crucial aspects about disguise: The process of "conceal[ing] the wearer's identity," and the related "state of being thus transformed in appearance" (775) is generally a teleological and time-limited activity and can result in performance as somebody else. Often, this process implies, as in the case of cross-dressing, a transgression of gender borders and plays on the human being's sense of identity in relation to what one sees / projects and to what is possibly hidden underneath.

In analogy to that, the etymology of the mask also points at the manipulation of the exterior. Of "disputed origin", the "measque", "maske", or "masque" – and the related act or display of wearing it, the "masquerade" – go back to Sp. *máscara*, It. *maschera*. While some etymologists believe the Arabian *maskhara* ("laughing stock, buffoon") to be at the root, others "connect the word with Pr. *mascarar*, Catal. *mascarar*, Pg. *mascarrar*, OF. *mascurer*, *mascherer* (mod. F. *mâchurer*) to black (the face), of Teut. origin: cf. OE. *mæscre* 'macula' (?spot, or ?mesh), MDu. *maschel*, *mascher* spot" (OED IX: 431). The two major variations accord well with the notions of outward appearance and performance which are crucial to the concept of masquerade, and still hold their relevance if one recalls a shift both in the meaning and use of the mask: Originally designating the "hollow figure of a human head worn by ancient Greek and Roman actors, intended both to identify the character represented and to increase the volume of the voice" (cf. also Chapter 1.1), it later came to signify a "covering for the face, worn either as a disguise or for protection" (425).

In this semiotic and pragmatic shift, or widening, from display and representation to pretense and concealment, the dramatic expansion and the

empowerment of the mask finds expression. In that context, actor Michael Goldman reads the mask as an emblem which "suggests the double movement of dramatic elation – both escape from self and self-discovery" (47). In light of their functions, disguise and mask can thus be regarded as (almost) synonymous. It is in this sense, and based on the equation of their respective verb forms,[44] that both terms are applied in the present study.

Finally, the noun masquerade also designates a social event in which people assemble in disguise and usually wear masks. The masquerades had evolved from carnival practices in Italy and became very popular in England during the 18th century, after the Swiss Count John James Heidegger had introduced them in 1708 (see Ribeiro 3). They provided a sanctioned and controlled phantasmagoria of self-transcendence, allowing for "a reveling in duplicity, a collective experiment – comical and arabesque – in semantic betrayal and violation of sartorial contract" (Castle 57). Like a miniature carnival held for an exclusive party, the masquerade as 'happening' allowed for a number of temporary transgressions and releases from fixed social roles. With considerable delay, this festive celebration reached the Dominion of Canada, where between 1876 and 1898 four major "fancy dress balls" were organized by the respective Governor General.[45] These entertainments echo, among other things, the historical events around the Detroit fortress in 1763 which formed the basis for Richardson's *Wacousta*. There is a deeper correlation between the incidents after the Paris Treaty and the dress balls organized for Canadian high society: "The popularity of the masquerade coincided after all with the expansion of British imperialism," Castle points out, "and the symbolic joining of races could conceivably be construed as a kind of perverse allusion to empire" (61).

Personal and national politics thus constitute one area of motivation for disguises and masquerades. There is much more to the act of donning a certain attire and hiding one's 'original' identity, as this study is tying to work out. For this act not only "se

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[44] As defined by the *OED* (IX: 426), the verb 'to mask' means to "disguise (feelings, etc) under an assumed outward show; to conceal the real nature, intent, or meaning of" as well as "to hide one's real form or character". Likewise, the noun 'masquerade' signifies: "To appear or go about in disguise; to pass oneself off under a false character; to have or assume a deceptive appearance" (431).

[45] Cf. Cynthia Cooper, *Magnificent Entertainments: Fancy Dress Balls of Canada's Governors General, 1876-1898* (1997), who points out the ideological implications by calling these entertainments an "ex-officio duty of the Governor General, [. . .] to foster a nationalism among Canadians that would be compatible with Britain's interests" (xv). With regard to what the dress would project in socio-political terms, Castle speaks of "three generic types" that had been popular in the preceding century: "the domino, or neutral costume; 'fancy dress,' in which one personated one of a general class of beings; and 'character dress,' in which one represented a specific figure" (58).

présente à l'homme comme une possibilité de transformation parmi d'autres," as Andrée Gendreau posits, but "le masque sert à dire et à organiser le monde" (3). While discussing central pre-20th-century texts, and focusing on the works of Grove and Kroetsch, the interrogation of this (meta-)communicative and structural device will be guided by questions such as: Who looks *at*, and is in most cases fooled *by*, the disguises? Is the assumption of another and temporary role in life easier than the reverse process – the return to former and often strictly pre-scribed ways of being? What is the consequence of self-hiding? Who resides behind the mask once the mask is gone? Does the performance of an opposite gender role, aided by accessoires, afford the respective subject and his / her onlookers previously unexperienced sensations, pleasures, and new (in)sights? What other effects, potential benefits and disadvantages are related to sartorial enterprises? Will disguise and masquerade retain their historical status of being a simultaneously playful and dangerous transgression of self and deception of the other?

Disguise and Masquerade in Literature: A Fragmentary Approach

In *The Pastoral Masquerade*, Laurence A. Gregorio argues that already the earliest forms of theater, including the classical Greek stage, exercised a strong influence on "a motif that made identity a problematic matter" (5). The motif soon reached beyond the dramatic world: Drawing heavily from "a rich and ancient tradition of physical, visible play on the mask," theater proved powerful enough "to plant the thematic seeds of disguise for all of literature" (4; 5).

Of the early classical texts, *The Odyssey* and *The Aeneid* are filled with those thematic seeds of disguise. The pattern of Odysseus's journey has become paradigmatic for the quest-motif in literature. Homer's text is replete with instances of masking, impersonations and deceptions, and will be discussed at length in Chapter 4.1, where it provides the ground for a comparison between two of its adaptations. Central in *The Odyssey*'s cosmology is the general view of disguise as a divine strategy and often disreputable act, a coding to which the protagonist is an exception. Upon his return to Ithaca, he is assisted by the goddess Pallas Athena, a shape-shifter *par excellance*, in regaining his kingdom and wife by being temporarily transformed into a worn-out

beggar.[46] "The representation of dishonor as disguise circumvents the connection between performance and truth embodied in the heroic conception of identity," Murnaghan (11) comments on Odysseus's appearance in a role socially inferior to his actual status. Since the plot of *The Odyssey*, and especially the hero's survival as well as Telemachus's journey towards his father, is unthinkable without disguise, this strategy becomes a constitutive element of the quest.

Virgil's *The Aeneid*, in a kind of competitive homage *(aemulatio)* to Homer's works, also shows that "Greek mythology provides many examples of gods who disguise themselves as mortals, go among men, usually for the purpose of testing them, and ultimately disclose themselves" (Murnaghan 11). In book one, Venus appears before her son Achatës "wearing a girl's shape and a girl's gear," with free-floating hair, bare knees, and a bow about her shoulders. Impersonating Diana, the goddess of war and hunting, Venus tests her son – who in not recognizing her remarks, "Your look's not mortal" – at the same time as she presents herself before the hero Aeneas, whose fate she seeks to improve (*The Aeneid* 1.411-66). The second half of the book abounds with Juno's, Jupiter's sister and wife, sending off mortals in disguise to do her bidding. Juno's plotting is also a topic in the most famous collection of tales revolving around transformation, Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.

Through the ancient prose romances to the epics of the Middle Ages, the phenomenon of disguise kept elaborating itself. Above all, the *Roman de la Rose* (1230-80) and its many satellite texts revel in a large number of characters, mostly non-human, who employ disguises to different ends. Satan's mask of temptation has become a topos; the fox Renart poses as *joungleur*; the protagonist in the *Roman de Fauvel* is the masquerade trickster who anticipates the carnivalesque festivals of the 14th century (cf. Gregorio 7) while one character in the *Roman de la Rose* is named *Faux semblant*. The literature of this period manifests the link between animal allegory and the mask.

Another outstanding example for a mediaeval treatment of the *apparentia*-versus-*essentia* theme is provided by Wolfram von Eschenbach's masterpiece, *Parzival* (1210). The story of the protagonist's coming-of-age between the two opposing worlds of the Arthurian society and the Grail community is inextricably linked to the female

[46] Sheila Murnaghan, *Disguise and Recognition in the Odyssey* (1987), points out that the hero's return in disguise is "a widespread and traditional plot type" and "used to describe the highest achievement possible within the specific values of Homeric epics" (5). Athena also assists Odysseus's son, Telemachus, in gathering a reliable crew to sail in search of his father; she appears before the city dwellers in the shape of Telemachus and manages to swear them into allegiance (book two).

messenger from the Grail Family, Cundrîe. During the first of the comparatively two short scenes in which she figures, Cundrîe curses the young hero for his ignorance – which is tantamount to prolonged suffering for the Grail King, Anfortas. In both physique and manner, she seems extremely ugly and repulsive, is described in a long list of animal features which reverse the beauty catalogue typical in mediaeval literature. As a shocking composite of mule, boar, swine, hound and bear, Cundrîe presents ugliness in excess, is more animal than human being.[47]

This is revealed, however, to be a literal and philosophical disguise in the course of her second scene, when a woman dressed in fine, fancy clothes shows up at the Arthurian court; she displays perfect behaviour, speaks impeccable French, and falls down on her knees before Parzival, humbly asking his forgiveness. Characterized as faithful (*triuwe*) and proud (*fier*), in the sense of upright, reliable, morally strong and enduring, this woman announces Parzival's appointment as new guardian of the Holy Grail. To everybody's utter amazement, she turns out to be the formerly awe-inspiring messenger. Thus, after deliberately contrasting Cundrîe's ugly exterior with a beautiful interior, Wolfram makes the inside and outside correlate. This upsets the conventions and breaks the topoi of both the beauty and the ugly / beast. As a revolutionary figure, Cundrîe and her beneficiary mission have had to rely on disguising her true intentions – initiating the hero, by way of cursing him, into his serious quest for self and God – and masking her own self, for the sake of mirroring the state of self-deception and hybris the Arthurian world has been revelling in. Hence, disguise in *Parzival* speaks of a cathartic function, a movement towards improving both individual and society.

The Renaissance, with its transition from old to modern man, from traditional to new outlook on the world, from mystical and mythologizing to empirical thinking, represents the most fruitful time for the exploration and extrapolation of the motif of disguise in literature. One of its exponents, Ben Jonson,[48] specializes on characters who constitute themselves through dramatistic and rhetorical guises, self-stylizations, and masquerades which reflect the surrounding social discourses. In his best-known

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[47] The Middle High German original reads: "über den huot ein zopf ihr swanc / unz ûf den mûl: der was sô lanc, / swarz, herte und niht ze clâr, / lind als eins swînes rückehâr. / si was genaset als ein hunt: / zwên ebers zene ir vür den munt / giengen wol spannen lanc. / ietweder wintbrâ sich dranc / mit zöpfen vür die hârsnuor. / min zoht durch wârheit missevour, / daz ich sus muoz von vrouwen sagen: / kein andriu darf es von mir clagen. / [. . .] Cundrîe trouc ôren als ein ber, / niht nâch vriundes minne ger" (*Parzival* I.6.313: 17-30)

[48] Jonson is also noted for having written and participated in a number of "masques." They were a a quasi-dramatic entertainment, primarily providing a pretense for a group of strangers to dance and sing before an audience of guests and attendants in a royal court or nobleman's house.

Comedy of Humours, *Volpone or, The Fox* (1607), he sketches a prime example for a creature equipped with wit and insatiable greed for gold. Volpone undergoes shape-shifting as dying miser, nimble-witted mountebank, quack, and taunting man who delights in the malaise of his legacy-hunters. The dissembling rogue ultimately outwits himself, deceived by his congenial servant Mosca ('fly'), who like the rest of the personage bears telling animal names in a play that is no allegory but a bitter satire on the inhuman conduct of human beings.

Whereas *Volpone* takes place in Venice, the traditional setting for a life of vice, luxury and carnival, Shakespeare's *As You Like It* (1600-01) journeys into an imaginary place. In a new version of an English pastoral tale, it leads away from the chaotic house of Duke Rowland de Boys, which has been usurped by his brother Frederick, into the enchanting Forest of Arden. In that space where the restraints of everyday life are suspended, false identities and the weight of oppressive roles are stipped off while others are taken on. Rosalind, banished from the court, is the comedy's centre of carnivalesque playfulness. She does not discard her male attire after the need to disguise is over, but keeps on performing her role of the shepherd Ganymede in order to elicit a confession from young Orlando, Duke Rowland's son, who has fallen in love with her at court. In her exuberance, Rosalind-Ganymede entices Orlando, who believes her to be a man, into rehearsing a mock-wedding in which he is to address her as Rosalind – and she responds: "I might ask you for your commission, but I do take thee Orlando for my husband" (4.1). Rosalind's daring and multi-layered, self-doubling play of the part of Ganymede who in turn performs as Rosalind not only illustrates, as Bracher (226) suggests, that "one's being is inclusive of otherness," but epitomizes the confusions and complications (through layering-on of disguises) a comedy must lead through before its happy end, in a symbolic enactment of fertility rites (through layering-off of disguises), can be achieved and order restored.

Moreover, Rosalind's comment in the epilogue, "If I were a woman" (5.4), and the fact that her "control over her disguise is paradigmatic of the playwright's control over the play" (N. Hayles 67), point to the Renaissance practice of having boy actors perform the female parts. In *Impersonations: The Performance of Gender in Shakespeare's England*, Stephen Orgel argues "that eroticized boys appear to be a middle term between men and women, and [. . .] are represented as *enabling* figures, as a way of getting from men to women. But they do also destabilize the categories" (63). Whereas Orgel's characterization brings the boy actor close to the position of the "third

space" that transcends gender binaries and thereby grants that position central status, Michael Shapiro argues that "the performance of a disguised-heroine play could have emphasized any of the three elements in the boy / girl / boy configuration without necessarily obliterating awareness of the other two" (6). Aware of his audience's ability to differentiate these levels, Shakespeare relies on their sartorial contract and makes use of the convention based on Puritan fears to interrogate the current notions of male and female playfully on the stage; his young actor in the role of Rosalind can add one more layer to the plurality of identities the female character experiences (in) *As You Like It*.

Twelfth Night, or What You Will (1602), the last of his "great comedies," shows a similar approach to boy actors, whose characters have a wider range but, through the play's sadder tone, display more self-reflexiveness. Viola, stranded in Illyria, an island filled with pretenders, disguises herself as servant Cesario to secure employment with Duke Orsino. Whereas he is unhappily in love with Lady Olivia, the countess in turn is immediately enchanted by Cesario, who first warns her, "I am not that I play" (1.5.184), and later adds, "I am not what I am" (3.1.143). Undiscovered behind her disguise, this figure seems to insist on the difference between her appearance as Cesario and the essence of her self as Viola at the same time as she registers the surplus of agency that only a male character – even as a servant – can enjoy. If her "gender identity is ever made indeterminable and thereby made threatening *to the theater audience*," as Susan E. Howard suggests, then her fully reverting to her female role at the end can be interpreted as affirmative of "a cross-dressed woman who does not aspire to the positions of power assigned to men" (32-33). Although Viola-Cesario's strategic masquerade, like Rosalind's play, illuminates the degree to which her fellow beings are given to pretence and self-deception, it is questionable whether her performance which is geared towards social survival really "reveals how the release that playing allows can lead to a renewed sense of identity and human bonds" (Greif 129). For the recognition scene at the end unites the disguised sister and her disguised twin-brother, Sebastian, in an uncovering of their 'true' identities – and both are incorporated into Illyrian society with ease and by a double-marriage which reinstates their gender-typical roles. In contrast to, or because of, that, the wise fool Feste ends the play in a song which reduces life to a melancholy tale.

Shakespeare's plays abound with many more instances of disguise – whether it is Hamlet who poses as madman in a psychological projection, or King Henry V who cloakes himself in a cape to survey his troops and test their *morale* – that add new facets

to the motif. Like many of his Renaissance colleagues, such as Jonson, Thomas Kyd, Philip Sydney and Christopher Marlowe, he used the Jacobean stage as a forum to experiment with the audience's and his own flexibility in terms of traditional and alternative gender roles. Shakespeare must be granted with bringing new woman figures on the stage. "In a quintessential version of the transvestite progress narrative," Garber argues while seeking to relativize his achievement, "Shakespeare's cross-dressed female characters were often seen in the early years of feminist criticism as role models for modern (and postmodern) women" (72). Although they represent a major improvement in terms of female agency, playfulness, authority, passion and reassurance, they are nonetheless subjected to patriarchal society's stereotyping of gender roles. As effective and dynamic as their masquerades may be, they always remain a theatrical instrument that invariably must be discarded at the end and therefore allows only for a temporary transgression of what it means to be a woman (or a man) in the drastically changing world of the Renaissance.

A Floating Motif

Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1885) is not only one of the most successful books for children ever, but also regarded as one the first truly American novels – or, as Hemingway would suggest, the beginning of American literature. Using the Mississippi as all-encompassing setting and addressing aspects like slavery and coming-of-age as an allegory for inner tensions and the nation's growth, the book also reflects the author's profound travel experiences and his fascination for Europe, which he had poured into his satirical ruminations titled *The Innocents Abroad; or, The New Pilgrim's Progress* (1869) – an ironic portrait of travelling Americans who seek to bring their light of civilization to the Old World. In *Huckleberry Finn*, this thematic connection not only shows in the motif of the naïve picaro's journey towards maturity, but in the role-plays and disguises which fuse European influences with specifically American facets.

Huck Finn is a subject of repeated masquerades and the fourteen-year-old narrative voice. He must undergo a series of transformations on his quest, must employ disguises both to flee and join society. In order to escape the puritan experiment of the widow Douglas and his drunk father, he decides to play dead. While he is going down

the Mississippi on a raft with Jim, the deserted negro suggests that the protagonist "dress up like a girl" to find out about potential slave hunters. In a calico gown, Huck practices "around all day to get the hang of things" (Twain 66-67) but next morning overdoes his performance. "Some calls me Sarah, some calls me Mary"' (71), he tries to explain to the friendly Mrs. Loftus who sees through him, while he quickly comes up with the name of George Peters and a fictitious tale of himself as an orphan. Lacking the necessary imagination to be credible, though, he is "ultimately incapable of inventing a flawless disguise" (Pribek 70). Mrs. Loftus nonetheless feels sympathy for Huck, gives him some food as well as a piece of advice: "And don't go about women in that old calico. You do a girl tolerably poor, but you might fool men, maybe" (Twain 74).

Although his cross-dressing, added by linguistic disguise, did not succeed in terms of proper deception, Huck elicited important information. He and Jim must hurry to escape. His self-initiated collapse of the role of Sarah into that of George – embodying the adolescent gender stereotypes of his age – has indicated to Huck the limitations of his capacity as an actor; at the same time, it has sharpened his awareness of the dichotomy between things as they are and as they appear.

But his next forays into the world of illusion are close at hand. After he and Jim have escaped the slave hunters, their raft is usurped by the Dauphin and Duke – two impostors *par excellance* who go by multiple aliases and are plotting to sell Jim. Huck must assist the swindlers in their theatrical performance of famous Shakespeare scenes. He is astounded during the show to discover Jim behind "the horriblest looking outrage" of the "Sick Arab," who was dressed by the Duke "in King Leer's outfit – it was a long curtain-calico gown, and a white horse-hair wig and whiskers," added by "theatre-paint" on face, hands, and neck (Twain 203). Whereas the Duke, "an expert in camouflage" (Sommers 20) who reasons that costume "makes all the difference in the world"' (Twain 169), relies on the impact of dress and society's susceptability to being deceived by its appearances, Twain exercises a travesty of serious theatre which unveils the performers and audience alike as unfit for the legacy of Shakespeare.[49] Moreover, he lets Huck gain insight into the treachery nature of theatricality while observing the King's transformation:

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[49] Gerstenberger, "Huckleberry Finn and the World's Illusions" (401), comments that the Duke's improvised performance of "Hamlet's soliloquy seves to remind the reader of another work in which disguise, pretense, and the dramatic metaphor play [. . .] an insistent part"; she further speaks of a similarly significant "presence of the mimetic complex" in both *Hamlet* and *Huckleberry Finn*.

> I never knowed how clothes could change a body before. Why, before, he looked like the orneriest old rip that ever was; but now, when he'd take off his new white beaver and make a bow and do a smile, he looked that grand and good and pious that you'd say he had walked right out of the ark, and maybe was old Leviticus himself. (204)

When the impostors try to swindle a large inheritance away by impersonating one Peter Wilks, the long lost brother to the wealthy Wilks family, Huck must assist by performing the role of English valet, but takes off in time when the Duke and King are unveiled and punished.[50]

While searching for Jim, who has been sold to a new master, Huck is accidentally maneuvered into accepting the part of somebody else when a woman, by hugging him with the words, "It's *you*, at last – *ain't* it?" (Twain 277), mistakes him for Tom Sawyer. All of a sudden, the wandering hero must play the part of a well-mannered, domesticated adolescent with Aunt Sally and Uncle Silas who have been expecting his friend Tom without knowing what he looks like. "Now I was feeling pretty comfortable all down one side, and pretty uncomfortable all up the other" (282), Huck maintains. He fears that Tom's imminent appearance might destroy his masquerade, which is the only impersonation based on a given character in the book. Moreover, while being enforced on him externally, it is his first successful, non-transparent camouflage which testifies to his having learned to play an acceptable social role.

Twain does not end his clever construction of mistaken identities with a disclosure of Huck-as-Tom, but makes Tom Sawyer enter the game. Versed in the rules of society and knowing how to play with its deliberate blindness to reality, Tom is eager to help free Jim and adopts a disguise within a disguise by pretending to be Sid Sawyer who pretends to be William Thompson, a stranger from Ohio. As Huck comments, "Tom had his store clothes on, and an audience – and that was always nuts for [him]. In them circumstances it warn't no trouble to him to throw in an amount of style that was suitable" (285). With almost diabolical skill, enabled by his apparel and inspired by an audience, the real Tom Sawyer kisses Aunt Sally in his guise as William and protests to Huck: "Tom, didn't *you* think aunt Sally'd open out her arms and say, 'Sid Sawyer' – " (288). Since his own identity-position is already taken by Huck, Tom applies his superior ability to play and inhabits two other positions. He successfully deceives

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50 Gerstenberger (403) comments: "[I]t is interesting to note that society responds to the swindler's unmasking by the quaint custom of tar and feathers, as if in the punishment itself it were possible to disguise the human outline and nature of the evil-doer."

everybody by taking off one layer of disguise and selling the one underneath – that of Sid – as his true identity.

Whereas their concerted masquerade as the brothers Tom and Sid Sawyer functions well for Huck and Tom, allowing them to enjoy an easy life on the plantation, their conspiracy to set Jim free fails. As with Huck's early performance, the negro's cross-dressing is too obvious not to be seen through. However, in spite of their covers's being blown, they are quickly forgiven and rewarded for having tried to help Jim who, due to his former owner's will, is actually a free man. Thus, Twain's tale of the youthful exploration of and initiation into the complexities and multi-facetedness of life along the Mississippi seems to reach a harmonic resolution. In his book, disguise and pretense form not only "one of the most consistent patterns of metaphor and action" (Gerstenberger 401), but have as two of their main protagonists children, who successfully usurp a domaine normally reserved for adults.

Both young males have experienced how easily one identity can be exchanged or mistaken for another, but also that punitive measures can result from "purely self-serving" masquerades and impersonations which are not understood as "growth opportunities" (Pribek 75). As an adolescent in a New World which is suffused with theatrical echoes of the Old, Huck has donned disguises, adopted different identities and played roles in a quest towards personal freedom and maturity. Grown and initiated, he can leave behind all vestments[51] which do not fit his sense of self. And while Tom moves back into the midst of human society – in which he is the better player – Huck returns to the wilderness of the west where his newly gained knowledge will be of good use. In *Huckleberry Finn*, disguise is an instrument of growth which either can be discarded (Huck) or persists as a central part of social reality (Tom); in the latter case, however, it is always in danger of becoming a means of abusive deception and treachery (embodied by the Duke and King).

With *The Confidence-Man: His Masquerade* (1857), Herman Melville presents a masquerade of allegorical and moralizing character. The action is located exclusively on board of the steamer *Fidèle* – a ship of fools and microscopic setting that bears traits of a fun fair and a business conference. Melville introduces this representation of human

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[51] Cf. Sommers (19), who ascribes two major functions to clothing "as a narrative device, both symbolizing the constriction of 'sivilization' and functioning ironically in the constant tension between appearance and reality."

dispositions of both regional and universal nature[52]: "these varieties of mortals blended their varieties of visage and garb. A Tartar-like picturesqueness; a sort of pagan abandonment and assurance. Here reigned the dashing and all-fusing spirit of the West, whose type is the Mississippi itself, which [united everything] in one cosmopolitan and confident tide" (CM 9). With and through this society, Melville touches on the themes of confidence, worldly knowledge, appearance and faith. His innovative technique resides in his use of one central figure of conscious and deliberate masquerade – his Confidence-Man;[53] through this character's multiple transformations, the airs and attitudes of many of his fellow-boarders are reflected and simultaneously revealed as pretentious, hypocritical, self-aggrandizing, deceptive – in short, as nothing but variations on disguise.

In the course of presenting many incarnations on the *Fidèle*, the protagonist – who never ceases his praise of optimism and his call for blind faith – first masquerades as a deaf and dumb man holding up a blackboard with Bible quotations about the concept of charity. He then becomes a "grotesque negro cripple" with legs "cut down to the stature of a Newfoundland dog" (10) who receives no charity but contempt and suspicion from the passengers.[54] Transferring his impersonation from a Bible-quoting "man in cream-colours" to the deformed figure of Black Guinea, the Confidence-Man embodies another variation of the handicapped type and his racial other; furthermore, in

[52] Gustaaf Van Cromphout, '*The Confidence-Man*: Melville and the Problem of Others," centers his examination around Melville's "profound engagement with questions of epistemology": while the possibility of knowledge versus skepticism is problematized, the book "focuses most sharply on *human* nature." In so doing, as he further argues, it "problematizes the cognitive relationship of the subject (the reader, the narrator, characters-as-perceivers, Melville) to others in three ways: through characterization, through narrative, and through theoretical reflections" (37-38).

[53] Several critics carefully question the 'unity' of this figure; see, for instance, Kenneth D. Pimple, "Personal Narrative, Melville's *The Confidence-Man*, and the Problem of Deception" (33), who speaks of "assuming there is *one*" confidence man [my emphasis]; Van Cromphout uses the same phrasing when mentioning the "confidence-men aboard the *Fidèle* – or assuming there is only one confidence-man, his several avatars [...]" (39). However. already eight and nine years before the publications of both Pimple and Van Cromphout, Khalii Husnii, "The Confidence-Man's Colourful-Colourless Masquerade: Melville's Theatre of the Absurd 'In Black and White'" (227), had drawn attention to the work of Johannes D. Bergman (1969), who "convincingly demonstrates that the prototype for Melville's hero is Thomas McDonald, first arrested in New York on the seventh of July 1849, and known to his contemporaries as the 'Original Confidence Man'." Husnii agress with Bergman on Melville's conception of a singular figure behind the Confidence-Man.

[54] A conversation between a bulky old man and a young clergyman further thematizes the 'true nature' of Guinea, the negro; the clergyman, quoting another one-legged man's distrust, maintains that "Guinea was some white scoundrel, betwisted and painted up for a decoy" (CM 40).

the shift from white to black man, Melville alludes to his protagonist's representations of first a Christ- and then a Satan-like figure.[55]

These oppositions set the frame for his metamorphoses. He oscillates between the poles of good versus bad, relativizes supposed norms, advocates optimistic Christian literature, seizes a student's copy of Tacitus to throw it overboard; he becomes a homoeopath, labour unionist, an orpan asylum's travelling agent, "Black Rapids Coal Company" president, "Philosophical Intelligence Office" person, and keeps confronting his fellow-humans with the *Nosce te ipsum*-theme in ironic ways. In the guise of John Ringman, he addresses a Pennsylvanian businessman, quips about whether they would know who they are, and then teases Mr. Roberts: "Who knows, my dear sir, but for a time you may have taken yourself for somebody else? Stranger things have happened" (22). Further diagnosing a loss of memory in his opposite, Ringman succeeds in arousing Roberts's interest in a financial transaction.

In the course of the many confidence scenes enacted by the same person under a variety of disguises going up and down the social scale and, tentatively, across cultural and racial borders, the many passengers of the *Fidèle* fail to pin down this strange force exerted on them by the Confidence-Man. "Life is a picnic *en costume*," he reasons; "one must take a part, assume a character, stand ready in a sensible way to play the fool" (178). His self-ironic credo correlates with Husnii's assertion that in "his triad-human, divine, devilish-nature, the only definite knowledge that one can assume about The Confidence-Man is, paradoxically enough, his apparently perpetual shape-shifting form" (Husnii 223). This protean ability has mirrored each and every one of his encounters to be given to some kind of foolery.

He continues to prove this by further exchanging the objects of his confidence while manifesting one assumed role, that of the cosmopolitan, Francis 'Frank' Goodman. In his new role, the protagonist displays a fusion of styles – which Melville takes great

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[55] The opposition of Christ- versus. Satan-like figures is univocally referred to in the criticism. See, for example, Eric N. Atherton, "Blurred Distinctions: The Parable of the Sower and Melville's One-Legged Man"; Atherton starts from "Melville's well-documented interest in religious doctrine and matters" and applies a passage marked in the author's personal Bible, Matthew 13:35-36, to outline how the distrust-inspiring one-legged man "is himself a Satan-figure"; through this, "Melville blurs and mingles the identities of passenger and Confidence-Man into a character who defies characterization" (150; 153). See also Husnii, who reads the first impersonation's link to "Manco Capac," the "divine Child of the Sun" in Peruvian legend, as the deaf-mute's "Christ-like celestial appearance" on board (219; 220); the next impersonation, especially when related to Melville's earlier story, "Benito Cereno," evokes contrasting associations of a devilish figure through blackness and a dog-like shape (221).

care in detailing long before he mentions the actual name;[56] his mixed apparel recaptures and reflects all the masks, veils, costumes, appearances, and colours he has presented before. Goodman thus becomes a signifier of excess that edges on being empty; displaying everything and nothing at the same time, he defies characterization.

In his increasingly personal, philosophical, and political conversation with amateur actor and swindler Charles 'Charlie" Arnold Noble, Frank voices his leitmotivic call for confidence in order to borrow fifty dollars – and is immediately accused of being a beggar and impostor. But he continues his game, since depriving others is not his design, but exposing the numerous impostors around him who invariably employ theatricality to hide their human self and prevent self-knowledge.

In the all-embracing masquerade on board the *Fidèle*, the performing characters are unconsciously directed by the chief actor occasionally to let drop their masks and reveal what is behind them. Frank tries his powers with sweet talk and angelic tongue on the barber, whose door-sign says "No trust," and manipulates him into a meditation: "look, now; to say that strangers are not to be trusted, does not that imply something like saying that mankind is not to be trusted; for the mass of mankind, are they not necessarily strangers to each individual man?" (CM 305). Enchanted by his customer's ability of persuasion, the barber shaves Frank for free. Afterwards, he speaks "of his queer customer as the man-charmer [. . .] and all his friends united in thinking him QUITE AN ORIGINAL" (316).

In this formula, the core of Melville's variations on the Know thyself-theme is ironically captured[57] while it questions the real nature of the protagonist. However, as a

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[56] "A man neither tall nor stout, neither short nor gaunt; but with a body fitted, as by measure, to the service of his mind. For the rest, one less favoured perhaps in his features than his clothes; and of these the beauty may have been less in the fit than the cut; to say nothing of the fineness of the nap, seeming out of keeping with something the revers of fine in the skin; and the unsuitableness of a violet vest, sending up sunset hues to a countenance betokening a kind of bilious habit. / But, upon the whole, it could not be fairly said that his appearance was unprepossessing; indeed, to the congenial, it would have been doubtless not uncongenial; while to others, it could not fail to be at least curiously interesting, from the warm air of florid cordiality, contrasting itself with one knows not what kind of anguish sallowness of saving discretion lurking behind it. Ungracious critics might have thought that the manner flushed the man, something in the same fictitious way that the vest flushed the cheek" (CM 186-87).

[57] To stress his point, the author devotes the penultimate chapter to a discussion of the "impropriety of the phrase"; in a playful tone of self-mockery, he maintains that "the sense of originality exists at its highest in an infant, and probably at its lowest in him who has completed the circle of the sciences." Adding that, except for Hamlet and Don Quixote, "original characters in fiction [. . .] are not, in a thorough sense, original at all," he further problematizes his confidence-man's (lack of) originality (CM 317-19). See also Van Cromphout (47). In line with Edgar Dryden, to whom he refers, he argues that Melville answers his own question, whether "the confidence-man is a truly original character," rather evasively; however, the treatment of an original character in general, by focusing on his "sources and effects – in a word, his existence –" reflects an affirmative sense to the question about the confidence-man's originality.

touchstone figure who directs all his consciously enacted impersonations towards revealing the hollowness and faithlessness of his fellow-travellers, the Confidence-Man can be regarded as the only original on board. In and through his many roles, he draws from an inner essence and faith[58] that all other beings in the *Fidèle*-universe lack behind their characteristic attires and respective behavioral disguises. This frees him from the need for a real name, which is never given in a book that presents a "chaotic masquerading universe without significance or meaning (either inherent or illusory, real or fictitious)" (Husnii 230). Melville's sombre opposition of what a disguise could potentially do and of what it actually does with and through the ordinary passenger in life's journey amounts to a satiric mirror of mankind's shortcomings. His portrait of this New World society in a floating state where core values like faith are constantly exchanged for superficial and financial effects is not optimistic; it is, at best, ambiguous, as the novel's last words indicate: "Something further may follow of this Masquerade" (CM 336).[59]

***Wacousta*, or: The Mask as Mediator?**

By concentrating, respectively, on individual as well as national adolescence and on the emergent society's fluid state of self-deception and camouflage, *Huckleberry Finn* and *The Confidence-Man* focus on aspects of a specific New World / American consciousness through the motif of masquerade. Both texts not only highlight the motif's European tradition, but transfer it onto the young literary world of North America and enact its adoption. John Richardson's *Wacousta; or, The Prophecy: A Tale of the Canadas* (1832) engages in a similar act. Whereas Frances Brooke's *The History of Emily Montague* (1769), which is mostly set in Quebec in the 1760s, focuses on transatlantic politics, Native customs, and nature without looking at masquerade, *Wacousta* displays an obsession with attire and all adherent forms of exchange between different cultures and orders while being placed in another colonial setting. It pushes the variations on sartorial contracts into much more sinister dimensions than the two American samples do.

[58] The book, as Van Cromphout (47) points out, repeatedly refers to 'having faith' as the only solution to access a deeper reality going beyond the mere surfaces displayed on board.

[59] A light-hearted variation of the protean confidence man is presented in Thomas Mann's *Confessions of Felix Krull, Confidence Man: Memoirs Part I* (1954).

Richardson's long novel thematizes "the managing of empire and the negotiation of cultural difference" (Jones 46) and uses the events following the Treaty of Paris in 1763 as historical background. According to the terms of the treaty, France had renounced to Britain all the mainland of North America east of the Mississippi (excluding New Orleans). Chief Pontiac, however, realized that under British rule trading conditions were deteriorating for his People and gathered practically every Indian tribe from Lake Superior to the lower Mississippi for a joint campaign to expel the British. While the idea was for each tribe to attack the nearest fort, Pontiac himself targetted the Detroit fortress for a surprise attack (7 May 1763).

To this historical subtext and its enhancement into legend, Richardson adds a fictitious tale of revenge, some elements from James Fenimore Cooper, and the style of Sir Walter Scott's novels, which are rooted "in time of national crisis which contrast civilization and lawlessness" (Hurley 61). The resulting generic hybrid combines elements of gothic romance and realist novel with the author's obsessive interest in apparel. That interest is also documented in his self-justifying account, *Eight Years in Canada* (1847), in which he compliments the well-dressed people of New York and criticizes the muddied attire of the recently arrived Sir Francis Bond Head who is *en route* to England. Moreover, Richardson underlines his own care for immaculate appearance and narrates how a parsonage at an inn on the way to Lockport had mistaken him for "Mr. Durham" – "as though [the errant servant] meant to convey that he had detected an English Governor traveling for security under a feigned name. This was too good a jest [. . .] and on no account could I have undeceived the simple agent" (*Eight Years* 21).

As an artifice, *Wacousta* is occupied, like its author, with various notions of deceiving and undeceiving, political motivations and psychic dispositions among the French, English, and Indian parties involved in the events around the siege of the Detroit fort. In a plot of treacherous warfare which is embedded in personal antagonism and fuelled by mutual misunderstandings, the central character is also the figure whose appearance is most eleborately described; Richardson takes two and a half pages to outline "the style of his costume, and the formidable character of his equipment" before concluding the description with "a glance at his lower limbs [which disclose] not the swarthy and copper-coloured flesh of the Indian, but the pale though sun-burnt skin of one of a more temperate clime. His age might be about forty-five" (*Wacousta* 135-138). In spite of this early hint, the real identity of this mysterious Indian warrior named

Wacousta –invested with physical powers bordering on the supranatural and, as major adviser to Pontiac, exerting a chief-like authority amongst the Indians – is only revealed towards the end: Originally a Scottish nobleman and former British soldier by the name of Reginald Morton, he was robbed of his fiancée Clara Beverly in the Scottish Highlands by his best friend, Ensign de Haldimar, whome he has been tracing ever since to take revenge.[60]

If Wacousta's cross-cultural disguise is primarily the effect of having been painfully deceived, it is also motivated by his desire to mock the obsession with clothing order that characterizes both his earlier incarnation and his former friend. Ensign, exercising meticulous control over his soldiers's apparel, is presently in command of the Detroit fortress, where his son Frederick and daughter Clara – named after her dead mother – are also staying. Whereas theirs is a typical garrison situation which projects the wilderness outside the gates as a space of chaos and evil, Wacousta has been enabled by this wilderness to strip himself of his Old World identity and transpose the etiquette of the British Army – to him now a symbol of exploitation and treachery – into an exaggerated Indian style which Reaney calls "costume fetishim" (542). In doing so, he also crosses over from Eurocentric law and order into his own version of Indian savagery and becomes, from a white perspective, the embodiment of wilderness: "Captain de Haldimar thought he had never gazed on any thing wearing the human shape half so atrociously savage" (*Wacousta* 251).

More futile, violent, and aggressive than the real Indians he lives with,[61] Wacousta's desire for revenge on the entire de Haldimar family is motivated solely by his private emotions, not by the Natives's concern for their future in the face of white colonization. Whereas this is one of the aspects through which Richardson risks "losing sight of the historical issues at hand" (Gerson 86), Wacousta's having 'gone Indian' is not so much expressed by a disguise, when seen close up, but rather by an array of attire which properly reflects his state of being. His fierce Indian mask rather speaks of than hides what is inside of him; potentially positioning him as mediator between the imperialist and indigenous worlds he both knows, it gradually discredits him by

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[60] Before playing his crucial role in the Pontiac uprisings in 1763, Wacousta alias Reginald Morton participates in the battle of the Plains of Abraham in 1759, as member of the French army alongside Indian allies.

[61] Cf. Robin D. Mathews, "The Wacousta Factor" (309), who speaks of a "perverseness that is not Indian."

conditioning an unstoppable metamorphosis beyond the identity-markers that characterize members of either world.

With the roots of his spiritual malaise in the old country, Wacousta must transpose his personal conflict with the de Haldimar family onto the level of cultural warfare if he wants to succeed. As L.R. Early outlines, this is part of an intertextual engagement with the conventions of Jacobean tragedy. He names *Hamlet* and Edward Young's *The Revenge: A Tragedy* as models for Richardson and, commenting on the ironic treatment of the New World as Paradise Regained, argues that these tragedies unveil "that an aristocratic milieu, ostensibly the matrix of civilization, breeds corruption and violence" (200-01). *Wacousta* transfers these character traits onto the colonial enterprise itself, epitomizing the hero as a hybrid-character who has slid from representative of colonial to anti-colonial force and whose revenge-seeking surpasses, in its excessiveness, Ensign's original wrongdoing by far.

Transferred is also the Renaissance stress on disguise and entrapment. In response to repeated Indian attacks on their garrisons, Frederick de Haldimar, Ensign's successor in the patriarchal line, resorts to a tragic strategy. He intends to leave the besieged fortress and spy on an Indian council in the woods, following the request of Oucanasta, an Indian maid and miniature-Pocahontas[62] who has fallen in love with him. Frederick orders his servant Donellan "to divest himself of his humble apparel, [so that the latter is] assuming in exchange the more elegant uniform of his superior" (*Wacousta* 236). In turn, he sports his servant's apparel. Their striking physical resemblances – echoing the notions of twins and doubles from the Jacobean stage – lead to a tragic misunderstanding: While Frederick, in Donellan's guise, overhears Chief Pontiac and Wacousta, he must learn that the latter boasts of having just slain "the son of the great chief of the Saganaw. [And you] will know that Saganaw by his dress – that dress [. . .] that Oucanasta [. . .] loved so much to look upon" (247). The exchange of identities erases the life of the servant who dressed upward on the social scale; the higher-ranking figure, by way of contrast, survives thanks to the inferior status his donned garments signal. Hence, in the act of trying to see through the scheeming of the Indians, the colonial representatives reveal their being equally "caught up in the arts of camouflage"

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[62] Gaile McGregor, *The Wacousta Syndrome*, compares Oucanasta's function to that of Natty in Cooper's *Leatherstocking Tales*; Natty, she argues, "was invariably associated with the energized interface between man and nature, and his role provided for the novels an emotional focus of considerable power. In overlooking this role, it would seem that Richardson missed out on one of the most interesting potentialities of his chosen genre" (9).

(Lecker, "Patterns" 52). Through this tragic cross-disguise, the colonial force ultimately deceives itself.

In the imperialist world sketched by *Wacousta*, various levels of order are struggling towards assertion and harmonization (see Mathews), and the opposing forces of Native Peoples and white colonizers seem to be represented by male figures only. However, the few female characters in the book, though modeled in the fashion of gothic romance, are also endowed with agency. Oucanasta and her repeatedly breaking the cultural boundaries in a movement towards reconciliation is one example; another one is Ensign's daughter Clara, who is robbed by Wacousta in a symbolical reversal of the original Scottish kidnapping by de Haldimar. Forcefully dressed as Indian woman and supposed bride of the warrior, she refuses to accept her new role and is killed, while her cousin Madeleine de Haldimar not only survives inside the shelter of the garrison, but collects "ingenious specimens of Indian art" as well as warfare instruments in her "wild and museum-like apartment" (*Wacousta* 291f). While maintaining the detached and immaculate position of a white, European woman,[63] she points towards a first sense of "assimilation of Native features of the colonial terrain to European aesthetic and economic standards" (Jones 56). Apart from the implications of cultural theft and appropriation – the results of which are displayed with pride, for instance, in London's British Museum, and during the fancy dress balls on either side of the Atlantic – Madeleine gestures towards an awareness and understanding of difference.

In her capacity for tolerance and careful sympathy, she is mirrored by the more active Oucanasta. Although both are rivals for the love of Frederick, the Indian woman helps Madeleine by disguising her "with the badge of captivity"; prentending to have her as a prisoner, she wraps her in an Indian blanket in order to show her where Frederick is held hostage by Wacousta (359). Oucanasta's crossing the cultural borders, and Madeleine's disguise of her racial other, are reflected and transgressed by the figure of Ellen Halloway, who adopts two different and efficient disguises and becomes the novel's counterpart to the Indian warrior.

In a fruitless attempt to save her husband from execution, Ellen cross-dresses as a drummerboy. By taking agency and "initiating a masquerade of gender that threatens the preserves of the male military" (Jones 49), she goes beyond the role usually ascribed to women in a colonial setting. When her husband is executed *because* of his silent

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[63] Madeleine represents the topos of pale European woman who keeps herself at bay most of the time, as a voyeur – a position that also characterizes Susanna Moodie's *Roughing It in the Bush* (1854).

loyalty to his superior, Frederick, whose life he had saved on the Plains of Abraham, Ellen is shattered by this malfunctioning of a colonial enterprise of which her husband was a part. She "breaks her 'engagement' with the centres of colonial 'civilization'" (Jones 47), begins to slide over into otherness and becomes a locus of conflicting gender-political discourses.

In her second masquerade, she appears in a composite dress of an Indian blanket and "portions of an apparel which was strictly European" (*Wacousta* 426) underneath. Just turned a widow, she becomes "the wife of Wacousta" (427) in a quick succession of roles which propels a display of unmeditated lust and her turning mad. Ellen transgresses European decorum and the notion of suppressed as well as subservient sexuality and "becomes surplus in relation to the garrison economy" (Jones 50). Thus, she presents a striking contrast to Madeleine's domestic accuracy and proper confinement and to Clara's refusal to allow Wacousta intercourse. The hybrid nature of her appearance, in which European and Indian elements reflect tension instead of harmony, testifies to an excessive state of mind which has transgressed its origins beyond recuperation. Similar to the case of Wacousta, Ellen has discarded the mask of civilization and instead presents a surface which reflects more than it conceals her essential being.

There are more instances of disguise, of doubling and deception for strategic purposes in the book; Everard Valletort and Captain Baynton masquerade twice as French duck hunters (*Wacousta* 161-63; 325); Ellen's first husband, Frank Halloway, was orginally named Reginald Morton and turns out to have been a nephew of that other Reginald Morton, her second husband, Wacousta (428-32). All these expressions of the motif of masquerade can be seen, Turner suggests, as "Richardson's way of expressing his awareness of the possibility of personal and social disintegration in the New World" ("Language and Silence" 188). His attempt to do justice to the complex political reality of a young country awaiting national status, to handle the legacy of Scott's standard and be distinct from American approaches while trying to create his own generic mix of history, gothic romance and wilderness novel was too ambitious an undertaking not to fall short in places; he himself was at home in neither Old nor New World. But through applying an elaborate system of masquerades, he managed to portray accurately, beyond his many fictional distortions, a state of mind split between colonial allegiance to the motherland and the new realities of the American continent, between sentiment and experience in a struggle to distinguish treachery appearances from authentic ones. In

that context, the mask becomes interrogator and expression of as well as mediator between cultural difference and exchange, identity positions and an emerging national consciousness.

These tensions are not only reflected in the oppositional patterns of colonizers versus Natives, but find their strongest expressions in the figures of Wacousta and Ellen. Whereas her transformation may be read "analogous to her transgression of racial difference, her movement 'beyond the pale' of the European fortress into the space of 'savagery'" (Jones 51), his parallel metamorphosis away from origins and across cultures indicates Richardson's anticipation of the critique of colonialism later voiced in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (see Gerson 87). To envision this odd couple as a New World Adam and Eve is not directly suggested by the book, but an image too terrifying to resist for a short moment in light of *Wacousta*'s dark scenery. Both their transgressions are indicative of the transformations imperialists can undergo in the process of either becoming obsessed with or subjected to powers which are brought from a distant home and bound to change their face in a chaotic wilderness. The masquerade of Reginald Morton who becomes Wacousta in an act of over-signifying his essential change is the product of a colonial enterprise which conditions the New World. And in this world, it is the mask in place that is out of place.

Wacousta is one of the earliest texts to interrogate the question of Canadian identity, "the kind of question which would be asked only of a colony" (Staines, "Canada Observed" 18). It is the first novel in Canada to do so through the motif of disguise and stands out today as a classic and important literary document. With the thematic seeds it planted, *Wacousta* could prepare the ground for the following generations of writers who would approach notions of personal and national identity through masquerade and role-play.[64] Whereas its influence on Kroetsch is rather indirect, except for his consistent use of Indian images and mythology, his 'forefather' Grove displays more affinity with the British writer. The similarities between Richardson and Grove, who both traversed cultures, were obsessed with personal attire and filled by a strong missionary impulse – albeit a self-serving one – are strong enough to speak of a lineage.

[64] Thomas Chandler Haliburton's *The Clockmaker* (1836) must be mentioned as another prime example for an early Canadian text centered around a role-playing character. In contrast to Richardson, however, Haliburton makes Sam Slick, a Yankee peddler, rely mostly on linguistic disguise through versatile rhetorics. Also, by focusing on Nova Scotia as the most significant and economically balanced province of importance for Britain, *The Clockmaker* is rather concerned with local customs and beliefs as well as with mirroring American peculiarities than with probing an emergent Canadian consciousness.

The British Major's asking for a government pension in 1841 in compensation for his literary "efforts to introduce into [Canada] that spirit of refinement" (qtd. in Gerson 12) is not much different from the stances the immigrant in exile from Germany inhabits in his correspondence and public addresses, in which he stylizes himself as the source of a new literary spirit (see Chapter 2.1). Before – and by – conferring it upon some of their characters, they liked to put on the mask of civilization themselves.

While both writers linked their persona with the notion of national literature, they also shared the failure of not achieving a truly new and original art. Gerson argues that Richardson "may be viewed as the first major example of the dilemma of the nineteenth-century Canadian novelist: attempting to mediate between the early American engagement with romance and the waxing British practice of realism, he compromised with an uneasy hybrid" (82). Her verdict of Richardson is uncannily applicable to the 20th-century writer Grove if one substitutes romance by realism and realism by naturalism. If Grove's mask-oriented writing generally exhibits the nature of an uneasy hybrid, Kroetsch's works can be seen as turning the attribute 'uneasy' into creative playfulness and transgression.

Chapter 2.1

Alias Greve, Alias Grove:
FPG and the Process of Personal Palimpsest

> Almost the whole of Grove's writing produces, to a similar degree, the impression of being a good translation of a much better original in some other language.
>
> B.K. Sandwell, "Grove's Autobiography"

> Why, so I have been asked, did I choose a pseudonym for my hero? Well, while a pseudonym ostensibly dissociates the author from his creation, it gives him at the same time an opportunity to be even more personal than [. . .] it would be either safe or comfortable to be were he speaking in the first person, unmasked.
>
> Frederick Philip Grove, "Author's Note to the Fourth Edition," *A Search for America*

> Vain trifles as they seem, clothes have, they say, more important offices than merely to keep us warm. They change our view of the world and the world's view of us. [. . .] there is much to support the view that it is clothes that wear us and not we them; we may make them take the mold of arm or breast; but they would mold our hearts, our brains, our tongues to their liking.
>
> Virginia Woolf, *Orlando*

> A human being, especially in the early, formative period of the awakening soul, is to himself an unexplored continent: and its exploration is, for the individual, of infinitely greater importance than the exploration of any Africa however rich and fabulous it may be. And it is the same with nations. But even a nation can explore itself only by its reaction to moods, thoughts, feelings already uttered. To utter them is the function of the writer who, therefore, cannot live the life of the day.
>
> Frederick Philip Grove, *It Needs To Be Said*

In an essay written in 1904, five years before he would leave the Old World and assume a new identity under the name of Frederick Philip Grove, the author begins: "We are emerging from an era in which it was believed that the best and only way to understand the works of an artist was to research his life. An artist's life was considered a commentary on his works" ("FTAE" 3). This essay, entitled "Flaubert's Theories of Artistic Existence," strongly argues *against* a biographical interpretation of Flaubert's works, which "are documents neither of his life nor of his human psyche," the reason being "that there is no bridge between life and creativity" (4). The essayist's assertions, however, must strike us today as ironic, either involuntarily or intuitively prophetic, with regards to his own existence: Felix Paul Greve, alias Frederick Philip Grove, practiced an artistic self-stylization in which his life can never be separated from the man's works, his creativity or psyche.

The case of this figure is, in the words of Anthony W. Riley, "an extraordinary and indeed probably unique one [. . .] in world literature" ("The Case" 37): the German translator, poet and novelist Felix Paul Greve fakes his suicide in 1909, departs from Europe forever, and emerges as Frederick Philip Grove in Canada in 1912, where he is to become one of the founding fathers of a modern English-Canadian literature. What he leaves behind in the Old World and subsequently creates in the New is a multitude of texts that are intertwined with sometimes parodic and often incongruous self-references, with deliberate falsifications and fictionalizations of his background. The man's *vita*, as a result of his artistic design, his motivations and his occasionally dramatic circumstances, amounts to a complex layering of self-constructions, of marked and non-marked autobiographical traces; in short, to a palimpsest that has necessitated – and will continue to do so – meticulous research and careful unfolding of the numerous scriptures it consists of.[65] Indeed, "the collectivity of identities" (Cavell 12) we refer to as FPG – Greve, Grove, and a series of (other) pseudonyms as well as textual *personae* – has made the biographical approach absolutely indispensable and simultaneously dangerous. "It is not only that FPG is himself a multiplicity," Richard Cavell argues, "but also that all of his critics must undertake the very process that he himself inaugurated, namely that of constructing a life" (12).

How tricky this enterprise of constructing such a life has proven is illustrated, for example, by an excerpt from Malcom Ross's "Introduction," originally composed in 1957 – and still reprinted in the 1970 edition of Grove's first Canadian publication:

> *Over Prairie Trails* was written by a man born in Russia of mixed Swedish, Scottish and English blood. Educated in Paris, Munich and Rome, and twenty-one years of age before he came to this country after tours (large if not grand) from the Sahara to Madagascar to the Antipodes to America, Frederick Philip Grove is yet the typical, perhaps even the archetypal, Canadian. Certainly the fact of his thirty years with us before his first book (*this* book) was published in 1922 by McClelland and Stewart will overbear any narrowly technical scruples some might have about the man's nationality. (v)

Ross's portrait – naïve and overly idealistic, but well-meaning – reflects the blend of fiction and fact that is so typical of Grove; in a way, this excerpt marks what has

[65] On different occasions, various critics also employ 'palimpsest' as a central metaphor for describing the relation of Greve's to Grove's existence and of FPG's 'real' life to his textual self-representations. Both my individual approach and the use of 'palimpsest' as a key metaphor for FPG's life and work have been developed independently of theirs.

become something of a tradition: mistaking FPG for a product of imagination – for somebody else. And yet, there is already in Ross's phrase concerning "scruples some might have about the man's nationality" a hint that some critics did not fully believe their own fabrications, which had been nourished by Grove's numerous and puzzling self-references. There remains the trace of a suggestion that they were willing to play the game of speculative interpretation in the hope of securing accurate bits of truth.

Perhaps no other scholar has experienced this ambivalence more intensely than Douglas O. Spettigue. In a public lecture called "The Search for FPG: An Interpretation," he charts the complex history of his own chase after his evasive subject. "But I shall take some comfort from Grove," Spettigue comments, punning on Grove's life-long fear of having failed: "I shall say that my failures were a kind of success, if only to me" ("Search for FPG" 14).[66] His failures proved to be a major success indeed – for it was Spettigue, with "The Grove Enigma Resolved" in 1972 and his subsequent book, *FPG: The European Years* (1973), who finally managed to identify the Canadian Grove with the German writer Greve. By way of result, as Paul Hjartason points out, "Grove became [Canada's] most talked about but least understood author"; instead of resolving the enigma of his being, the effect was rather "to make the familiar, the Grove we had come to know, *unfamiliar*, the known, *unknown*" (Preface ix).

This estrangement took place at a time when this literary phenomenon was beginning to appear more accessible; prefaced by Pacey's early monograph (1945), the studies by Sutherland (1969), Spettigue himself (1969) or Stobie (1969; 1973) reflected a renewed interest in the 'Canadian writer' Frederick Philip Grove and took care in chronicling how the Canadian public first became aware of, then approached, and finally canonized "their" author. Now, in the context of a Canadian culture redefining its relation to this figure, Ronald Sutherland could quip "that it may in something more than jest be said, 'He was a stranger, and he took us in'" (12). This realization resulted in a growing apparatus of glosses on the palimpsest 'FPG' – a process that has been further enhanced by an "awakening" of German scholars over the past two decades; the late Walter Pache (1979; 1981; 1983; 2000), Axel Knönagel (1986; 1989; 1990), Irene Gammel (1992; 1994) and Gaby Divay (1993; 1994; 1995; 2000) – the latter two

[66] Prior to this unpublished lecture, Spettigue had commented on his search, in book form and in several introductions to reprints of Grove's works; the lecture manuscript is particularly valuable, however, as a document in that it not only chronicles Spettigue's tracings in detail, but also as a self-critical retrospective, and as a sympathetically parodic treatment of FPG's "Rebels All."

German immigrants to Canada – and Klaus Martens (1996; 1997)[67] have all contributed to illuminating some of the previously unknown aspects of FPG's life and work in Germany. They have further intensified the process that Greve – in his essay on Flaubert – so vehemently dismissed: that of building a bridge between life and creativity.

An examinaton of the Canadian author Grove side by side with the German translator and author Greve will add new dimensions to our sometimes speculative and sometimes factual approach. Detailing some of the major critics's discoveries, we will chart the locations and circumstances of his education as well as early literary activities and thus indicate how the shift in identity did not occur out of necessity only; it will also become apparent how the cultural *milieu* in Europe and his genuine disposition for travel, physical exercise, and theatrical self-fashioning did turn FPG into the modern Odysseus he enjoyed portraying himself as. Above all, he practiced a life-long obsession with fine elegant clothing and its transposition into a literary motif which makes visible human habits as well as their moral implications and becomes "a metaphor for his sense of determinism" (Potvin 222-23). His modes of existence among and between the lines of overlapping and contradicting biographies as well as through a series of masks will be traced. Thereby, some major aspects of the process of personal palimpsest that was, and still is, FPG will become accessible to us. And that, in return, will allow us to grasp the art – and the failures – of the man.

Greve's Background and Beginnings

One of the crucial incongruences between Grove's alleged "facts" and verifiable truths goes back to the beginning – to the date and place of his birth. In the introduction by Ross, Grove's year of birth is given as 1871; in his "autobiography," *In Search of Myself* (1946), however, he claims, by way of implication, to have been born in 1872, as he does not give the date explicitly but speaks of having been "born prematurely, in a Russian manor house," and 57 pages later refers to his first living years as from 1872 to 1886 (ISM 15; 72). The information about the time of his birth was wrong as was the location: born on 14 February, 1879, as Douglas Spettigue has been able to verify,

[67] On the problematic case of Martens, see also the Preface.

Greve alias Grove entered this world in Radomno near the Polish-Prussian border. Born in Germany, and the son of Mecklenburg Germans – Carl Eduard and Bertha Greve, née Reichentrog – Felix Paul Berthold Friedrich Greve was raised neither in Russia nor in Sweden, as his autobiographical texts would have it, but in Pomerania.[68]

The family history already provides material for Felix to build his fabrications on: after his parents had gotten married in 1876, they moved to the Pommeranian town called Turow – a name Grove was to use later in *In Search of Myself* for the "Castle Thurow" on the Swedish coast where he claimed to have spent his youth. But the family of four heads – Felix's older sister, Henny, had been born on 25 August 1877 – moved to Hamburg, Germany in May 1881. His father first worked as a streetcar *conducteur*, then checked the tickets. Carl Eduard left his family in 1892 – a departure that Felix Greve may have interpreted as a symbolical death; in his only recorded meeting with the French writer André Gide, Felix would claim in 1904: "A seize ans, j'ai perdu mon père; c'était un très riche industriel du Mecklembourg, qui, l'année de sa mort, se ruina complètement" (Gide 137). Whereas Felix would utter this 14 years before his father's actual death in 1918, it was his mother who died in 1898, much mourned by her son.

Before her death, Bertha Greve, who kept a pension to sustain her children and herself, seems to have been prepared to undertake almost anything in her powers to secure a good education for her son. While Felix was attending the *Realgymnasium* in the St. Pauli area and subsequently the more prestigious *Gymnasium Johanneum*[69] in the city centre, they lived in a convenient proximity to Felix's schools allowing him to walk to his institutions of learning. Between their arrival in Hamburg in 1881 and Bertha's death in 1898, the struggling family had no less than 12 different addresses. Early on, Felix may have gotten used to a pattern of unrest that was to be repeated in Manitoba when he was moving from one location to the next. In Germany, this pattern did not prevent the aspiring scholar from attracting his teachers' attention.

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[68] Spettigue secured a copy of Greve's birth certificate that can now be checked in the University of Manitoba Special Archives and Collections (see MSS 57, Box 15, Folder 19). All further references will appear in the text proper with number of collection, box, and folder. All biographical information in this section, unless indicated otherwise, is taken from the following sources: Douglas O. Spettigue, *FPG: The European Years*; Margaret Stobie, *Frederick Philip Grove*; Douglas O. Spettigue, Introduction, Frederick Philip Grove, *In Search of Myself*; Gaby Divay, Introduction, *Poems/Gedichte by/von Frederick Philip Grove/Felix Paul Greve und Fanny Essler*; Klaus Martens, "Nixe On The River" and *Felix Paul Greves Karriere: Frederick Philip Grove in Deutschland.*

[69] According to the German educational system at the time, Felix was first attended a non-academic school ("Realschule" or "Realgymnasium") before switching, due to his visible talent and respective recommendations by various teachers, to the more suitable academic school, a "Gymnasium" – the kind of prestigious institution that would give him appropriate training for a future university career.

The career of the young Felix Paul Greve at his Hamburg schools must be termed successful and remarkable. Documents and evaluations by school officials, however, differ in varying degrees from FPG's later retrospectives, particularly with regard to the financial implications. The talent and ability to work hard as well as the outstanding memory that he would attribute to himself both in his "confessional" talk with Gide and in his autobiography now appear as fairly "real" features of this figure; his claim, "J'ai toujours eu une énorme puissance de travail" (Gide 137), or that his "memory was phenomenal" (ISM 109), is reflected quite accurately in the *Johanneum* director's characterization of the graduate Greve: "G. is well talented, not without sharp wits, displays an effective sense of working independently [and] has managed to close his initial gaps in knowledge [. . .] through the great diligence of his that is supported by a very good memory."[70] That FPG was able to distort that memory, whenever suitable, is shown by the exaggerated account of his tutoring minor pupils "jusqu'à quatre-vingts leçons par semaine" and by the assertion that at one stage the entire family – he speaks of three (originally nine!) sisters to Gide – depended entirely on his income (Gide 137). More than that, the Canadian writer Grove would later present the death of his mother – a death from cancer which was never documented and against which he made her fight a heroic battle – as an inspiration for the young man to prove his sense of responsibility:

> I began to have pupils, mostly young boys attending the gymnasia of the city [. . .]. In addition, I had a few night pupils in English, French, and Spanish [. . .]. At the end of the first month I was able to write to Uncle Jacobsen that, in addition to keeping myself at school, I was able to pay for my mother's stay at the hospital, keep myself in pocket money, and lay by a little towards the time when I should have to pay for my board. (ISM 108-109)

Underlining FPG's characteristic trait of enlarging the facts of his life for the sake of self-dramatization – both parents are turned into fictionalized entitities, and the family has been given a further member in the imaginary figure of Uncle Jacobsen, on top of three sisters – these quotations stress the importance of money. Innumerable passages in FPG's *œuvre* portray the simple transactions of earning and spending money as determining his schedules. An agent of his conduct, money would induce the young, intellectually gifted Greve of the Hamburg days into hard and occasionally excessive

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[70] "G. ist gut begabt, nicht ohne Scharfsinn und versteht mit Erfolg selbständig zu arbeiten [und die hinsichtlich seines Wissens anfänglich] vorhandenen Lücken hat er durch großen Fleiß, der durch ein sehr gutes Gedächtnis unterstützt wird, einzuholen verstanden" (qtd. in Martens, *Karriere* 41).

ways of working, equalled – as would soon become apparent – by an urge to spend whatever finances he was able to secure.

It was a two-fold pursuit that Greve had already subscribed to: that of knowledge, and that of financial means. The former would become an instrument for the latter. His determination, discipline, and speed in learning could impress the school officials, particularly Professor Dr. Friedrich Schulteß, a teacher, translator, author and mediator between cultures who had recently become the school director and figured as Felix's mentor. Knowing of his *protégé*'s capacity for autodidactic work and of his loving care for a sick mother, Schulteß supported Greve's grant applications by praising his pupil's progress, along with stressing a comparatively poor background. Felix was considered in need and worthy of financial aid, and he received it.

The pose of the tireless autodidact who sustains his sick mother and family all by himself, together with his outstanding high-school leaving examination, proved successful: in the spring of 1898, Felix was awarded a total of three grants, the best of which – the "Prof. Fischer-Stipendium" – was to pay him 1000 *Goldmark*[71] annually, for a maximum of four years while enrolled in a university. In contrast to his initial intentions to study classical languages at Berlin, though, Felix had changed his mind and decided to move to Bonn – the university that had shaped his mentor – and to enroll in both philology and archaeology.

The Felix Paul Greve who arrived in Bonn in April 1898 was a young man of transformed identity. Dressed as he was in a tailor-made suit and tie, at ease in old and modern languages, sportive and sociable, there was nothing in his appearance that would betray a single aspect of the hardships and poor origins he had attributed to himself at Hamburg. On the contrary, Felix, looking for new ways of distinguishing himself, joined the academic fraternity called "ARC Rhenus," a rowing club that required a high entrance (*Sicherheitsleistung von 400 Goldmark*) as well as a monthly membership fee. A photograph he had soon taken professionally, a *Kabinettsbild* comparable in its function to contemporary visiting cards, shows him clad elegantly and with the Rhenus flag as a pin – "the outward sign of newly achieved status in society" (Martens, "Nixe" 16). For the supposedly wealthy *arrivé*, the "Prussian Oxford"[72] at Bonn would turn out to be the well-chosen stage for the entry of one Felix Greve and

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[71] Equal in value to the pre-World War I "Mark", the *Goldmark* would translate by then into 10/42 Gold Dollar.

[72] Martens (*Karriere* 49) quotes Harry Graf Kessler (1988: 32) on the regattas and the intellectual climate in Germany: "Bonn galt zur letzten Jahrhundertwende als das 'preußische Oxford'."

mark the beginning of a long series of self-centred acts. With the mask of the rich student supplanting that of the poor pupil, he had begun his essential exploration of personae; impersonation was to become "FPG's primary mode of existence" (Müller, "Felix Paul Greve, Alias" 87).

In the academic sphere, Greve showed initial seriousness and took the courses he had been thinking of at Hamburg, attending lectures by Profs. Büchener, Usener and Loeschke on philology and archaeology. He read Byron with Prof. Foerster. Much more remarkable, however, and at least of equal importance for his future career, were the many extracurricular activities. University records reveal that Greve took a total of four courses in fencing, the last one focusing on the handling of a rapier. As a *Fuchs* (fox, a newcomer), the new member Greve engaged in rowing exercises, athletic training, and excursions. He repeatedly donated prizes for the winners of the regular rowing contests and provided a heating system for the boathouse's dressing room.

Greve had found a perfect niche in which to pose successfully as a wealthy young man of academic ambition and athletic abilities. He had become a "family member" "[d]uring his first year at Rhenus, [. . .] had risen to positions of trust and responsibility and was inching ever more closely towards the top of the club's hierarchy" (Martens, "Nixe" 22). Having been elected as *Zweitchargierter* (second highest committee member), he was also involved in preparing some theatre performances, to generate money for the erection of a monument in memory of the famous literary historian, translator and poet-professor Karl Simrock. Whereas there is no record of his having performed a role in any of the plays that were staged then, there are serveral references testifying to his having excelled in sports. This is all the more interesting when compared to Grove's "autobiographical" writings, in which the topos of the powerful and athletic sportsman, sailor and buggy-driver is countered by that of a frail human being with a bad back. Documents from the turn of the century, however, reveal that Felix owned two rowing boats – the *Nixe* (mermaid) and *Faultier* (sloth) – and trained successfully to become an outstanding boatman. Only two weeks after having joined the rowing club, he went on an impressive 270 kilometer trip from Bonn to Trier and back in a two-seater boat called "Vega." But out of five major excursions done with four club members, it was the trip from Bonn past Mainz to Heilbronn and back again (on the Rhine, Main and Neckar Rivers) that won him a remarkable reputation. Dr. Georg Thiel, one of his companions on that trip of 758 kilometers, completed between 3-15 August, 1899, kept a diary in which Felix *Nixe* Greve figures

prominently, nicknamed after his boat and for an apparent hint of androgyny in his appearance. And he stands out for more than his apparent physical fitness: "'We sent our quartermaster 'Nixe' out as a scout, whom Mother Nature has equipped with such irregular bodily height that he cannot easily get lost. [Coming back and having found night quarters, 'Nixe' had proven] his astonishingly fine nose, for the stout landlady with whom we stayed made an extremely reliable impression" (qtd. in and trans. by Martens, "Nixe" 28).

Greve – generous, endowed with a 'fine nose' and solid physique, sociable and boosting the club's activities – was elected *Erstchargierter* (club president) in October 1899. Within less than one-and-a-half years, Felix, the lucky one, had become the club's major representative, its central force. As such, he linked Rhenus with the influential *Flottenverein* of imperialist orientation, thereby earning "his" club a rising esteem in comparison with Borussia, the rival club of the high aristocracy. And when Rhenus was, for the first time, to preside over the *Kaisercommers*, the annual celebration of the Emperor Wilhelm's birthday on 26 January 1900, none other than Felix Greve was in charge of the event in the *Beethovenhalle* at Bonn. Dressed in the club uniform – white cloth with a red-blue-white sash designating his particular office, a cap with a golden cord on his head – and the ceremonial sabre on the table in front of him, he must have thought he had arrived: all important and established persons were present. Not even the fact that the sudden news of the Old Empress's death, with her grandson being present among the audience, had to be imparted, could shatter Greve's performance during the ceremony. Presenting himself in such a convincing fashion to the Bonn society, this young man of modest background earned praise and respect. He could mark an impressive and fast rise after a little more than one-and-a-half years.

Among his fellow students, Greve befriended Herman C. Kilian, a wealthy young man from Dresden who was less dedicated to sports than most Rhenus members and more inclined towards languages, literature, and cultivating his English style. Several group photographs indicate a rather delicate bond or relationship in which Kilian appears as a typical male with black moustache, tweed-cap, pipe and serious look, and Greve as a much more feminine counterpart. Kilian brought with him literary talent and a background of German-Scottish ancestry that was to become appropriated by Grove in his later "autobiographical" family portraits. It is also likely that Herman and Felix collaborated on a translation of Oscar Wilde as early as 1899 or 1900; both showed a clear affinity for the pose of the artist in an English outfit, and Greve would

in fact publish his translation of Wilde's *Fingerzeige (Intentions)* in 1902, for which Kilian had originally been asked to translate the essay "The Decay of Lying."

Their friendship was to be severely tested in the context of a tragic accident which occured at the end of October, 1900 and which was never fully decoded with regard to its implications. Hans "Hanne" Lomberg disappeared mysteriously after a dance at the Hotel Mundorf, where the Rhenus members had gathered and were now either taking the train back to Bonn or waiting for the mist to clear up in order to take the boat. Lomberg must have decided to walk. His corpse was discovered three weeks later near Hersel along the shore of the Rhine. The police investigations were able to establish nothing more than the fact that he had drowned without apparent cause. What could have happened to the rather well-trained Lomberg, who was familiar with the river and its currents, and who had just followed Greve as first in charge of the club, liked and respected by his fellow-members? The Rhenus journal relates some information that undoubtedly fosters speculations about a strange involvement of Kilian: "In light of his total lack of interest and unworthy conduct, we had to expel our inactive member Kilian – he had neither shown up for the conveyance of Lomberg's corpse, nor for the burial, had written not a single word of excuse and generally paid very little attention to the entire tragedy."[73]

It is striking that these notes would speak of an "excuse" (*Entschuldigung*) rather than of sympathy or a letter of condolence – unless Kilian had done something that would necessitate an excuse or the display of remorse on his part, and a kind of punishment and clear dissociation on the club's part. It is further striking that Greve would depart soon after; the club journal entry from from 19 January 1901 registers in short but telling words: "Our erstwhile member Greve has been granted his request to leave" (qtd. in and trans. by Martens, "Nixe" 38). Regarding the prominence Felix had among Rhenus members and, at least for a short time, in Bonn society, the briefness of this cryptic entry seems to insinuate some fatal connection of both Kilian and Greve with Lomberg's unfortunate drowning accident. Cavell, investigating "the homosocial context surrounding FPG" in Germany as a context "*through* [. . .] which FPG

[73] "Unser inaktives Mitglied Kilian mussten wir wegen gänzlicher Interesselosigkeit und unwürdigen Benehmens – er war weder bei der Überführung der Leiche Lombergs, noch bei dem Begräbnis erschienen, hatte kein Wort der Entschuldigung geschrieben und überhaupt sehr wenig Notiz von dem ganzen Unglücksfall genommen – ausschliessen." Qtd. in Martens (*Karriere* 94).

constructed his lives," condenses Martens's speculations about the three males's interrelations and speaks of a "homoerotic triangle" (13; 23).[74]

Regardless of the fact that the scholarship on FPG has mostly been given to "normatizing" this figure in sexual and national terms (Cavell 12), we cannot establish whether Felix Greve did have a homosexual relationship with either Kilian, Lomberg, or both, during his time at Bonn. The reasons for his sudden departure from the Rhine may be manifold, and Kilian would continue to play a major and ambivalent role in FPG's life for many years to come. But to assume, as did Spettigue, that "Felix's defection from Bonn in the late fall of 1900 had a specific cause, namely the news of the final collapse and, on the night of November 30, the death of Wilde in Paris" (*FPG* 58), appears far-fetched. Whatever mystery lay behind the events of winter 1900 / 1901, Greve might have grown restless with the milieu and possibilities, seeking for new fields to test, present, and create himself in. For some time, at least, the university of Bonn and the Rhenus club had been a stage on which Felix could acquire and cultivate sportive, managerial, social and intellectual skills which would all prove useful for his future existences.

Going South

What would make more sense for an aspiring student of archaeology, with a gift for mimicry, than going to those sites where field work could be done and experts both challenged and imitated? Frederick Philip Grove's *In Search of Myself* is filled with references to archaeology and Rome; he insists on having spent considerable time, from 1899 onwards, with excursions and studies in Italy (ISM 164f). Felix Paul Greve could not likely have been in Italy that early, for his obligations at Bonn did not allow him to leave for a longer period of time. But although we have come to expect many of his assertions to be more fictional than factual, his textual claims are based on actual occurences in a close fashion. The notes of the *Deutsches Archäologisches Institut* (= DAI; German Institute of Archaeology) prove that Greve did participate in scholarly

[74] Cavell substantiates his opinion by maintaining that in "the rowing club, sexuality was mediated by sportsmanship, which provided (as it does today) the most socially sanctioned opportunities for homosocial relationships within a heteronormative culture (as Brian Pronger has argued)" (23).

meetings between December 1900 and February 1901.[75] Whether he really spent, as purported in his autobiography, "six or seven hours daily in study, attending lectures, seminaries, and demonstrations" (ISM 164), cannot be verified but neither excluded, considering the amount of work he was capable of at Hamburg. Similarly, the excursions he claims to have made to Naples, Palermo and Girgenti may be based on fact; even working as a guide (ISM 198-201) would have been possible for him. Felix Greve performing the role of learned specialist amidst international tourists is easily imaginable.

With his interlude at Rome, Greve had opted for extracurricular activities again, as an alternative way of rising to a position of esteem and some wealth. Probably connected to Rome through the former Bonn student and DAI-grant recipient, Richard Delbrueck, Greve had signed the participants's list as *Privatgelehrter* (independent scholar). He obviously wanted to pose as an authority, but the *Mitteilungen* (Communications) relate only one reply by Greve, from 8 February 1901, in reaction to the talk from 25 January given by Ernst Pfuhl, who had discussed the head of Pericles, a copy of a Diomedes statue, and the notion of translating an original. As the lack of further contributions to the debates suggests, Greve apparently did not succeed in being admitted into the inner circle of the archaeologists. His departure from Rome, some time in February, was as sudden as his leave from Bonn but would not remain his last premature disappearance.

Subsequent months in the year 1901 present a larger gap in documentation until Greve's entry in the Munich registration on 30 September as "ndependent scholar" and, a line below, "author." Maybe Felix had visited those famous archaeological sites in Southern Italy and Sicily of which he later wrote (see ISM 164) in spring 1901. His self-references as scholar and author on the registration form almost appear like a collation of the various scriptures FPG was in the process of producing about himself. That he did spend several months in the south that year is probable, for his first book of poems, *Wanderungen* (published in 1902), is inspired by travels among the antiquity sites. In any case, his activities in that year mark a transition towards writing and translating (cf. Divay, "Greve's Translations").

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[75] A letter by his former director and mentor Schulteß, answering an inquiry regarding Greve's whereabouts, speaks of his student's being in Italy as early as September 1900. Schulteß himself applied for a longer holiday for the time from 10 February to 25 June 1901 "for a journey to the south" so that it is likely that he not only knew of Felix's archaeological pursuits, but that they had eventually arranged to meet in Italy. See Martens (*Karriere* 106).

From late September 1901 on, Felix spent some months in Munich. He probably did not, as he purported to, engage heavily in his studies; he had already embarked on trying to conquer the literary scene of bohemian Munich that was centred around the "Zeus of Schwabing" (Sarkowicz 381), Karl Wolfskehl.[76] A poet, dramatist, essayist and translator, the son of the wealthy banker and politician Otto Wolfskehl had come to Munich in 1893, after taking his doctor's degree at Gießen; he immediately befriended Stefan George, the most demanding, eccentric and elitist poet of his time. Greve's address at Amalienstraße 24 was close to the university, and also to that of the Wolfkehls, whose house was home to frequent artist meetings and to the *Jour*, the Sundays on which, occasionally, *Meister* Stefan George would be present. It was probably the influential Karl Wolfskehl, with whom Greve did become acquainted no later than the fall 1901, who admitted the well-versed and allegedly wealthy FPG into the George-circle.

As before in Bonn and Rome, Felix Paul Greve posed as a young man of financial and intellectual means in Bavaria's capital. His correspondence with his major target, Karl Wolfskehl (a total of thirty-three letters, mostly as undated short notes, and fifteen picture-postcards) reflects an odd mix of formal approach and intimate, almost confessional detail. Well aware that "Zeus" would be his key to success, Greve took great care in keeping Wolfskehl informed about current projects (e.g., his advanced translation of Wilde's *Intentions*) and his former achievements. The first *known* letter by Felix – probably the second in the sequence – is dated 2 December 1901 and "shows Greve already a familiar of the Wolfskehl world, to which he might have been introduced by Friedrich Gundolf (1880-1931)" (Spettigue, "Unpublished Letters" 15). In his third letter of 10 December, he inserts an explicit reference to an earlier translation of his: "By the way, over the past days I just found, among my papers, a translation of Dante's *Vita nuova* done in 1898, of which I should like to communicate something to you occasionally, as I deem it not entirely miscarried. The Wilde is progressing vigorously . . ."[77]

In one of his following but undated letters, probably of late December 1901 or January 1902, Greve encloses "nine randomly selected sonnets of my Dante

[76] Cf. Gaby Divay ("Greve's Translations" 133) who also mentions the Wolfskehl-"Zeus" comparison and speaks of Schwabing as "being Munich's Greenwich Village."

[77] "Übrigens fand ich dieser Tage unter meinen Papieren eine im Jahre 1898 verfasste Übersetzung der *Vita Nuova* Dantes, aus der ich Ihnen gelegentlich etwas mitteilen möchte, da ich sie nicht für ganz verfehlt halte. Der Wilde schreitet rüstig fort ..." (Qtd. in Divay, "Greve's Translations" 132).

translation," adding that "one passage appeared so unsuccessful that I even resorted to plagiarizing you in the process of transcription (3rd sonnet)."[78] As none of the replies by the Schwabing "Zeus" have survived – and they were probably erased on purpose – we cannot deduce whether he was actually flattered or impressed by this gesture. But Greve knew of Wolfskehl's as well as George's interest in Dante and of the latter's intense occupation with the *Divina commedia.* By sending these sonnets of the *Vita nuova* – "one fourth of [. . .] the original complex" (Divay, "Greve's Translations" 134) – Greve showed his fine sense of what would likely render him an interesting literary figure.

Felix did attend Wolfskehl's *jours* and join the Schwabing artist circle for various activities and gatherings at different locations. Among his new acquaintances and 'friends' were Ludwig Curtius, Ludwig Klages and his sister Helene, Roderich Huch and his brother Friedrich, Alfred Schuler, Franz Dülberg and *Gräfin* (Countess) Franziska zu Reventlow. Although George would be surrounded by a number of ephebes, Greve showed some interest in Helene Klages, around whose virginity something of a cult developed in the circle. He operated in indirect ways, mentioning her in many of his letters to Wolfskehl, keeping copies of pictures he had taken of mutual friends for her (cf. Spettigue, "Unpublished Letters" 16), and eventually dedicating a poem from his first book of poetry (*Wanderungen*) to her: the five-starred dedication of "*Irrender Ritter*" ("Errant Knight"), in which a *Herrin* (a ruling mistress) is addressed (63), hints at that possibility, as Divay ("Greve's Translations" 139) suggests: "'For *** **' [. . .] matches the cadence of her name" – Helene Klages.

The exact nature of Felix's relation with Helene is hard to define. Spettigue quotes an undated letter (probably of August 1902) by Greve to Wolfskehl: "'As Miss Klages is dining with you today, may I perhaps ask you kindly to tell her that in the Dorian Gray Ms. the first chapter is missing?'" Although this suggests that Felix and Helene were collaborating on a translation of Wilde's *Dorian Gray*, Spettigue reasons:

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[78] "Gleichzeitig gestatte ich mir, Ihnen neun beliebig herausgegriffene Sonette meiner Dante-Übertragung zu überreichen. [. . .] An einer Stelle, die mir völlig verfehlt schien, habe ich sogar während der Abschrift ein Plagiat an Ihnen begangen. (3. Sonett)" (Qtd. in Martens, *Karriere* 128). At the Stefan George Archiv at Stuttgart, only six sonnets from the *Vita Nuova* translated by FPG are extant; they were obtained by Gaby Divay in 1990 and subsequently reproduced in one of her essays (see he "Greve's Translations" 134-140). Probably Greve never did send more than six sonnets, and his own dating of their translation as far back as 1898 cannot be regarded without suspicion. Although they are different in style than other writings he produced around 1901, with a less "twisted syntax usually favoured by the Stefan George school" (Divay, "Greve's Translations" 139), they are simultaneously written in a consistent lower case – a possible reflection of what has become known as the *George-Mache*, the production of poetry according to rules and standards demanded by George (134ff). Given Greve's hard-to-deny impulse to impress the entire circle around George, one can suspect that he had produced his Dante translations immediately before sending them out to Wolfskehl, labelling them an 'effort of three years ago.'

"Helene Klages was a writer; was she going to look over Greve's translations for him?" (1992: 16). Whereas this would imply that Helene actually instructed Felix, Martens (*Karriere* 141) cites a letter by the Countess zu Reventlow, a translator and notorious *femme fatale* who refused to take Helene as an apprentice or even collaborate with her. Felix, on the other hand, had probably impressed Helene with the publication of his *Wanderungen* in February 1902, and she could hardly fail to notice that with his publication of Wilde's *Fingerzeige (Intentions)* he was beginning to establish himself as a translator.[79]

No matter what their personal relationship might have been, a collaboration of Greve and Klages on any of the translations officially attributed to him cannot be verified; nor can it be inferred with certainty that Greve's play, *Helena und Damon. Ein Spiel in Versen* alluded to Helene Klages explicitly through its title and a dedication of eight verses to one "whose name out of consideration I avoid."[80] Published in May 1902, printed on expensive Japanese paper, the play is referred to by Greve as a *Hochzeitsspiel* (a wedding play) and described by Spettigue ("Unpublished Letters" 17) as a "closet drama." Neither extensive public acclaim nor a marriage ensued for Greve, who would continue translating Oscar Wilde during the summer and fall and trying to have "his" Wilde plays staged in Berlin theatres.

Felix took a holiday at Gardone-Riviera (from about 20 July to 14 August), working a bit and exercising a lot. According to his own claim in a letter to Wolfskehl of 13 August 1902, he managed to cross the lake and return in only 9 hours in "my immortal swimming tour (Gardone – Lecchi – Gardone)" (qtd. in Spettigue, "Unpublished Letters" 19). The same letter also relates Felix's account of successfully posing as an Englishman and being taken for Oscar Wilde. The two photographs included show him "wearing a wide-brimmed hat but otherwise formally dressed" and, most interestingly, with a moustache (19). During his time in Northern Italy, Felix had opportunity to manifest his talent for impersonation and role-play; he literally revealed to a small audience how much he had integrated Wilde's stance of making art the medium for simultaneous self-expression and self-hiding. For the Irish writer's

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[79] Spettigue ("Unpublished Letters" 16) relates that in a letter to Wolfskehl from 12 March 1902, Greve "writes that the publisher Max Bruns has begun setting *Intentions*."

[80] The full *Widmung* reads: "Wahrheit und Dichtung eng in eins verschlungen, / Vereinigt Lebensglut mit Traumerfahrung: / So rede dieses Spiel mit leichten Zungen, / Doch einer sei es tiefe Offenbarung! // Ihr will ich dankend diese Blätter widmen; / Doch ihren Namen will ich schonend meiden: / Der Dichter liebt, mit dem Gewand der Rhythmen / Des Lebens Nacktheit hüllend zu umkleiden" (Qtd. in Martens, *Karriere* 161).

assertion, "Man is least himself when he talks in his own person. Give him a mask, and he will tell you the truth" ("The Critic as Artist" 1045), had become FPG's existential credo and was to resurface in variations in his works.[81]

The year 1902 would prove eventful in many ways. On 20 August, Felix wrote to Wolfskehl about being "'besieged by half a dozen theatres on account of Wilde. I should know who put them on my trail.'" Implying that 'Zeus' assisted him in his endeavours to stage Wilde's plays, Felix adds that he has been referred to as a "'well-known translator' and the 'knowledgable expert'" on the Irish author; then, on 14 September he announces that four of the Wilde plays are being produced at once, "'in translations by one Mr. F.P.G.'" (19; 20). Of the four plays envisioned, only *The Importance of Being Earnest* is scheduled in a Berlin Theatre, but postponed for October. The production of *Bunbury*, as Greve decided to call it, never took place for various reasons.

Although he never had secured the stage rights, Felix kept pretending that he was in their possession while successively sending out his translations of four Wilde plays to the publisher Bruns in the course of 1902. Now it turned out that not Greve, but his translator rival Gaulke had been given the rights. This was especially tragic since the well-intentioned Bruns had already printed the pieces as well as Greve's edition of Wilde's selected *Dramen. I und II*. None of these translations could be sold in public, nor put on stage. The next bad move consisted in Felix's asking, while negotiating a translation of Pater, von Poellnitz of the Insel Publishing House for an advance of 800 Marks. Von Poellnitz refused, mentioning "talk of lavish dinners given for FPG in Leipzig, and of the many books of his that Insel was going to publish [and of] some other, uglier things" (Spettigue, "Unpulished Letters" 20). Felix's argument that he had "more than just himself to worry about now" did not change anything for the better, and so he wrote a letter of goodbye to Karl Wolfskehl on 7 October, alluding to a catastrophe – "'You will not see me in Munich any more'" (21).

Three days later, Greve was allegedly planning briefly to "'arrange last things'" in Berlin, then go to Hamburg and depart on a "'German-African steamer'" (21). About the implied person that he also had to "worry about now", critics disagree; some suggest Helene Klages, others the woman with whom he was to cause a public scandal over the

[81] Grove's most poignant and literal use of Wilde's stance is the preface to the fourth edition (1939) of *A Search for America*, in which he discusses the "choice of a pseudonym for [his semi-autobiographical] hero," Phil Branden (ASA 460; see this chapter's motti and also Chapter 4.2).

next months – Else Endell (who later lawfully called herself Baroness Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven and is referred to by critics as both Else and Elsa). In any case, as Spettigue asserts, "Felix knew in breaking with Wolfskehl he was breaking with the whole Munich circle and with its tangents in [. . .] Berlin" (21). What ensued was a remarkable chain of events – deviating from the sketched outline – that would, over the years to follow, attract increasing public attention.

In the Munich circle of artists, Greve had befriended the famous architect August Endell and his wife Else. After his sudden departure in October, Felix apparently spent some time with August in Berlin. At that time being treated for "hysteria" in a sanatorium at Wyck on the island of Föhr, Else had fallen in love with the young poet-translator. They became lovers and confronted August with the new development. Filled with envy and frustration, the spurned husband consented to a joint trip to Southern Italy in January 1903, in the course of which he tried in vain to shoot himself at Naples and was given a bicycle to exercise around Ischia. Whereas the powerless husband soon returned to Germany, Else and Felix moved on to Palermo, where they would ride horseback, work on translations and try to effect her first orgasm.

Some details of the earlier events at Munich and Berlin can be taken from the *roman-à-clef* that Greve was to publish in 1905, *Fanny Essler. Ein Berliner Roman* (FE I+II), a satire and thinly disguised parody of the respective artistic circles in both cities (see Chapter 3.1). More essential information can be found in the memoir of Else, who was to become a Baroness and a friend of Djuna Barnes, to whom she sent her life-story in many disrupted letters. Finally published in 1992 as *Baroness Elsa*, this memoir describes how in April 1903, Felix was suddenly summoned home by his 'friend' Kilian – in fact, baited by a telegram speaking of an "'investment in the failing bank' [. . .] to entice him back to Germany" (BE 102). Upon arriving at the Bonn train station, Felix was immediately arrested. Much ado was made of his having carried only one *Pfennig* in his pocket when it turned out that Kilian himself had laid the charge against Greve. In Else's stylistically unusual retrospective, "Felix had gotten the means for our trip to Italy from '*Mr. Kilian*,' telling him he was sent as a correspondent by the '*Berliner Tageblatt*' to Palermo and [. . .] all Felix's expenses previous also had been paid by this doting friend – who adored him for a genius" (BE 102).

Discussing "Felix's pecuniary circumstances," Else realizes how Kilian's financial support helped Greve perform a role – he "looked, behaved rich [and] was the half-god I yearned for." She diagnoses in Kilian's behaviour "the action of a jealous

woman who had lost control of caste," concluding that there "could exist now no doubt that there had been a spiritual homosexual affair – at least from '*Mr. Kilian's*' part – a physical one seemed to be out of the question – from Felix's side without doubt – even a spiritual one I could fancy by him only for his youthful vanity's benefit – spiritual and material" (BE 102-3).[82] Herman F.C. Kilian never commented on any homosexual tendencies but upheld his charge against Greve. The circumstances of the trial itself bore traits of a tragicomedy, with Greve giving false information about his parents's income, creating a well-to-do background for himself, and trying hard to appear laborious, whereas Kilian seemed to revel in detailing how much money Greve had tapped from him under false pretences while promising to pay back most of it immediately. On the day of the trial (28 May 1903), Kilian calculated that Greve owed him 25.000 Marks, adding that the loss itself wouldn't matter that much to him. The 'friend' had enough reason to see Felix sentenced to a prison term of one year at Bonn.

The year in prison – in a single cell Felix had managed to get – would turn out to be a fruitful time thanks to a cunning strategy. Already in the weeks preceeding his imprisonment, Felix had begun to refresh old and establish new contacts with publishers, skilfully playing the role of naïve victim willing to make up for his mistakes, and therefore eager to prove how good and proficient a translator and essayist he could be. A letter to Rudolf von Poellnitz illustrates how the recently imprisoned Greve conceived of his unfavourable situation and of the necessary steps to be taken:

> Dear Mr. von Poellnitz,
>
> Today I am writing to you personally, as it were, since I consider it absolutely essential in business relations such as ours to have complete understanding between the two parties. Presumably you have learned from the newspapers about the catastrophe that has struck me. I cannot expect of you – as I expect it of my friends – that you will have formed a very favourable impression of me from this affair, much less can I hope that you would guess the truth of it, when not even a court of inquiry could do that. I hope some day we shall be able to discuss the matter perfectly calmly.
> But right now I want to beg you earnestly not to break off all your dealings with me, but rather to carry on with the Browning as well as the Wilde and Pater (vol. I) – first of all for the sake of the works themselves, secondly because for me to have to break off now would be tantamount to utter ruin.

[82] Elsa adds a little later, "*and I had come between*" (BE 104; her italics); Richard Clavell sees in that constellation "the classic pattern of homosocial triangulation" that also subtly informs FPG's *A Search for America* and *In Search of Myself* (22).

> To make things easier for you from here on, I would be willing to adopt the pseudonym, Friedrich Carl Geerden; if necessary, I would even agree to complete anonymity. I leave that to you.
> I beg you again, for the sake of the books and for personal reasons, to consider this arrangement. I should be especially grateful for an early decision on the Marius. You know I have not just myself to think of now, so I have to plan ahead.
> Meanwhile I remain, with best regards, your very devoted
> Felix Paul Greve
> Bonn-on-Rhine
> 19 Wilhelm Street
> 6. vi. 1903 (qtd. in and trans. by Spettigue, *FPG* 94; cf. Pacey, *Letters* 526-27)

Greve's daring step forward was successful. Although naturally viewed with distrust, he was nonetheless given a few commissions by, among others, von Poellnitz of the *Insel Verlag* and J.C.C. Bruns of the *Bruns Verlag* which had previously published his Wilde translation. To achieve this, Felix had performed not only convincingly, but ingeniously offered a pseudonym. "F.C. Geerden" was accepted by the *Insel Verlag*; Greve's publishing houses were receiving distress warrants, and employing a pseudonym was supposed to circumvent the consequences at least partially. And Greve's particular way of fashioning the story of his unfortunate "catastrophe" without giving any facts while pretending innocence reveals his self-dramatizing talent. To suggest a pseudonym (which was to be one in a long series of aliases) and to give the prison address as private address rounded off this performative act. As in his correspondence and his imitation of Wilde before, he employed the mask to fabricate a very specific truth about himself.

According to his own claim, Greve did translate some forty(!) volumes in total while at prison in Bonn (cf. Gide, "Conversations" 136) in addition to keeping extensive correspondence with various publishers and authors. He had a sense of who would deserve attention or promise better sales and changed his focus to authors like Gustave Flaubert, George Meredith, and H.G. Wells. Although Felix Greve was translating with seriousness and impressive discipline, he could not refrain from asking both von Poellnitz and J.C.C. Bruns for advances, arguing, in the latter case, that he was planning to get married soon (letter of 9 November 1903).

By the end of May 1904, the time he was released, Felix could look back on outstandingly productive fourteen months in jail. Some of his translations had already appeared (Ernest Dowson, or, under his Geerden-pseudonym, Robert Browning), others were about to be published (Wells and Flaubert, both supposedly in collected works series); furthermore, he had been working on his own novel and translated two books by

Gide, who was already established. A few days after his release, he travelled to Paris to meet Gide. The record the French author put down in his journal the following day, first published in 1919 as "Conversation avec un Allemand quelques années avant la guerre," is definitely "d'un certain intérêt psychologique" and has become one of the most important documents we have regarding appearance and conduct of Felix Paul Greve.[83]

In this astonishing record of their dialogue, Greve first explains his situation, relating how he had tried to negotiate with his former supporter Kilian but was sent out the door by the butler. He provides more information that deserves critical attention: he is forced to publish under his wife's name; his father – now dead – was a rich industrialist from Mecklenburg; Felix is the family's tenth child; he reasons that for an artist it is dangerous to search life but that behind his own art, since he prefers life, money is the driving force. The psychological mechanism at play has been obvious in Greve's behaviour before, but never illustrated in such detail, nor described by the performer himself in a suprising moment of playful self-revelation: "If faut que je vous avertisse, Monsieur Gide, que je mens constamment" (Gide 138).[84]

Gide's record of Greve's unmasking masquerade thus provides a crucial platform from which to view FPG in the mirror of his own words. The "Conversation avec un Allemand" underlines Greve's obsession with self-references that vary in their degree of accuracy. His utterance, "j'aime passionnément l'élégance" (Gide 139),[85] supports this palimpsestic practice. The notion of FPG as palimpsest is further enhanced by the letters to Gide following this meeting of June 1904. On 17 October of the same year, Greve discusses his translations of Gide and outlines his own plans:

> Et de moi-même. Il me faut travailler d'une façon bien singulière. Je ne suis plus une personne, j'en sommes trois: je suis 1. M. Felix Paul Greve; 2. Mme Else Greve; 3. Mme Fanny Essler. La dernière dont je vous enverrai prochainement les poèmes, et dont les poèmes – encore un secret – sont adressés à moi, est un poète déjà assez considéré dans certaines parties de l'Allemagne.[. . .] Jusqu'à présent elle n'a publié que des vers. Mais moi, F. P. Greve, son patron et introducteur, prépare la publication de deux romans qu'elle a écrit dans la prison de Bonn sur Rhin...Personne ne se doute de cet état des choses...l'un des romans de Mme

[83] Gide further comments: "Je transcris ces notes, sans y rien changer, telles que je les pris en juin 1904 le lendemain du jour de cette unique rencontre" (133).
[84] "I have to warn you, Monsieur Gide, that I am constantly telling lies."
[85] "I love elegance passionately."

Essler, qui paraîtra sans nom d'auteur et que M. l'éditeur croit une autobiographie, aura pour titre: Fanny Essler. (Qtd. in Divay, Introduction lxx-lxxi)[86]

This revealing letter surprises with at least two new aspects: first, FPG has taken to using a joint pseudonym and, secondly, he outlines the prospect of publishing an anonymous autobiography under the title of *Fanny Essler*. All this is presented in a puzzling manner since Greve claims a triple identity (as himself, Madame Greve, Madame Essler) on the one hand, and partly sounds, on the other hand, as if Fanny Essler were living. To add to the confusion, the French original uses both the male ("un poète") and the female form ("elle a écrit") for this figure; having written in the prison at Bonn points back at Greve himself as the author of Mrs. Essler's poems and novels (cf. Divay, Introduction lxxi). Moreover, the name "Else Greve" would imply that Felix had formed a legal union with Else Endell, née Plötz, but no divorce from August Endell had been effected by that time, nor had any new marriage been registered.

In 1905, *Fanny Essler* was indeed published, but not anonymously; the author's name was Felix Paul Greve. Not labelled as autobiography, but subtitled *Ein Berliner Roman* (A Berlin Novel), FPG's *Schlüsselroman* with its telling relationship between fictional characters and official author must be seen as "the key to characterization in the Canadian novels" (Spettigue, "*Fanny Essler* and the *Master*" 47). Portraying a section of the personal history of Felix Greve and Else Endell in the figures of Reelen and Fanny, the book is, to a large extent, the biography of Else. When Greve's sequel to *Fanny Essler* came out, *Maurermeister Ihles Haus* (1906; *The Master Mason's House*, 1976), it represented the first half in the chronology of Else's life story, this time in the figure of Susie Ihle, whose childhood years and adolescence are depicted. If the fact that both books had female protagonists reflected a new literary trend – see, for instance, Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* (1857), Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* (1877) and Zola's *Nana* (1879-80) – their general depiction of male figures in anything but positive terms was nonetheless a daring move on Greve's part and transgressed the subtle attack on male

[86] Taken from a letter by Felix Paul Greve to André Gide, 17 October 1904, *Bulletin des amis d'André Gide* 32 (October 1976): 40. The following translation from the French is by Gaby Divay (Introduction lxx-lxxi) and *Markus Müller: " And now about me. I must work in rather strange ways. I am not one person any more, I am three: 1. Monsieur Felix Paul Greve. 2. Madame Else Greve. 3. Madame Fanny Essler. The latter, whose poems I shall send you shortly, and which are – this is still a secret – addressed to me, is a poet already well regarded in some parts of Germany.[. . .] *So far, she has published only in verse form. But I, F.P. Greve, the patron and person introducing her, am preparing the publication of two novels she has written while in prison at Bonn-on-Rhine.... Nobody has any suspicions about the state of these things ... one of the novels by Mrs. Essler, which will appear without the author's name and which the editor believes to be an autobiography, will have as its title: *Fanny Essler*."

authority in Fontane's *Effi Briest* (1895). The strong parodying instances and critical tone of the first book could not be matched by its successor, though; as a whole, these two publishing ventures did not bring the financial success Greve must have been seeking.

The aspiring writer was indebted not only in financial terms. He would claim full authorship for these two novels; Else in her memoirs, however, describes Felix's part: "He had written *two novels*. They were each dictated by me as far as *material* was concerned – it was *my life* and persons out of my life – he did the executive part of the business – giving the thing a conventional shape and dress" (BE 65). In light of Else's assertions, the genesis and authorship of both novels must be reviewed: The content was given by her, and 'all' Felix had to do was tailor this material into novelistic form. The 'preface' in his correspondence with Gide about pseudonymous authorship would prove true – Madame Else Endell, alias Greve, was indeed, or at least, as much the author of *Fanny Essler* and the following book as was Greve himself. Selfishly, and quite typically, Felix would not publicly acknowledge his being indebted to Else.[87]

Although recent scholarship has tried to establish with more accuracy how strong Else's input and contributions were, many instances still remain unclear. She wrote poems already in Germany before working and publishing as a Dadaist figure later in New York. Gaby Divay has proven that some of Greve's poems – and at least one by his later incarnation, Grove – are clearly based on drafts by Else (see Introduction; "Abrechnung" 33-34). In this context, it is also possible that Else assisted Felix with his many translations in substantial ways; her memoir speaks of joint hours spent working on literature. This would help explain the enormous amount of publications by Greve and his many pseudonyms in the years during and after his imprisonment.

In spite of his tendencies towards exaggeration and self-stylization, Felix Paul Greve must be credited with a good sense for promoting important authors. Already before his prison term, his translations as well as two essays, *Randarabesken zu Oscar Wilde* and *Oscar Wilde* (both 1903), had brought the Irish dramatist, essayist and writer of fairy tales to the attention of the German public. Having "really started the first Wilde

[87] Lynn deVore (1983) has examined the friendship between Elsa and the American exponent of female modernist writing, Djuna Barnes. She maintains that Barnes, not unlike Greve, made use of Elsa's psychologically telling letters and argues that "*Nightwood*'s Robin is fundamentally based upon Elsa and that Felix is fully derived from one of Elsa's lovers named Felix Paul Greve." Moreover, deVore reasons that "Elsa's biography also serves as a reliable guide to Barnes's masterpiece, a voice that extends and amplifies the potential meanings of the novel" (79; 89).

craze in Germany" (BE 69), Greve continued this trend, expanded his spectrum and published two translations of Gide, *Der Immoralist* and *Paludes (Die Sümpfe)* in 1905, and *Ein Liebesversuch und andere Novellen*, *Saül*, and *Die Enge Pforte* over the next four years – thus establishing Gide on the German market and delighting, for example, Hermann Hesse. Similarly, Greve convinced his publisher Bruns to bring out three titles by Meredith as well as Greve's own study, *George Meredith und sein Stil: Eine Entgegnung* in 1904-05, and three books by H.G. Wells (*Die Riesen kommen!!*, *Dr. Moreaus Insel*, *Die Zeitmaschine*) in 1905-06. The most prestigious project was undoubtedly the *Complete Works* of Gustave Flaubert in 10 Volumes – an enterprise that was dear to Felix but that would disappoint him deeply.

J.C.C. Bruns, Greve's publisher, had always been lenient and gradually regained faith in him; Greve's translations of English authors had proven of more than average quality, and so J.C.C. decided to let him start on four books by Flaubert (including three volumes of letters) as translator and editor. This was bound to upset Max Bruns, the publisher's son, who had previously pushed a prestigious Baudelaire edition against his father's reasoning and was now hoping to start his 'own' Flaubert series. Max (more powerful, of course) and Felix (in dire financial straits) had to arrange themselves; animosities were exchanged; Max's personal notes speak of Felix's failure and inability as editor (see Martens, *Karriere* 270-1). Into this already charged atmosphere came a letter by a previously unheard of Dr. Fischer of Bielefeld, who turned out to be the fully authorized representative of Flaubert's heiress, Madame Franklin-Grout of Antibes. Dr. Fischer informed Bruns that the planned Flaubert edition was not not possible for reasons of copyright, and curtailed the entire venture by suddenly bringing himself into an almost omnipotent position.

During the years to follow, Max Bruns, now leading the house, was engaged in several lawsuits with Dr. Fischer. This frustrating development also terminated Greve's relations with the *Bruns Verlag*. Of the Flaubert editions published from 1904 onwards, two were selected and prefaced by "Felix Paul Greve" and translated by "E. Greve" (*Briefe über seine Werke*, *Reiseblätter (Briefe aus dem Orient. Über Feld und Strand.)*), and two translated by "Felix Paul Greve" (*Die Versuchung des heiligen Antonius*, *Briefe an Zeit- und Zunftgenossen*). All in all, this had not become "his" (nor Max's) but rather Dr. Fischer's edition; nonetheless, his intensive occupation with Gustave Flaubert had strongly influenced Felix's understanding of himself as a literary man. Greve's essay, "Flauberts Theorien über das Künstlertum," published in the *Rheinisch-Westfälische*

Zeitung in 1904, gives testimony to his own new artistic orientation; as Divay ("Greve's Translations" 128) asserts, "Flaubert is his adopted model now, and it remains in place for the rest of his life."

Given the complications adhering to many of his projects and his life style as well as the translations he was working on, it is remarkable how long it would take for exhaustion to show. Living with Else first in Wollerau in Switzerland, Paris-Plage in Northern France (1905-06), and then in Berlin again, Felix translated, among others, Henri Murger's *Die Bohème* (1906), Cervantes's *Novellas* and *Don Quixote* (1907-08), Walter Pater's *Marius* (1908), parts of Balzac's *Die Menschliche Komödie* (1908 onwards) and Jonathan Swift's *Prosaschriften* in four volumes (1909-10) for the *Insel Verlag* at Leipzig. Also in 1909, in Berlin, Erich Reiss published Greve's translation of Alexandre Dumas's *Der Graf von Monte Christo*. Not all of his works match the high standards he had proven capable of. In a letter of 21 September, addressed to Else "Greve" after Felix Paul Greve's mysterious disappearance and alleged suicide in the summer of 1909, Insel attorney Anton Kippenberg skilfully diagnoses the causes for increasing flaws in Felix's recent translations:

> I have always completely acknowledged that a lot of his work, and I can say most of it, was excellent and in accordance with his great talents. Some of it, on the contrary, was not at all that way, and I am not the only one who pointed that out, but in many discussions and written remarks contained in letters to us this became obvious. Your husband almost always realized and candidly admitted this himself.[. . .] The reason was not lack of ability – nobody could have appreciated the talent of your husband more than I – but rather that he felt forced to take on more work than he could cope with adequately, in spite of his tremendous energy, as he needed the money to pay off an old debt, as he often told me.[. . .] If I expressed doubts it was [. . .] in the form of a friendly warning: you are taking on too much. (qtd. in and trans. by Pacey, *Letters* 551)

The pressure must have grown too much. Felix Paul Greve vanished in 1909, apparently wanting the public and his creditors to believe he had tragically drowned on a boat to Sweden. He abruptly ended his career as a German poet, novelist, essayist and truly prolific translator. He had begun translating around 1898, with sonnets from Dante's *Vita Nuova*; he had stopped with Swift's "A Modest Proposal," creating a German version "of inspired quality [that] is known to have delighted Brecht as a schoolboy" (Divay, "Greve's Translations" 146). Greve's daring translations were crucial contributions to the new field of making foreign literature available to a domestic

audience reading in German. That such a process implies individual interpretations and eventually necessitates appropriations may be criticised – but it is also, as Alberto Manguel infers, essential to the act: "In the early middle ages, the word 'translation' (derived from the past participle of Latin *transferre* – to carry over; to carry across) meant the moving of sacred relics to another place. Occasionally, these transfers would be illegal," especially in those cases where relics were stolen to bring glory to the city that could secure their possession.[88]

An analogy to the case of Greve cannot be denied: In the worst instances, as with the pseudonymous Konrad Thorer's tackling of Cervantes' *Novelas Ejemplarios*, FPG would literally steal from previous translations without even consulting the original, turning an already bad translation even worse in the process[89]; in his more fortunate approaches, as Divay ("Greve's Translations" 147) suggests, "his translations were a formal recasting of existing texts whose content appealed to his personal sense of enjoyment, and which provided a welcome opportunity to identify himself with them or their authors." Although generally imitating the practice of his fellow-translators – especially of George, whose *Umdichtungen* fused appropriation with artistic reinterpretation – Greve was lacking the genuine originality necessary to render a literary translation a true work of art. In light of such limitations and an increasing exhaustion, one possible solution was stealing away to stylize himself as a relic in a new context.

[88] "Im frühen Mittelalter bedeutete das Wort "Übersetzung" (gebildet aus dem Partizip Präteritum des lateinischen *transferre* – übertragen) die Verbringung von Heiligenreliquien an einen anderen Ort. Manchmal waren diese Transfers illegal, wenn etwa die heiligen Überreste in einer Stadt geraubt wurden, um dem höheren Ruhm einer anderen Stadt dienstbar gemacht zu werden" (Manguel, *Im Spiegelreich* 165).

[89] Anton M. Rothbauer, editor and translator of a *Complete Works* (1963; 2000), outlines the disastrous effect of "Konrad Thorer's" approach to Cervantes. For one thing, crucial information indicating that previous translations had been used ("Vollständige Ausgabe in 2 Bänden unter Benutzung älterer Übertragungen, besorgt von Konrad Thorer") moved from the first pages in the first edition of Greve's translation (1907) to the book's end in subsequent editions (1956); the reference was thus minimalized and obscured. Moreover, as Rothbauer criticizes, the bitter truth of that original statement consists in the fact "daß Thorer kein einziges Mal das Original zu Rate gezogen hat, sondern Kapitel um Kapitel von Notter und Keller abschreibt. Die ganze Bearbeitung bestand darin, daß Thorer dort, wo Notter und Keller seiner Meinung nach unklar waren, den Text etwas umgeschrieben hat. Er glättete das Deutsch der alten Übersetzung und brachte in die ohnehin fehlerhafte Übersetzung aus dem Jahre 1840 noch neue Fehler hinein." ("Einführung in die Exemplarischen Novellen" 57).

Passage and Transfer of Identity to the New World

With a bit of irony and a trace of admiration, one could argue that all FPG would do after his mysterious departure from Europe was to translate himself, his cultural heritage and capacity for perpetual self-transformation into the New World. The overall picture of this transfer which entailed "Grove's doctrine of aesthetic incarnation" (Williams, *Confessional Fictions* 54) is, however, far from complete. Knowledge of the time immediately following his disappearance and up to his well-documented entry in Manitoba in December 1912 is sparse.

Recent discoveries and current research are adding a few more pieces of information to these still obscure three years. In October 1998, Bruce Thomson of Winnipeg checked passenger lists at the Canadian National Archives in Ottawa and found the entry proving that one "F[elix] Grove" – aged "thirty" and "married," with "Touring" entered for "Destination" and "Author" for "Occupation in Country From Which You Came" – had taken a passage on a White Star Line steamer from Liverpool to Montreal from 22 July to 30 July 1909 (see Divay, "Grove's Passage" 2-8). Thomson's discovery was all the more astonishing as this information had been provided in *A Search for America* (ASA; 1927) – the Canadian writer Frederick Philip Grove's 'fictional autobiography' that hitherto had been viewed with much suspicion whenever personal data came into play. Although 1892 for the year of departure and the alleged age of 24 were wrong, the other information concerning the steamer passage proved correct.

The whereabouts of FPG after his arrival in the New World needs much clarification yet. Contrary to the story-line in *A Search for America*, which focuses on Toronto as the place where the Grove-persona Phil Branden worked as a waiter, Gaby Divay suggests "that Greve / Grove's itinerary led him from Montreal straight to New York City, via Toronto and perhaps Buffalo. The presence of a much worn 1909 Baedeker travel guide to the United States in Grove's library has contributed to this conviction. [The copy] has numerous markings in the New York pages, including underlining of several German bookdealers" (Divay, "Grove's Passage" 13).

The next major clue is provided by the woman that Felix Paul Greve had left behind in Germany, Else "Greve" Endell. The later Baroness Elsa took a passage to New York on 10 June 1910, sailing from Rotterdam and arriving on 29 June. She was, as Spettigue discovered while editing her memoirs, "proceeding to Pittsburg to meet her

'brother-in-law' named 'T.R.Greve' (undoubtedly F.P.Greve, with the cross-bar removed from the letter F, making it a T, and added to the P, making it an R." (Hjartason and Spettigue, Introduction 24). Her memoirs reveal a lack of knowledge as to FPG's whereabouts in the 1920s – "He might be very successful now in America – if he is not dead – I do not know." – but indicate that she had joined him there: "I became separated from him – by his suddenly leaving me (it might not have been so suddenly but appeared so) alone and helpless without even knowing much English then – in the midst of the county of Kentucky[90] in the small farmcountry. That is how I came to America in the first place" (BE 66). Hence, Else had joined Felix at Pittsburg and they moved to Kentucky where he, after about a year of farming, left her behind for a second and final time in the fall of 1911.

The lines and biographies of these two figures diverged from then on. Else was to grope her way, via Cincinnati, to New York, where in November 1913 she "married a black sheep of the illustrious Freytag-Loringhoven family [. . .], using her maiden name Ploetz and deducting eleven years from her real age of 39" (Divay, "Fanny Essler's Poems" 168). Prominent in Greenwich Village, collaborating with artists like Man Ray and Marcel Duchamp, and engaging in a brief but intense affair with William Carlos Williams, the notoriously poor Baroness became a model and a dadaist figure before returning to Europe in 1923 and dying in Paris in 1927. Some of her poems which had been published in English, as well as those poems found in the University of Maryland Archives, convey a high degree of originality. Her German piece "Schalk" ("Wag"), presumably written around 1923, engages in an intertextual dialogue with Greve's works and their earlier collaborations; "Schalk" uses elements of "Ein Portrait: Drei Sonnette" – published in 1904 under the joint pseudonym Fanny Essler, focusing on the hands, eyes, and mouth of a non-named male – and turns this into the grim image of a high-browed fall bringing destruction and decay. This allusion to FPG's nasty behaviour and his leaving her alone becomes explicit through Else's annotation on the poem's earlier version from around 1922, then titled "Herbst" ("Fall"): "The fall is – as an image – a portrait of Felix Paul Greve."[91] This man, thought of by his former partner in

[90] She probably means the State of Kentucky. The precise location in Kentucky has been established by Gaby Divay, who discovered among Else's papers at the University of Maryland a note on her poem "Schalk" saying, "Sparta, Kentucky, am [on] Eagle Creek," (Divay, "Fanny Essler's Poems" 178).

[91] "Der Herbst ist – als Bild – ein Portrait Felix Paul Greves." For comparisons of the Fanny Essler poems and Else's variants of "Herbst" and "Schalk", see the facsimile reproductions in Divay (*Poems* 43f; 49b). For further illumination, see also Divay ("Abrechnung" 33f).

unfavourable terms which evoke associations of disintegration and death, was to spend one more year in obscurity before beginning a new existence.

The scene of entrance on the Canadian stage is Winnipeg, Manitoba, in December 1912. An ambitious man of impressive stature – dressed in a slightly smudged work habit – "sought and was granted an interview with Robert Fletcher, then Deputy Minister of Education," and came out with an "'interim' teacher's certificate" (Pacey, Introduction xv). Having surfaced out of the blue, with nothing in his hands (not even a reference), but with persuasive eloquence in his talk, the man thus initiated what was to become a remarkable career in the New World: that of teacher and principal, a writer of essays, nature sketches, newspaper articles and novels by the name of Frederick Philip Grove.

Translating himself into this new version was an enterprise of endless self-references, almost like an essayistic circulation around a subject the essence of which could only be sketched in tentative terms. This task of transferring implied many struggles and general restlessness. Grove's beginning in rural Manitoba is characterized by no less than 11 different teaching positions between January 1913 and June 1924;[92] although he married Catherine Wiens, a fellow teacher, on 2 August 1914, and they had a daughter, Phyllis May, one year later, he was always on the move, from Haskett to Winkler, to Virden, Gladstone, Ferguson, Eden, and finally to Rapid City. It was only there that he and his family would stay for seven years (1922 to 1929) before moving to two small towns near Ottawa, briefly, and then to their farm in Simcoe, Ontario in 1931, where he died, after two strokes and in very poor health, in 1948.

The 36 years of his documented time in Canada show FPG as a man of different roles but enormous will-power and immense capacity for work. Starting out as a teacher, he would soon acquire the reputation of being an ambitious and equally demanding as well as driven man. Margaret Stobie, who around 1970 undertook the interesting task of interviewing most of Frederick Philip Grove's former pupils who were still alive, managed to preserve a wealth of voices – among them, for instance, that of Victor Suddaby, who remembered how Grove was hard on them and made them uneasy, "a complex character. But he was real. I guess I learned more under him than from any other teacher I had. Perhaps that is why I liked him in spite of himself"

[92] Strictly speaking, Grove taught only at nine different institutions, since he returned twice to posts he had already inhabited – the Consolidated School in Eden and the High School in Rapid City. Cf. Pacey (Introduction xxvii-xxviii).

(*Frederick Philip Grove* 55).[93] Colleagues and students alike were often engaged in struggles with this immigrant who was not only "*echt Deutsch* – real German" (28) but keen on reforming old structures within educational institutions. His philosophy was that new methods and new devices would enhance the complicated process of knowledge acquisition; his belief in practical education made him, for example, invest a considerable part of his salary in setting up a chemistry laboratory for the students. Given the more conservative orientation of many school and administration officials, most of whom were Mennonites, and his own disposition for losing patience or lacking respect, the newcomer would run into difficulties. There were "complaints in the town that Grove was arrogant, presumptuous, officious, that he had offended the school board" (Stobie, "Mennonite Reserve" 70).

A similar sense of complexity emerges from Grove's earliest Canadian correspondence (1913 / 1914). The five extant letters to his correspondent I.J. Warkentin, a Mennonite who had gone to Leipzig, Germany to do post-graduate work, illuminate his position as principal at the intermediate school at Winkler. His efforts at improving, or revolutionizing, the school system are expressed in a self-asserting and self-justifying tone that changes from initial enthusiasm to increasing aggression. He shows strong determination: "With our friend P.H. it is a fight, I am afraid. It looks as if the issue will soon be – he or I.[. . .] *I have got* to win out." Having outlined his plans to restructure the classes and to lead the "open war" for the sake of accepting outsiders, he exclaims in the same letter: "I made it plain to him that *I* was running this school, not he.[. . .] Well, I conquered along the whole line.[. . .] The assistant teachers are my assistants now, not hidden bosses" (Pacey, *Letters* 9).[94]

Instances of self-portrayal in his correspondence and later autobiographical accounts would present Grove as a well-travelled man of wide-ranging experience and erudition; images of importing cultural goods which secure the nation's intellectual growth abound. With the past behind him and far away from his European background, he creates, in his second letter to Warkentin in Germany, one of those fusions of confession and self-stylization that would become his trademark:

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93 Stobie's assertion that Grove "was a professional and professionally trained elementary teacher before he arrived in Manitoba" has not been verified (*Frederick Philip Grove* 31).

94 Fourth letter in the series (from December 6, 1913). First published in Margaret Stobie ("Mennonite Reserve").

> I wish I could get a decent critical edition of Homer's *Odyssey*. The older a man gets the more he wants to be left alone with the 2 or 3 companions that he has found worth while – Goethe's *Westöstlicher Diwan*, *The Odyssey* and Shakespeare's 2 *Richards*, *Lear*, *Timon* and *Midsummernight's Dream*! Give me those and a life-sentence and I will rest content. (Qtd. in Pacey, *Letters* 6)

FPG was not to rest content over the following years, but while holding up the mask of the civilized immigrant he would continue the task of translating himself into a Manitoban prairie context which he condescendingly viewed as cultural wilderness and through which he envisioned himself to be hailed one day as national *spiritus rector*. The selection of favourite books or authors not only implies a strong intellectual capacity; he also picks those works that thematize power-struggles among generations, classes and cultures, transformation or loss of social identity (as in *Lear*) and, above all, the unending journey that subjects the hero to supreme tests in a world often ignorant of his abilities.

The increasing frustration caused by constrant troubles in his teaching positions and by a ten-year absence from writing gave way to a dramatic "recovery of creative power" (Makow, "Letters from Eden" 107) in the fall of 1919. During the seven weeks of 10 October to 28 November, Grove wrote a series of sketches originally titled "Seven Drives on Manitoba Trails by A Manitoba Teacher" and published in 1922 as *Over Prairie Trails*. The five extant letters he wrote his wife at the time provide fascinating glimpses into FPG's "rebirth," his state of mental agitation, and the genesis of this collection as well as conception of future works. In the third letter, he explains that two out of seven drives have been sketched already, adding that it "is not only great prose, but real poetry to boot.[. . .] This book, by condensation of facts and impressions [. . .] will be about ¼ fiction and ¾ fact. That will make it all the better" (115).

Grove's attitude towards school duties – and thus towards his responsibility as a family man – changes with an increasing sense of creativity-as-fate: "My dear girl, I have started something, it is stronger than I am, and I cannot say that I like it. It is like an illness that overthrows all plans." Worries about financial security and saving money – a topic looming large in the two preceeding letters – are suddenly cast aside: "I know now that for 25 years[95] I have wasted my time.[. . .] I do not care one rap about school. I shall write, and if I cannot keep up the work in the school, I shall neglect it" (115). This

[95] Makow ("Letters from Eden" 116) reasons that Grove's wife Catherine most likely did not know her husband's real age or identity at the time; in all biographical material FPG was to issue later in Canada, he would claim to have entered North America in 1892.

sense of determination does not change drastically over the next years, although already in his next letter Grove reasons, "I am not going to quit so long as I feel I can do the work without endangering my book. We need the money too darn badly" (118).

Some of these struggles and reasonings surface in *Over Praire Trails*. When the book came out, hailed as a new style of writing and something the prairie dwellers could identify with, the fact-fiction formula as outlined in one letter and repeated in the fifth sketch was not questioned by the public; most readers were all too willing to take the book for a mixture of natural descriptions and a self-portrait of an unusual teacher and family man. The author emerges in the sketches of his seven Manitoban trips between Falmouth (where he taught) and Gladstone (where his wife taught and kept their child) as a keen, scientific observer of the landscape in the fall and winter, enjoying his journeys through "the barren sea" (OPT 73) of the wind- and snow-swept prairie. As a daring traveller, Grove consciously accepts Homeric challenges of almost superhuman dimensions. Trying to pass impassable roads after a snow-storm, he comments that this "was indeed like nothing so much as like being out on rough waters and in a troubled sea" (OPT 77). The Grove-as-Odysseus analogy is further substantiated by the fact that six of the seven sketches are resolved with the hero's return home to a Penelope-equivalent, the author's wife who is always waiting.

Over Prairie Trails underlines the tendency to identify with literary figures and creations FPG had already demonstrated in Europe, for instance, in his appropriation of Georgian, Wildean and Flaubertian facets. With his first Canadian publication, he adopted a composite persona of Odysseus, Nietzschean superman, and Rousseauian critic, established the Homeric quest pattern as an integral part of his writing, and began to unfold a tragic outlook on man's inferiority to natural forces, always voiced in the mind of a solitary and struggling protagonist.[96] All his subsequent works would, either by actual or mental travels, modify this pattern through a searching figure, in an essentially dramatic context, oscillating between the poles of history and nature, between the demands of civilization and the need for self-assertion. "Viewed in this

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[96] Repeatedly, Grove has voiced this view in his public addresses, as in "Nationhood" (1929): "All religion, all science, all art, rightly understood, lead us on to that realization and to what I have come to call the generally tragic reaction of the human soul to the fundamental conditions of man's life on earth." He calls tragedy "the highest form of literary art," arguing that the "word implies a standing-up to one's destiny." Moreover, he reasons that all tragic figures, from the Bible onwards, "undertook to do what cannot be done by human strength alone: they exhibit the indomitable, the Promethean nature of man" (INTBS 153). The.

way," as W.J. Keith ("A Re-Examination" 133) maintains, "the basic structure of *Over Prairie Trails* becomes profoundly representative."

By working on his first book, Frederick Philip Grove was beginning to arrive in the New World. Unleashed into regained creativity, into a long fit of immense productivity that would last approximately ten years, he was already writing new texts mentally while trying to finish the last sketch of *Over Prairie Trails*. He was tempted to rush ahead before rounding off his current project: "I should infinitely prefer writing my 'Immigrant' first," he tells his wife in a letter of 21 November 1919. "That book becomes more and more plastic now. Tone, style and contents. It works itself into chapters, even" (Makow, "Letters from Eden" 120). This 'Immigrant' book would become known as his "fictional autobiography," *A Search for America*. Not to be published until 1927, this book would present 'Phil' Grove's persona in the figure of Phil Branden, a suddenly impoverished immigrant of wealthy background and Swedish-Scottish descent. Through *A Search for America*, FPG rewrote the major translation of himself from Old into New World.

The process of coming to terms with his past and of investing his present with acceptable markers of being a new man implied more textual work. In the same letter that announced his 'Immigrant' project, Grove commented, "After that I have another book ready as to contents: The White Range Line House. The one that I started to work on in German. But of course, I'll remodel that if I write in English. I'll have to see first, whether my English will be a success" (120). In a rare moment of self-questioning, Grove ponders the possibility or necessity of translating himself from German into English. Knowing that English would be his only chance to secure success, he opted against his mother-tongue. The book he envisioned would focus on problems of communication and (lack of) understanding. *Settlers of the Marsh*, as it came to be called upon its publication in 1925, centres around the Swedish immigrant Niels Lindstedt who has to learn to understand first the English language and then himself before he can arrive 'home' on the Canadian Prairie. As crucial parts of this process, the fateful marriage to and murder of the 'town whore,' Clara Vogel, together with Niels's subsequent prison term and final union with Ellen Amundsen, are yet another translation of Greve's, that of his shift in relationships from Else to Catherine. For these reasons as well as for the novel's convincing depiction of the hardships of pioneer life, *Settlers of the Marsh* is a major piece of Canadian literature (see Chapter 3.2).

With the three books already in outline or in writing, Grove had not exhausted his creative energy yet. "I am sure I can dash books down at a rate of two a year for a dozen years yet. In between there will fill out a couple more volumes of nature studies." The self-aggrandizing tone is combined with a prophetic view of what else was going to be published by him. In fact, the surprising success of *Over Prairie Trails* prompted FPG to compose a complementary collection describing spring and summer trips; published in 1923, though, *The Turn of the Year* could not match its predecessor and flopped. Grove's own evaluation in 1919 of where his strength lay would prove accurate: "I am sure I can do better, too, when I am entirely on fictitious ground. I don't like to be hampered by facts.[. . .] I believe I shall break through at last into the open, even if these drives fall flat" (120).

FPG did have the kind of breakthrough he was hoping for – in spite of, or because of, the complicated publishing history of most of his works. *Settlers of the Marsh*, cut down from a trilogy-manuscript, aroused fierce debates and was briefly set on the index (but never banned!), since the practice of abortion by jumping heights repeatedly was not a proper thing to describe in Canada of 1925; *A Search for America* underwent several stages of rewritings, with the text cut shorter each time, and had been turned down by a host of publishers before Graphic in Ottawa finally accepted it. This "Odyssey of an Immigrant" soon became Grove's biggest success and brought him such acclaim that the secretary of the Association of Canadian Clubs, Graham Spry, suggested a lecture tour. The timing for this proved right, as the Groves' twelve-year-old daughter Phyllis May had unexpectedly died on 20 July 1927, due to an incapable doctor's inability to diagnose her appendicitis. FPG would keep lamenting this tragic loss for a lifetime, but the prospect of demonstrating his stature as a man of letters must have been comforting. From February 1928 to March 1929, he travelled through Canada on three nationwide tours. This series of public addresses catapulted him, temporarily, to the forefront of the country's intellectual activities – and to the height of his own aspirations. After triumphant responses in Ottawa and Toronto, Grove deemed himself the Canadian patriarch and wrote to Catherine while *en route* to Kitchener: "Well, I am 'the biggest thing there is in Canada' in Toronto. Same thing as in Ottawa. Only here, the university people dominate. I was introduced at a small meeting as 'perhaps the most significant voice in the English-speaking world of today'" (Pacey, *Letters* 123).

Always given to overvaulting ambition, Grove's megalomaniac fits were enhanced in moments of triumph. Unfortunately, he lacked both the modesty and the *clairvoyance* necessary to consolidate any deserved but short-lived success. "With Grove," as his friend Wilfred Eggleston recollects, "no triumph lasted long.[. . .] And he did not strike me as being very good diplomatic material, either" (107; 109). Besides this unfavourable character disposition, the Depression began to take a strong grip on North America when FPG had made it to the top. Already his next prairie novel, *Our Daily Bread* (1928), with the university professor Woodrow Ormond as another interesting Grove persona, was only mildly successful; so was *It Needs To Be Said* (1929), the collection of his addresses given during the lecture tours. With *The Yoke of Life* (1930) and the summary of his conception of prairie life in *Fruits of the Earth* (1933), the story of patriarch Abe Spalding's tragic creation of a microcosmic world, Grove had managed to establish himself as the first consistent writer of realist regional fiction in Canada – but one suddenly without an audience.

Grove's short-sighted strategies of pitting various publishers against one another complicated things unnecessarily in 1929 when they were negotiating for his "Adolescence" manuscript. When it was published the next year (as *The Yoke of Life*), and *A Search for America* went into a second printing, Grove had four new books out. This was not only an unhealthy overpresence; Grove had earned himself something of a reputation for manipulating his publishers (cf. Stobie, *Frederick Philip Grove* 137-146). At the same time, however, he had been offered the position of director in a small publishing venture in Ottawa. Suddenly, the chance to fulfill one of his old dreams opened up before him: already in his German years, FPG had been planning "to edit the whole of German literature in verse" (Qtd. in Spettigue, *FPG* 172). Now, in Ottawa, he began his daring project of editing and publishing what he deemed the most important Canadian prose texts in 'his' *The Canada Series*; Eggleston (107) describes the effect on Grove: "He was acknowledged by some critics and reviewers as one of the leading Canadian novelists; he was editor of Graphic Press; he was the head of Ariston Press; he was the general editor of an impressive new historical series.[. . .] Grove currently appeared to be on the heights in every respect. It was, of course, only a mirage." But Grove must have felt elated inside his mask of the cultural imperialist who generously sheds the light of his superior knowledge on an emergent Canadian nation in need of instruction.

Grove's son was born on 14 October 1930, named Arthur Leonard after Frederick Philip's friend, Arthur Leonard Phelps. His enterprise with Graphic and its division, Ariston Publishers, Limited, ended in frustration. The business structures were obscure, payments constantly delayed, and "Graphic was approaching disaster" (Stobie, *Frederick Philip Grove* 153). In contrast to the hoped-for riches and increasing fame, a disillusioned Grove closed out all his affairs in 1931; with the little money he made upon quitting, he bought a farm in Western Ontario, "with dreams," as his friend Phelps commented, "of being a gentleman farmer and literary man. The project was as pathetic as it was ambitious" (153) – but it reflects yet another variation of the many personae through which FPG liked to test himself.

The farm and house in Simcoe, Ontario was an image coming out of Grove's literary visions. In "Nationhood," one of his most celebrated addresses during the lecture tours and afterwards published in *It Needs To Be Said*, Grove concluded with attributing "a new hopefulness" to the Canadian people's mentality; he reasoned "that perhaps it arises from the fact that here, in this country, they can own the soil on which they stand. For I take it to be a desire still inherent in man as born by woman to own that bit of land whence, with tentative mind, he reaches out into the dark mysteries which surround us" (INTBS 163). One of his most-quoted utterings, this passage also displays some of the inner yearning that motivated him to follow the many land-conquering protagonists of his works. Like his struggling heroes, "he [now] had the mansion, the symbol of achievement" (Stobie, *Frederick Philip Grove* 157) and the piece of land attached to it. He wanted to farm in great style, bought six purebred Jersey cows, and hired out men to renovate the house and work on the field (158). Miscalculating the financial implications and overestimating his abilities in agriculture, he was almost immediately subjected to the material decline that befell most of his pioneer figures.

The literary man in him would pursue and organize regular meetings of the "English Club," first held in the Groves's house, later in town; he would plan and direct the topics, often deliver papers himself (sometimes derived from his former addresses), and gradually tour the district with talks on "literature, education, and New Canadians" (159). But this practice lasted only for a few years. Official activities, exchanges with fellow intellectuals, contacts with the outside world became fewer and fewer in frequency; except for Catherine's tutoring a series of pupils to maintain the financially distressed household, there was little social life for the Groves. They lived in isolation

and quiet – conditions that FPG rather seemed to welcome; he "sometimes went for a year or more with no communication with" colleagues like Fairley or Pratt (181). "The lonelier the better as far as I am concerned" (Makow, "Letters from Eden" 119), FPG had written to his wife from Eden in 1919 – and nothing much had changed.

Measured only against the number of publications Grove had in the 1930s and 40s, his productivity was slowing down considerably during those years. But he was far from lazy; farming had turned out to be the wrong business for him. Lacking the impulse or the stamina to come up with something new, he tackled older projects that had been abandoned for several years. Reflecting his all-time fascination with technology (an echo from his translating Wells), he examined the individuals's relations to society and nature in other settings, particularly that of Ontario. *Two Generations* (1939) and *The Master of the Mill* (1944) were the results. The latter novel not only examined man's being dominated by the machine in the endless struggle for economic power, but also aimed at an allegorical Eastern-Canadian history by sketching the Clark family dynasty from 1867 to the 1930s, with the mill as the all-dominating symbol of familial and national entrepreneurship.

In less quantity than in the late 1920s, Grove also continued publishing short stories and essays in different journals and magazines. From 1935 to 1937, however, he published nothing at all; from 1938 to 1947, he had at least one piece of writing published each year, including the much-discussed "Postscript to *A Search for America*" (1942), in which he dramatized his fate as a writer in Canada and as a labourer in a canning factory near Simcoe at age sixty-two. *Consider Her Ways* (1947), the last novel issued during his lifetime, went back as far as 1925, originally called "MAN, His Habits, Social Organization, and Outlook." As the preface to the published version indicates, the text – like so many other works by FPG – had undergone a series of drastic changes; "MAN" had been translated from a human perspective into that of a few ants that went on a six-year excursion from the Orinoco valley all the way to New York City – all this to study the ways of mankind. Working in the satire tradition of Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (one of Felix Paul Greve's last German translations), this "'Ant-book'" apparently had a special significance for Grove: "I used to consider [it] *the* book of mine" (qtd. in Stobie ("An Innocent from Abroad" 227).

Although *Consider Her Ways* speaks of a strong influence of European tradition and of his own translating practice, the relevance of his last book for Grove himself was not equalled by its relevance for the public, who basically ignored the ant-story. How

much of this Grove could still realize and what his possible responses might have been, we cannot establish. After he had suffered a first stroke with resulting paralysis on the right side of his body in 1944, his health faded and, after a severe seizure and prolonged illness, Grove died on 19 August 1948.

A medal from the Royal Society in 1934; an honorary life membership in the Canadian Author's Association in 1939; membership in the Royal Society in 1941; a monthly grant from the Writers' Foundation beginning in 1944; an honorary degree from the University of Manitoba (where he had graduated as an extra-mural student in 1922) in 1946; finally, the Governor General's Award for his official autobiography, *In Search of Myself* (1946), in 1947 for "non-fiction": "Few Canadians received such honors," Stobie (*Frederick Philip Grove* 184) subsumes; "possibly no one else in Grove's day received as many."

To date, the play of aliases that FPG had performed so persistently keeps haunting the critics who have come up with a multitude of labelling fragments which still do not fit into a coherent image: "[. . .] a writer in Canada rather than a Canadian writer" (Pache, "Grove: Comparative Perspectives" 15); "a stranger [who] took us in" (Sutherland 8); "this country's most talked about but least understood author" (Hjartason, Preface ix); "something of a liar" (Pacey, Introduction xiv); "our first novelist of unquestioned stature" (Keith, Introduction xi); "a man of new beginnings" (Spettigue, *FPG* 219) with an "almost compulsive habit of veiled self-referencing" (Divay, "Names" 109).

Partly out of habit, and partly out of wise anticipation of what he had triggered by his elaborate self-mirroring and his translating Old World-versions of FPG into new ones, the immigrant to Canada composed a self-revelatory essay which was never intended for publication. In "Rebels All: Of the Interpretation of Individual Life," he writes: "To those who knew me, I was an enigma. To myself all my actions were perfectly clear" ("Rebels All" 70). Knowing him, in this context, means facing a mystery without penetrating it. "All our lives are based on interpretations," Grove adds in an ironic Nietzschean gesture: "The world of facts is unknown to us" (72; 74). The fact he has left behind is the mirage of personae which he has conjured by incessantly seeking to interpret his own masquerade in the library of his (translated) works.

Chapter 2.2

Robert Kroetsch:
Western Canadian (Postmodern?) Poetics as Archaeology / Genealogy

> Persona is a beginning.
>
> Robert Kroetsch, "The Moment of the Discovery of America Continues"

> What, you imagine that I would take so much trouble and so much pleasure in writing, do you think that I would keep so persistently to my task, if I were not preparing – with a rather shaky hand – a labyrinth into which I can venture, in which I can move my discourse, opening up underground passages, forcing it to go far from itself, finding overhangs that reduce and deform its itinerary, in which I can lose myself and appear at least to eyes that I will never have to meet again. I am no doubt not the only one who writes in order to have no face. Do not ask who I am and do not ask me to remain the same: . . .
>
> Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*

> This Robert Kroetsch is the site of a discourse on the nature of Canadian culture and history as well as a discourse on critical inquiry, narratological method and postmodern practice. [He] is increasingly dispersed as the subject of an investigation as to our nature and identity.
>
> David Arnason, Introducing Robert Kroetsch, 29 Sep 1992, Winnipeg

Pre-Positionings

In her much-quoted apostrophic assessment, critic Linda Hutcheon argues that "Robert Kroetsch is Mr Canadian Postmodern, if anyone is" (*Canadian Postmodern* 183). For all its relevance and validity, Hutcheon's naming act dangerously categorizes an author who has always been stressing the importance of eluding categories. "Any attempt to bio-criticize Robert Kroetsch into position," Aritha van Herk ("Biocritical Essay" ix) laments accordingly, "can only end in frustration." Therefore, notions of postmodernism will figure only marginally in this attempt at portraying some this author's motivations, stances and directions. Esteemed as a central figure in Western Canadian writing, Kroetsch has developed a style of his own that brings together a schooling in theories of modernism, subsequent interests in post-structuralism and phenomenology as major branches of postmodernism, and the oral traditions of North America. A great number of writers have exerted influence on his fiction: Conrad and Joyce, Cervantes and Ovid, Lawrence, Woolf and Faulkner, Borges, Calvino, Cortázar and Márquez are among the

most important ones; and in Canada, Grove, Mitchell, Ross and MacLennan, Laurence, Wiebe and Watson. In his poetry, influences are not easy to name, but from early models like Homer and Spenser he has moved to (post)modern and mostly North American writers in an over-all concern with quests for home, growth and change, and a ground for autobiographical envoys. Among the critical thinkers, Mikhail Bakhtin, Roland Barthes, Jacques Derrida and Julia Kristeva are the most persistent sources of inspiration for Kroetsch. His creatively critical essays, like "The Moment of the Discovery of America Continues" (1989),[97] often function as a talking mirror of his basic concerns and enact in vivid literary practice, through inserted stories, tall tales, memoir and poetry, what the author seeks to assert in theory.

From the mid-1970s onward, Kroetsch has received a lot of critical attention. His playful experimentation with forms and willingness to tread new narrative ground has not always been met with enthusiastic or approving responses. For instance, Joseph A. Lipari argues that in *Field Notes*, "too often [Kroetsch] settles for the merely clever and inventive" (1930), and Lesley Choyce "found many of the poems [in *Advice to My Friends*] to be little more than stylistic diversions" (30). By far outnumbering such voices, however, are the more appreciative evaluations. Moreover, there is a number of critics / writers who not only try to outline his evolution, but also to place themselves and their stances in relation to him.[98] Van Herk, concentrating on the psycho-biological dynamics in Kroetsch's cosmology, (dis)positions him – along and against herself – as wandering poet, questing lover, motherless son, protean trickster, chaotic transgressor, or his own dopplegänger in her "Biocritical Essay."[99] In "Weathercock: The Directions of Report," Donna Bennett posits that "'Un-naming', 'uncreating', 'decreating' have become important concepts in [his] criticism" (118) and provides a thorough analysis of his literary techniques and influences before she ends in transgressively subsuming them in a Kroetschian style. While Ann Munton maintains that he "develops from a realistic approach to fiction to a more fabulist one, exploring [. . .] tall tales and myths"

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[97] This essay is one of seventeen in Kroetsch's *The Lovely Treachery of Words: Essays Selected and New* (1989).

[98] In terms of this phenomenon, cf. the observation in the Preface about the intersecting circles of critics / writers who share similar concerns.

[99] In a recent interview conducted by J'nan Morse Sellery, van Herk stresses the enormous influence Kroetsch has always been exerting on her: "In my writing, I am having this ongoing dialogue with not just what Robert Kroetsch has written, but with what the work he has written represents." She also adds "I do not mind my being haunted by Kroetsch" (Sellery 36). Through that posture, she aligns herself with the figures of Rita Kleinhart and Raymond in Kroetsch's latest work, *The Hornbooks of Rita K* (see later and Chapter 5.2).

(*Robert Kroetsch* 5), Robert Lecker reasons that "Kroetsch's life, like his theory, poetry, and fiction, reflects a multiplying set of tensions between extremes" and suggests to apply the all-encompassing "border-crossing metaphor" to characterize "these multiple tensions and grounds" (RK 3). E.D. Blodgett assumes that Kroetsch "has always been profoundly exercised by the signification of history," ascribes to him a "constant recourse to literary theory produced as oracular discourse" and views him in light of "the making of himself as a kind of theory or myth" ("God in Rags" 229). Frank Davey, in a playful review of Kroetsch's involvement with the American journal *Boundary 2*, speaks of his "partisan postmodernism [and adds:] Kroetsch in the 1980s redoubles himself, taking positions as both a colonial subject and a beneficiary of postmodernism" ("American Alibis" 250).

Appreciative and informative as these critical cornerstones are, they must fail to produce a coherent picture – if there ever is one – of the writer, editor and teacher Kroetsch. But he has been labelled his own best *explicateur*,[100] which is documented by his essays and a number of interviews, particulary by a book of the telling title *Labyrinths of Voice* (1982). This series of interviews by and with Shirley Neuman and Robert Wilson, who have edited the book, is set up as a labyrinthine hide-and-seek game of mutually self-reflective and contradicting authorial and critical voices. In this and in other publications, Kroetsch has acknowledged what tools he considers useful and necessary for producing literature of a kind that both instructs and entertains. He has done that mostly in the context of fictionalizing and theorizing his beginnings and ongoing writerly activities, sees autobiography, for instance, "as an archaeological site" (LV 207). Therefore, starting with a first sense of genealogy, some of those methodological instruments will gradually be invoked to help dig out and illuminate the author's sense of place, region, background and development through personal history.

Beginnings: Digging for Story in the Garden

Sailing for the New World in 1841, the paternal side of Kroetsch's family commenced their mythic westward journey that was to carry on through the next generations after

[100] See, for instance, Ann Munton, who argues "that Kroetsch himself is perhaps one of his own most sensitive and intelligent critics" (*Robert Kroetsch* 17).

arrival at New York.[101] While they were settled in Bruce County, Ontario, Kroetsch's grandfather Henry (*1856) and father Paul (*1893) were born, before the family had to move further west and, after operating a sawmill, took up farming in Alberta in 1905. The line of Kroetsch's maternal grandmother, Anna Weller (*1849; originating from Trier), had left the Old World later but arrived in the district of Alberta four years earlier. His mother Hilda Marie Weller (*1903) married Paul Kroetsch in 1925 and they settled on a little prairie farm near Heisler. On 26 June 1927, Robert was born. The only brother to four sisters, and often freed from too hard male labour due to allergies, young Robert enjoyed the sense of open space and its many activities, the farm setting with horses, fixing fences, gardening and "rounding up cattle in the fall" (Munton, *Robert Kroetsch* 2). These activities and his freedom on the farm should prove to be significantly informative and instigating:

> Well, as a child, I remember that I constructed a whole world, possibly as a hero, [and] it was a geographical place in my mind: I imagined the rivers, and the town. [. . .] And also, in the garden, after they had planted potatoes, it was very easy to make little buildings in the soil. So I would [. . .] try to build these little places. [I]t was a very elaborate sense of being somebody else somewhere else, and almost novelistic in its scope. (Maze ii)

The garden constitutes the place where stories begin for Kroetsch. Moreover, growing vegetables and planting trees in the "kind of open field" where both women and men interact prompted his "wrestling with this notion of erotics"; the "ambiguous" garden moved him into a "kind of human-sexual intertextuality" (LV 21). Creative imagination, early desires, and a soil for textualization all come together: "I had to connect it with my garden, or, as I say, writing" (Maze iii). The (almost) edenic scenery of his garden thus originates writing, touches him into his life-long obsession with the "dream of origins" (BAW 76).

That obsession is intensified by the early death of Kroetsch's mother. "Isn't storytelling always a way of searching for one's origin," Roland Barthes asks, albeit in light of the death of the father and with Oedipus in mind (*Pleasure* 47). Out of a non-oedipal impulse, and by way of simultaneous lament and homage,[102] the search for the

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[101] Unless noted otherwise, biographical information is taken from Munton, *Robert Kroetsch* (1992), Carl Bessai, *The Impossible Home: Robert Kroetsch and his German Roots* (1997; video documentation), and personal conversations with the author.

[102] Cf. Kroetsch's sense of gratitude for matriarchal influence: "My parents, especially my mother, encouraged me to think: You can do what you want to do in the world" (Maze iii).

lost mother informs all of Kroetsch's works in many variations. Of equal importance is his belief that as part of an immigrant tradition, "we are eternally wandering" (qtd. in Bessai [videotape]). In addition to that, his intensive reading during school and college years afforded him the profound sense of "not finding myself in the reading; my environment was never represented. I think that played an enormous role in how I began to question and wonder about the formation of identity" (Maze v). How he developed his own method of approaching and unlayering a notion of personal, regional and national identity is reflected in a number of his essays, most tellingly in "On Being an Alberta Writer" (1983), which testifies to his notion of a generative exile. In that account of initiation, Kroetsch remembers how staggered he was as a child by the impression that "Ours was the ultimate tabula rasa" (BAW 70).[103] This emptiness not only urged him "to make up a story. *Our* story," but also to become, "profoundly, the listener" (74; 71). His compulsions led him straight into the beer parlours – mythic spaces of Canadian oral tradition – which he discovered as "those places where we talk ourselves into existence" (75).

Apart from elegantly combining discussions of his and other authors's vernacular literature with autobiographical elements,[104] "On Being an Alberta Writer" underlines the "appropriateness of [Foucault's] archaeological method" for a writer who in searching for a regional identity noticed that "authorized history was betraying us on the prairies" (76; 71). In *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1969), Foucault argues against "[c]ontinuous history [as] the indispensable correlative of the founding function of the subject" (12). As he further outlines in "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History" (1971), an essay that condenses some of the book's central statements, what is found through an archaeological approach to "the historical beginning of things is not the inviolable identity of their origin; it is the dissension of other things. It is disparity" (142). Hence, the French philosopher – who emphasizes the transitory nature of a self, the composition of an 'I' as a difference of masks[105] – reasons that genealogy "must record

[103] Cf. John Clement Ball, who examines Kroetsch's works in light of a "writing [that] springs from a sense of place," and maintains that "a tabula rasa, or blank state, is a solid and desirable place to begin putting something – a home, an identity, a literature" ("Carnival of Babel" 21).
[104] "The Moment of the Discovery of America Continues" extends the essentials of "On Being an Alberta Writer" and incorporates most of "The Continuing Poem" (originally 1984). It is a good example of the author's rewriting, re-citing and glossing of his own texts in the attempt of revising his own stances.
[105]See also *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (1966).

the singularity of events outside of any monotonous finality" (139).[106] This stress on fragment, as opposed to official completeness and linear versions of history, and the privileging of the metaphoric activities of digging and tracing have made Kroetsch embrace the model of the archaeologist / genealogist.

His writing associates strongly with Foucault's questioning, reflects a similarly critical attitude with reference to notions of personal and national identity.[107] Nonetheless, it is important to differentiate his own stance from that of the French philosopher; Bennett writes:

> Unlike Foucault, Kroetsch does not use archaeology as the model for generating the rules for discourse and genealogy as the methodology for discussing social practices. Instead he emphasizes both of them as alternatives to historical thinking. Archaeology looks at discrete fragments without the causal meanings that history requires; genealogy traces back relationships to see that no one historical source lies behind any single subject. Archaeology thus responds to contiguity of place, genealogy to that of time. ("Weathercock" 134)[108]

In spite of this difference, both Kroetsch and Foucault are very much concerned with process as opposed to fixity. "Our national discontinuities made us ripe for Postmodernism" (LV 113), the Canadian writer argues; he is, like the French thinker, attracted to this phenomenon which, according to Ihab Hassan, "veers towards open, playful, optative, provisional (open in time as well as in space), disjunctive, or indeterminate forms, a discourse of ironies and fragments, [. . .] a desire of diffractions" (*Dismemberment of Orpheus* 271).

Such characteristics provide a ground for Kroetsch's experimental and region-oriented writing. Aware of the fact that "we have genealogies that multiply our connections into the past, into the world" (LV 117), he engages in elaborate postmodern explorations which lead to incessant excavation trips across the fields of traditions, influences, memories – all the things that characterize the particulars of the prairie. His

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[106] Foucault continues by stating that genealogy "depends on a vast accumulation of source material [and] demands relentless erudition" (140).

[107] Among the essays in which he has acknowledged his affinity for Foucault's concept of archaeology are "Beyond Nationalism: A Prologue" and "The Exploding Porcupine"; in "Disunity as Unity," he writes: "In this postmodern world, we trust a version of archaeology over the traditional versions of history" (DU 24).

[108] Kroetsch's motivation does not coincide with Foucault's in the sense that the latter's concern is more with inherent power structures; Kroetsch argues, "it is the archaeological act that resists the overarching generalization of history" (BN 69), and says "Genealogy is a primary version of narrative" (65), which renders obvious that he is much more interested in the possibilities of (re)telling or retrieving a story for the sake of revealing identity.

philosophy is encapsulated in his most-quoted – but also frequently misinterpreted – statement uttered in conversation with Margaret Laurence in 1970: "In a sense, we haven't got an identity until somebody tells our story. The fiction makes us real" ("Conversation" 30). Kroetsch stresses the importance of retrieving the lost / personal stories, unearthing the fragments, making heard and dispersing the vernacular, which together contribute to a sense of self. While the "identification between voice and land is integral" for him (Lecker, RK 13), the distinction from Eastern Canadian writing like Robertson Davies's late-victorian novels (which have Europe for their hero) and Mordecai Richler's urban cosmos of Montréal is equally important.

Kroetsch does not restrict himself to retrieving or keeping old forms. His ideal is to break free from categories, from the limitations of inherited definitions, from all the cultural baggage the settlers of Canada brought along, implanted and cultivated in their illusory hope to preserve their old identity. For him, this holding on to obsolete models in the New World is most strongly expressed through the use of language, especially in the naming act. In "Uncovering our Dream World" (1977), an interview conducted by Robert Enright and Dennis Cooley, Kroetsch employs Joyce's term "layering" in terms of 'orchestrating' different levels of meaning as metaphor for what he does. He contends that Canadian society is characterized by the dialectic of being "almost in stasis all the time between opposing things" (34). In "Death is a Happy Ending: A Dialogue in Thirteen Parts" with Diane Bessai (1978), he extrapolates this view while discussing Sheila Watson and ascribes to the Canadian psyche

> the double hook. The total ambiguity that is so essentially Canadian: be it in terms of two solitudes, the bush garden, Jungian opposites, or the raw and the cooked binary structures of Levi-Strauss. Behind the multiplying theories of Canadian literature is always the pattern of equally matched opposites.
>
> Coyote : God
> Self : Community
> Energy : Stasis (215)

The Poet in the Prairie: A Listen-ing Journey, Forever

Calling these binaries a trap, Kroetsch consistently seeks to overcome them through his poetic approach to writing and in his construction of complexely narrative, multi-

layered poetry. To discuss the transposition of his essayistic-theoretical stances into his literary *œuvre*, the poems are a good place to begin with. *The Stone Hammer Poems: 1960-1975* (1975) are profoundly regionalist, portray a number of historical prairie figures and personal heroes, like the silent Chinese proprietor of the Canada Cafe at Heisler who in "Elegy for Wong Toy" becomes, twenty years after his death, "one of my fathers" (SHP 44). Several literary / historical / spiritual fathers are enlisted by the book, among them Grove with his "coyote self" in "F.P.G.: The Finding" (47) and an Indian trickster in "Old Man Stories." In pointing to transformation as one of the guiding themes, these figures associate the poet with the shaman as a mediator between the known and the unknown world, between the fixed perspectives of the community and the intimate, transgressive experiences of the individual.[109] In contrast to its often being categorized as infertile, empty and devoid of history, the prairie in Kroetsch's poems becomes a place of capabilities and of a past. He recruits the studious St. Jerome –who "read / moving the world into his own / (my) head into his vision" (53) – to inhabit his textual west and thereby enrich it.[110] "I suppose one of the healing acts that we engage in is the transformational act – metamorphosis –, the way in which you have to move out of yourself into other possibilities . . . keep it open . . . re/dis/cover" (LV 173).

Kroetsch's earliest collection, *The Stone Hammer Poems*, manifests this capacity for transformation, both in the stylistic and topical range of the pieces and in the different personae the author assumes. It prepares the ground for a series of longer interrelating poems. The title poem, in particular, demonstrates that his techniques – unearthing historical fragments, using lore and objects like the stone hammer as a genuine mythopoeic exercise to reinvest the West with new meaning – are already well developed by 1975. At that time, critics are only beginning to take notice of Kroetsch as a poet, and most of them regard his poetry "as a concentration of the concerns elaborated in the novels" (Munton, *Robert Kroetsch* 21), as do both Peter Thomas (1980) and Robert Lecker (1986) in their monographs.

[109] It is interesting to note that the book contains two sepia-tinged photographs which depict an arrangement of Indian teepees (SHP 21) and immigrant farmers stacking hay on the prairie (43) – as if the author were positioning himself both among and between these different entities of human life.

[110] During the conference at St. Jerome's College in Waterloo, ON in June 1997 in honour of Kroetsch's seventieth birthday, he underlined that the painting of "St. Jerome in His Study" by Antonello da Messina (1418) has been "one of the icons that informed my sense of what a writer is or should be" ("What Else" 10).

Among those critics who grant Kroetsch's poetry an independent and important position within his *œuvre* are Enright and Cooley. In their interview with him, he elaborates on his relation to place, outlines his poetics and acknowledges the influence of Williams Carlos Williams and Wallace Stevens. When Cooley, with Pound and Stevens in view, points out that "the ellipses work both vertically and horizontally" in Kroetsch's poetry, the latter explains how "letting go of your left-hand margin" changes the notion of space on the page and can help in representing / reproducing the "silence [which] is one of the chief sounds on the prairies" (34-35). Silence as a central condition on the prairies and prerequisite for the poet is further discussed in Munton's essay "The Structural Horizons" (1983) and in Roy Miki's 'interchange,' "Prairie Poetics" (1983). Both critics ascribe crucial status to the possibilities of language growing out of silence for the writer's poetics;[111] they see the triad of Eli Mandel, Andrew 'Andy' Suknasky and Robert Kroetsch as the major representatives of a new form in prairie writing – a 'new' long poem – which corresponds to that silence / language paradigm by placing on the spacious page the vernacular, the anecdotal and the structural (see Mandel in Miki 85).[112]

Kroetsch's long poems conquer the page like a new continent. They are highly innovative, experimental, palimpsestic, cross genres as they transgress traditional assumptions about poetry and simultaneously foreground and evade the poet as autobiographer. They are inextricably linked to the author's life-long sense of being "caught in an incomplete journey" towards his ancestors's home as a "place of the imagination, a place of recollection" (qtd. in Bessai [videotape]). In that quest, he is doubled by his poet-friend Mandel, an archetypal figure of diaspora who argues that he pattern of phenomenological journey is representative of those Canadian "writers 'writing west'" (*Another Time* 70). It is also Mandel who, by echoing Michael Ondaatje, reminds us "that the long poem forms part of our Canadian tradition,"[113] and who

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[111] Cf. W.H. New, who in his *Articulating West* makes a distinction between the more traditional writers who aspire to impose an appropriate language to a landscape and those who are seeking to find and make heard "the landscape that is language itself, for the purpose of freeing the imagination from representational strictures and affirming the compatibility of spiritual (visionary) and political (empirical) goals" (xxiv).

[112] In "The Long Poem: Journal and Origin," Mandel discusses the importance of documentary sources, including journal entries, in conjunction with Bloom's *Anxiety of Influence*, and comments: "The search for authenticity. This really happened. This is my journal. From structure to process. Doubles. Doubling. Emptying language. The emptiness of the prairies" (*Family Romance* 239).

[113] The notion of 'tradition' refers primarily to the length of the poems; in that context, Northrop Frye would express in 1946 his surprise "to find how often the narrative poem has been attempted, and attempted with uneven but frequently remarkable success" (*The Bush Garden* 149). The newer versions

describes it as "something big enough to hold the world and time, a space for the vast geography, a time for the hidden history of Canada" (Preface 6). Such hidden things are brought to light, through a polyvocal mix of textual evocations, in *The Ledger* (1975), the long poem which marks the start of a series – later collected in *Field Notes* (1981), then expanded into *Completed Field Notes* (1989) – which fuses family history with Canadian history, rural with literary voice, internal with external space, and the writer with the language-trader and archivist who turns trickster and eternal journeyman.

In *The Ledger*, Kroetsch starts from document, an old family ledger retrieved from archives in Ontario, and rewrites the creation story by opposing credit and debit in left- and right-hand columns, in the inevitably failing attempt to make things balance in "The book / of columns. / The book that *lies* / permanently" (TL 29; my emphasis). Telling the previously untold, but probably not unheard of, stories of the massive erasure of the Native population and their natural habitats, and of the immigrant lives spent in the process of building communities, raising farms and cutting down trees, *The Ledger* engages in a Menippean discourse,[114] working from within parodic, subversive, disillusioning positions. It un-names the world as mediated through false (immigrant) history, names the unnameable and becomes – in a meta-textual gesture typical of this writing – "the poem in the chaos / in the dark night / in the beautiful forest" (28). With its psychological overtones, the poem *is* the chaos which generates the terrors of existence as one version of a beginning for New World immigrants. The final lines – so poignant in their embracing the paradox that is life for Kroetsch – will continue to echo through all of his writing, and through all writing on him as well: "REST IN PEACE / You Must Marry the Terror" (31).

Less sombre in tone, more exuberant, sensuous and proliferating in verbal imagery which functions as emblem of the garden seeds, *Seed Catalogue* (1977) enters into menippean dialogue with *The Ledger*. Eros follows Thanatos, flirts him. "This is my first confession. Bless me father I played / dirty so long, just the other day, up in the granary [. . .] Germaine / with her dress up and her bloomers down" (SC 37). This poem, the author's most famous one to date, registers more textual variants than its predecessor. While describing its impact on the constitution of an indigenous prairie voice, Lenoski speaks of the "enKroetschment" of *Seed Catalogue* (128). In this

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of long poem under discussion here have abandoned the notion of linear narrative for the sake of fragmentary and often multiple discourses that can overlap, be reversed, and tend to resist closure.

[114]For a discussion of "the multi-styled and multi-toned nature of the menippea" and its "new relationship to the world as the material of literature," see Bakhtin's *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (PD 112-122).

context, Cooley ascribes a particular strategy to this poem, "where in defiance of / defence against urbane writing [Kroetsch] lays claim to a series of non-literary texts – rural Alberta vernacular, anecdotes, testimonials, contemporary idiom, tall tales, kids' songs, jokes, sections from art books, literary essays, inventories, inscriptions on grave stones, oral histories, and (most outrageously) extracts wrenched from actual McKenzie's Seed catalogues" ("The Vernacular Muse" 198). Such stylistic variance and the governing metaphor of growth (note, e.g., the semantic connections of granary, *Germ*aine and bloomers) stress that, in contrast to *The Ledger* 's notion of (im)balance which veers towards embracing death, coming-into-life and finding / filling a role propells this piece.

In his much-anthologized essay "For Play and Entrance: The Contemporary Canadian Long Poem," Kroetsch uses the analogy between the sexual act and the writing of poetry "in which archaeology supplants history" to establish his "grammar of delay." Arguing that the fragment comes to equal the story, and "the story becomes its own narrative," he places the stress on "the *act* of telling" that is related to language's failure to produce coherence (FP 119-120). For him, narrative can always only be fragmentary, dispersed, with its component parts scattered chaotically across a text which might suggest a climax but will not deliver it. Correlatively, a sense of prolonging, and statements of things in suspension, of having been there or almost achieved, mark the narrative fragments of *Seed Catalogue*. Absences, in long lists – growing like the hyperbolically advertised "*McKenzie's Pedigreed Early Snowcap Cauliflower* [which] is *unquestionably* one of the *greatest inheritances* of the *present generation*" (SC 40-41) – paradoxically form the major substance of the text:

> the absence of a bottle opener, and me with a vicious
> attack of the 26-ounce flu
> the absence of both Sartre and Heidegger
> the absence of pyramids
> the absence of lions
> the absence of lutes, violas and xylophones
> the absence of a condom dispenser in the Lethbridge Hotel and
> me about to screw an old Blood whore. I was
> in love.
> . . . .
> the absence of books, journals, daily newspapers and everything
> else but the *Free Press Prairie Farmer* and *The*
> *Western Producer*
> . . . .

(SC 39)

These lists have been cited by critics many times. Whereas "each of these entries is accompanied by a colourful story, however abbreviated it may be," the "'unofficial' and 'inadequate' list is also personal and bodily. It migrates towards sex, drinking, excrement, and sports – subjects which doubly violate the decorum of solemn European accomplishments" (Cooley, "Ampersand" 107). Highly meta-fictional/lingual/poetical, Kroetsch's meta-prairian *Seed Catalogue* implants lists of absences into the poem as garden by way of a double strategy: He names not, thus un-naming, what is there or supposed to be there, but instead unwinds his litany of absences, naming that which is / was not there, naming absence into presence.[115] Rejoicing in the fact that "there is [. . .] no getting out of the universe of discourse" (Meindl 48), his artistic jumble of narrative segments engages in a tackle of postmodernism's refutation of the metaphyiscs of being. It tries to let the place speak itself.

If it is true that, according to Douglas Reimer's reading of Heidegger, "the thinking subject most authentically experiences the presence of specific things if they are absent" (Reimer 55), then it is the poet who must be able to instruct and speak out of these absences. The thinker-poet as creator / shaman becomes the central figure in this New World Eden. If one is capable of solving an ontological dilemma, Reimer further suggests, it is the poet as the "best truth-teller society can expect to find," since "writing both determines the future – creates it – and brings it before the people in a comprehensible way" (56). But how can a poet tell the truth when words, or translations of ideas, are inevitably bound to distort? Kroetsch, in "Unhiding the Hidden," quotes from Heidegger's *Poetry, Language, Thought* (1971): "'Roman thought takes over the Greek words without a corresponding, equally authentic experience of what they say, without the Greek word'" (UH 58; Heidegger *Poetry* 23). Heidegger cautions: "The thing itself must be allowed to remain in its self-containment" (*Poetry* 26). Based on the phenomenologist's stances, Kroetsch asserts "that the root meaning of the word truth is un-concealing, dis-closing, dis-covering, un-hiding" (63)[116] – and thus reveals why the Canadian writer / poet's task "is his task to un-name" (58). He must lay bare his

[115] As alluded to in the quotation from "Death is a Happy Ending" (215), the absence / presence dichotomy is one of Kroetsch's most famous binaries which he both consciously employs and seeks to overcome.
[116] Cf. Heidegger's phrase in "The Origin of the Work of Art": "Truth is un-truth, insofar as there belongs to it the reservoir of the not-yet-uncovered, in the sense of concealment" (*Poetry* 60).

community's essentialist assumptions as a deceptive translation of an (original) existence they have yet to discover.

In *Seed Catalogue*, his endeavour makes the poet act strategically: His poem confuses the voices of who is talking and being talked to, asking and being asked. "*How do you grow a gardener?*" (SC 34) is the first question that initiates a series of further ones with metonymic substitutions of gardener by lover, prairie town, past, poet (4 times), poem, and garden (3 times). Based on the structure of a refrain, this is yet another naming, another catalogue of absences, which calls into being. That structure is disrupted by the request, "Poet, teach us / to love our dying." (49), which might be uttered by both the poet addressing himself and the poem of his society demanding further instruction for their ontological quest towards (individual and communal) identity. That request echoes as well as retells the existential malaise of *The Ledger* by remembering the 'terrible symmetries' of his cousin's being shot in his aeroplane while trying to drop bombs on Cologne (the origin of the maternal line), but also by tending to prairie life through the central metaphorical complex of seeding. "I wanted to write a poetic equivalent to the 'speech' of a seed catalogue," Kroetsch comments on his attempt to give an authentic shape to the land by implanting its multiple voices into this "shared book in our society" (CP 82).

From different perspectives and with changing approaches to language as "the greatest fiction and [. . .] the most real thing we have" (qtd. in Neuman, "Unearthing Language" 236), the continuing long poems go on being written into (*Completed*) *Field Notes*, go on exposing the writer and his writing as an archaeological dig. They expose the lamenting 'I' of *The Sad Phoenician* (1979) in his narcissistic pursuit of multiple selves and *alter egos* as he moves in / through the alphabet. He tests and dismantles it as his material, in stanza-imitations from A to Z, along alternating 'and-but' oppositions which themselves are structured by puns, parody, clichés and quotations.[117] The polygamous poet, "trading in language" (SP 58), confesses to be both anarchic and in need of order (66). In doing so, he shares his principle with the reader: "tell us the whole truth / but / hide what must be hidden" (70). A "condition of civil unrest" is therefore the book's telling self-reference on the original edition's back cover.

[117] For instance, "But / where shall I say you have gone? she said" (SP 67) is a direct quotation from Mandel's poem "the doppelganger" [sic], where the question is uttered by a male speaker (the double of the addressee, a man whose wife has committed adultery with the speaker) and concludes the poem (*Out of Place* 47). With regard to another source, Kroetsch admits: "I actually used Spenser when I wrote *The Sad Phoenician* (LV 101).

It seems that the stances of 'unhiding the hidden' and of 'hiding what must be hidden' form the dialogic backbone of the writer's ongoing poetic self-effacement in the mirror of reappearing self-transformations. "In Greece I found a maze and stories of mazes that became, I now see, metonymous with my own life," the speaker in *Letters to Salonika* states (LS 154). This continual discourse extends Kroetsch's notion of geography – which "is people relating to what I'll call *place*" (LV 9) – in the largest sense, as these (long) poems begin to look away from Canada and to travel, both psychologically and literally, to distant times and foreign locations like China and Delphi. "It's mapping and it's also playing with an unknown: it gets into both metaphoric and metonymic possibilities" (9), he explains about his sense of a geography which keeps uncovering more facets of the writer. "The Silent Poet Sequence," "The Winnipeg Zoo," "Mile Zero," "Postcards from China", "Delphi: A Commentary," "The Frankfurt *Hauptbahnhof*" and the moving search (for) "The Poet's Mother" – as well as other texts in the *Completed Field Notes* – all dwell on the topic of the poet's quest for a paradigmatic non-self, his desire to break out of restrictive cosmologies: "One of the things we seek, I think, is freedom from definition" (LV 7).

Since that freedom, as he has repeatedly stressed, is supported by the move from metaphoric to metonymic writing, the guiding title-metaphors of stone hammer,[118] ledger, and seed catalogue constitute the beginning of a metonymic chain of literary and literal devices. It supports Kroetsch's transformation of history into poetic narrative in the course of compiling his (*Completed*) *Field Notes*. Far from being completed after the collection's publication in 1989, this chain has been made longer, as in *Revisions of Letters Already Sent* (1993), the author's reentry into poetic ventures as an incessant act of correction and rewriting. Most notably, the metonymic chain has led to his poetics of the seemingly permanent title *The Hornbooks of Rita K* (discussed in Chapter 5.2) – a bewildering genre-collage, an / other radical parody of the male quest, and a polyphonic, multi-layered intertextual interrogation of the notions of gender-as-disguise and identity construction, originality, and libidinal forces. His latest publication mirrors and continues the history of his poetry assemblages, for it has undergone shape-shiftings through sequential and fragmentary appearances between 1993 and 2001 – e.g., as "The Poetics of Rita Kleinhart" in his (anti-)autobiography, *A Likely Story. The Writing Life* (1995), which unites essayistic memoirs, homage to fellow-writers and vignettes of

[118] In the *Completed Field Notes*, the "Stone Hammer Poem" forms the "Prologue," which highlights the piece's status as an inaugural moment for Kroetsch's poetic writing (CFN 1-7).

prairie life. *The Hornbooks of Rita K* stakes Kroetsch's poetological terrain by tentatively approaching, through a triad of personae, his own works in another digging out and turning around of self-referential and flexible language.

By textualizing himself and the prairies as an archaeological site, personal / prairie history accordingly as a matter of genealogical tracing, Kroetsch not only works towards a poetics of place, but also towards an active engagement of the reader with his essays, poetry and fiction alike. Because the author wants "him [/ her] to enter into the process with me" (LV 57), "the reader, like the writer, becomes archaeologist, seeking the grammar of the fragments" (EP 112). As a result of that joint venture, the roles of reader and writer loose distinction, begin to overlap in a kind of hide-and-seek game.[119] The reading process which allows and calls for such an active participation has been described in detail by Wolfgang Iser. He argues that by combining some former knowledge with new findings on a specific text, the reader accesses "its potential multiplicity of connections" and achieves, as a prerequisite for interpretative emancipation, a *Konkretisation* ("The Reading Process" 215; 212). Although Iser describes a general hermeneutic procedure, its implications for the reader can be radical, depending on the nature of the text: Post-structuralist or postmodernist literature, it is generally argued, is most apt to create a reader who is aware of the possibility to participate actively in the textual game, since this writing draws attention to its very artificiality, to its intertextual play and language's potential.[120]

With these meta-fictional prerequisites given, the reader can go beyond the mere act of traditional interpretation and engage in performative hermeneutics. Kroetsch provides all the necessary ingredients for that activity in his texts, and comments that the reader's "task of fitting" whatever he or she has "unearthed" into different combinations of meaning is "not going to rule out one (reading) against another" (LV

[119] Kroetsch says "I can almost visualize the labyrinth I have to make, both for myself and for a reader" (LV 180).

[120] For interesting discussions of the reader-figure 'generated' by Kroetsch's post-modernist writing, see Brian Edwards, "Novelist as Trickster: The Magical Presence of Gabriel García Márquez in Robert Kroetsch's *What the Crow Said*" and "Textual Erotics, the Meta-Perspective and Reading Instruction in Robert Kroetsch's Later Fiction," as well as David Creelman, "Robert Kroetsch: Criticism in the Middle Ground." For more general discussions, see Jane P. Tompkins, ed., *Reader-Response Criticism: From Formalism to Post-Structuralism,* Susan R. Suleiman and Inge Crosman, eds., *The Reader in the Text: Essays on Audience and Interpretation*, and Patricia Waugh, *Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction*. Linda Hutcheon, *Narcissistic Narrative: The Metafictional Paradox*, provides instructive demonstrations, particularly in chapter 9, "Composite Identity: The Reader, the Writer, the Critic" (138-152).

14). In light of Barthes's 'death of the author,'[121] reading becomes an empowering act which, in the words of Hutcheon, "partakes of the experience of writing itself" (*Narcissistic Narrative* 144). Morevoer, Kroetsch positions the reader as hero:

> I think of the reading act as an incredibly demanding, an exciting act. It may be that in modern texts, in twentieth-century texts, the ones we like, the reader is there: the reader has to run the risks, be culpable, face temptations, face the tests – the conventions that apply to the hero in the text, apply instead to the reader. (LV 175)

Enabled to rival characters in a book, the heroic reader can engage in competitive dialogue with them through hermeneutic performance. As a potentially generative matrix for a play of identities, the text can afford its active recipients a new anthropological dimension. Kroetsch's novels, like his poems, offer this dimension. At their historical beginning, there are personal experiences not unlike those an aspiring reader makes: Having received his B.A. from the University of Alberta in 1948, Kroetsch entered the world of Northwestern Canada, where he first worked as a labourer on the Fort Smith Portage and then as a purser on the Mackenzie River transporting goods up into the Northwest Territories for two years. Upon these repeated journeys of instruction and mind-mapping at Canada's last frontier,[122] he moved east to become information and education specialist for the United States Air Force at Goose Bay, Labrador, for four years.[123] After attending McGill University (1954-55), where he studied with Hugh MacLennan, and after an intermission at Middlebury College, Vermont, and marriage to Jane Lewis in Mexico, he spent 1956-61 at the University of Iowa, where he received his Ph.D.

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[121] Barthes asserts that "it is language which speaks, not the author" and defines the text as a "multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash." For him, ultimately, "there is one place where this multiplicity is focused and that place is the reader" ("The Death of the Author" 143; 146; 148).

[122] In "Why I Went Up North and What I Found When He Got There" (1986), Kroetsch centres his account around his becoming sexually initiated with the help of a hooker named Jewel and comments: "The North makes possible a new story. It makes that story possible, not through the encounter with the self (held dear by Western thought), but rather through the astonishing encounter with an Other that eradicates self into all its disparate potential." He argues that "To write is, in some metaphoric sense, to go North" – an vice versa (WIW 35; 14).

[123]As "Education Director," Kroetsch was not only granted an "officer rating (GS-9)," but also in charge of delivering information, which resulted in his writing of feature stories and headlines, in editing local contributions and proofreading all material to be published. See The Robert Kroetsch Papers, Special Collections Division, University of Calgary Library, MsC17.1.1.

Novelistic Explorations: Rewriting the Past, Reshaping the Format

In retrospect, Kroetsch would comment on the time from 1948-54: "I'd discovered in six years of not only seeking but finding experience that I had one hell of a lot to learn about literature. About writing" (qtd. in Munton, *Robert Kroetsch* 4). He began teaching at the State University of New York at Binghamton in 1961 and in 1962 returned briefly to the Mackenzie to research for his first novel. Inspired by Hugh MacLennan's "own sense of influence," he started "to produce a body of Canadian fiction described in Homeric terms by George Woodcock as 'a nation's Odyssey'" (Lecker, RK 23). Already pre-echoed in "Coulee Hill" (his unpublished dissertation, renamed as "When Sick for Home"), this epic enterprise started to take shape with *But We Are Exiles* (1965). According to van Herk, it "introduces some continuing preoccupations of [his] fiction: the masculine flight from women, the contention with chaos, the shaping river, the character who embraces death" ("Biocritical" xxi). The problem of changing identity and the insistence on being (almost) always in exile can be added to this enumeration.

But We Are Exiles presents the figure of Peter Guy, a Canadian Everyman[124] who escapes home in order to find himself and works as a pilot on the towboat Nahanni Jane. He is associated with mirrors and his piloting the boat functions as a metaphor for the author's steering the story-material towards its destination. In the "mirror-smooth" Mackenzie River of the opening scene, Guy "saw his own face watching him [and] studied the reflection as if not sure whom he might see" (BWE 2). The myth of Narcissus dominates the book and expands into the struggle with his dopplegänger, Michael Hornyak, whose mysterious death remains obscure until the end. Former fiancée to Guy, Kettle Frazer becomes first Hornyak's wife, then his widow. She – in her resistance to be realligned with Peter – strongly reflects the unresolvable sense of alienation that characterizes Guy; maybe his "exile from family, community and history becomes emblematic of a wider crisis of cultural identity," as Spinks asserts ("Kroetsch's Narcissus" 7).

Measured against his more daring postmodern works, Kroetsch's first novel has often been called his weakest and least important one. "I was still tempted by the idea of

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[124] Cf. Spinks ("Kroetsch's Narcissus" 16) and Lecker (RK 27), who both stress Guy's journey as a struggle to escape historical definition in a wilderness setting. Spinks refers to "Guy's transindividual status" and argues that the book can be read as Kroetsch's tackling of post-colonial concerns with questions of representation, personal vs. cultural identity, self versus other, and the assumption that "mimesis is of dubious value for a post-colonial poetics" (3).

author as storyteller" (LV 178), he tries to account for those evaluations. Written in a mode of representation which comes close to being realist, the book engages in a somewhat unhappy marriage with narrative experimenting, so that the story's linear time-sequences get upset by the plot. Criticism has also been levelled against the obvious influence of his traditional inheritance, especially of Conrad, Ovid and Homer, but Lecker points out that *But We Are Exiles* already achieves what will characterize all following novels – namely, the "conjunction of traditional and innovative forms [which] plays a profound role in determining the narrative strategies employed" (24).[125] Kroetsch makes use of these old models by making them strange, by inscribing a difference, which bears an affinity with Fred Wah's adaptation of the Russian Formalists' concept of defamiliarization to a Western Canadian poetics.[126]

The blending of old and new forms, together with the "interplay of individual psychic and more general mythic metaphors" (Thomas 36), and their making strange mirrors a becoming strange of Guy's self, a gradual decomposition of the initially "frail composure" (BWE 2) he saw in the river's reflection. When Guy argues with the crew, the skipper describes his alienation right to the point: "'You're your own worst enemy, by God'" (107). Guy's passage echoes and transforms the Conradian journey from familiar and cultured environment to a landscape of uncertainty in which Jungian archetypes cannot operate properly. Guy, at the end, is settled back into darkness and silence, exiled from himself and yet positioned in an ambiguous coffin / canoe, after his travels have so far underlined the constructed nature of (his) identity and his lacking capacity to change.

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[125] Lecker comments that Kroetsch's achievement "was often overlooked in early assessments of his work, partly because [his] 'deconstructive' position was first identified in interviews and articles published after 1972" (RK 24). Thomas claims that "this novel [is] unusually valuable as an introduction to Kroetsch's subsequent fiction" (36). Van Herk, ignoring the strong differences between Guy / Hornyak and Marlowe / Kurtz, believes that the "novel usurps Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*" ("Biocritical" xxi).

[126] In *Letters to Salonika*, one of his long poems that work from journal entries and include implicit commentaries on his writing practice which are applicable also to his fiction, Kroetsch writes: "Part of living together is the allowing for repetition. The nuance, the change, the exploration. The making strange" (LS 146). Explicatory of his own technique, he simultaneously points at Wah's "Making Strange Poetics" (1985), which is derived from the Formalists and their endeavour to dissolve the boundaries between form and content. Their concept of defamiliarization is explicitly outlined in Victor Shklovsky's "Art as Technique" (1917), where he writes: "The technique of art is to make objects 'unfamiliar,' to make forms difficult, to increase the difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged" (20).

After his novelistic escape into the wilderness and the "silence [which] is summed up by the north" (CW 54),[127] Kroetsch came back home to begin his Out West Triptych, both homage to the prairies and a rewriting, (re)mythologizing of their history. *The Words of My Roaring* (1966) is a book entirely different from its predecessor. Its historical setting is the drought-ridden, fundamentalist Alberta of the dirty thirties. It chronicles the ten days preceding the landslide of the Social Credit Party on election day, 22 August 1935. As the title announces, *The Words of My Roaring* is a book of loud voices, most notably that of the narrator and hero figure, Johnnie J. Backstrom, but also of his prairie community and – through the "complex machinery" of the radio – of John George Applecart (a transparent disguise of the political figure of "Bible Bill" Aberhart[128]). The stress is on Backstrom, though, on his voice's exuberance, hyperbolic exaggerations and foolish wisdom – on its profoundly human dimension. An undertaker by profession, and "six-four in [his] stocking feet, or nearly so" (WMR 4), this "creature of excess [and] powerful centre of consciousness" (Arnason 125) is given to a gargantuan thirst and hunger and becomes Kroetsch's first novel-version of the trickster figure and unreliable narrator.

The Words of My Roaring is the first manifestation of his fascination with Bakhtin's carnival, which focuses on communal interaction and provides temporary liberation from established rules and hierarchies.[129] In a novel which is not realist but a "comic extravaganza" (Arnason 125), the subversive power of the carnivalesque, the tragi-comic and parodic, and the vernacular all coalesce in the central scene in the middle of the book. In the stampede arena, Backstrom's nameless *alter ego*, the rodeo clown, is injured lethally by a bull; by intuition, the protagonist races "for the center of that arena," discovers a human being inside the clown's costume, and a mouth that "moved small inside the mouth that was painted on his face [. . .] kept trying to tell us all something." The undertaker is initiated into his "first major speech," born as an eligible candidate, created as and by voice. Appropriating and transgressing Applecart's rhetoric that he so many times listened to on the radio, he entertains and wins his audience by admitting: "Backstrom is a clown all right. [. . .] You'd be bigger clowns

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[127] He writes further in "The Canadian Writer and the American Literary Tradition": The north "remains a true wilderness, a continuing presence. [. . .] It presses southward into the Canadian consciousness" (CW 54).

[128]With William Aberhart, the Social Credit Party came into power after a fourteen-year-long domination of the progressive United Farmers of Alberta; by 1966, they were still ruling uninterruptedly.

[129] See Bakthin's *Rabelais and His World* and *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*. In "Carnival and Violence," Kroetsch testifies to his being fascinated by Bakhtin's works.

yourselves for voting for me – unless it rains by election day" (WMR 107-113). In contrast to Applecart's apocalyptic visions, he ends on a surprising note of hope.

What ensues is a typical carnival feast in which the roaring crowd throws Johnnie up in the air, keeps handing him free food incessantly and shows him "affection and love [. . .] and generosity and deference and admiration and adulation" (114). In its allusion to a critical moment in history and an impending change in the course of nature (see Bakhtin, *Rabelais* 9), this festive scene supports the role of Backstrom as a figure who embraces the paradoxes which are characteristic and formative for Kroetsch's cosmos: "Sometimes it seems that chaos is the only order. The only real order" (WMR 107). Having suddenly promised rain in the middle of the drought, Backstrom comes to run for election against his symbolical father, Doc Murdoch – an Easterner with an edenic garden and a beautiful daughter, Helen Persephone.[130] Although he is married to Elaine, Backstrom enjoys a week of nightly love-making with Helen in the luscious garden, in which different mythic contexts interact: Frazer's fertility myth (see his *Golden Bough*[131]) and Homer / Ovid's tale of Persephone's abduction by Pluto / Hades into the underworld are combined and, while changing, move into one another – a technique which reflects the "power, the allure, of an overriding mythology" (LV 122-23) that tempted the author and characterizes the entire novel. This handling of myth contributes to the book's sense of metamorphosis and to the subversive retelling of a bad historical experience; in the author's later works, it will turn into a demythologizing approach.

In a storm and ceaseless pouring, the rain comes on pre-election night. Now Backstrom is considered a prophet and expected to give his winning speech at the poll booths the next day. The book's final lines show him both tempted to run away and rehearsing, over and over, a speech which would deny his responsibility for the rain and set misunderstandings right – which echoes his commentary, "But we are so often mistaken; we confuse beginnings, endings. They are so alike so often" (WMR 7). With this first of many remarkable narrator-character voices in a prairie setting which is

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[130] Van Herk remarks: "Her role of Persephone completes his as an undertaker (keeper of the dead)," and contrasts him to the doctor as "giver of life" ("Biocritical" xxiii).

[131] Compared to Eliot's employment of Frazer in *The Waste Land*, in which the myth of fertility is used as a matrix to underline the dominating sense of spiritual barrenness and infertility, Kroetsch's use focuses more on a structuralist engagement with the conditions of meaning. In *Labyrinths of Voice*, he discusses Frazer's technique of creating parallels between texts and stories and retelling them, thereby stripping them of particular meaning. "I saw that only locally does one make applications of meaning. Thus Frazer's freeing of myth from the burden of meaning and returning it to pure story became very important for me" (LV 88-89).

genuinely brought to life by the author's skilfull interweaving of traditional and local mythology, *The Words of My Roaring* marks the creation of what critics like to call Kroetsch country, a country "where the rain [of words] always arrives, again and again" (Wharton x) and where the fertile rites of comedy rule.

If it is true that "Canadians seek the lost and everlasting moment when chaos and order were synonymous" (BN 68), Kroetsch's works tend to perpetuate that moment. In the two novels that complete his trilogy, *The Studhorse Man* (1969) and *Gone Indian* (1973), the chaos-order duality becomes increasingly catalytic, extends from the characters's psyche to the level of the text where two narrator figures compete in a game of mutually destabilizing the narrative. As part of that, both novels employ carnivalesque disguises and masquerades for the sake of plot enhancement and of rendering the figures, their doubles, and the text more complex. For that reason, they will be discussed at more length in Chapters 4.1 and 4.2 of this thesis.

Work on the Out West Triptych was paralleled by the writing of a book of regional tall tales and travel accounts, a blend of tribute to and revision of Kroetsch's native province: *Alberta* (1968). Reissued in 1993, with an additional chapter affording a bird's-eye perspective from a balloon and with an afterword by his friend Rudy Wiebe, the book chronicles the manifold attempts to define a place, a geography and its people in their characteristic manifestations. As a collection of inquisitive tale-shaped circulations around that locale, *Alberta* is a central document of Kroetsch's quests for home and land. Like a first journey into the unknown from where the traveller brings back crucial knowledge, it informs his complete *œuvre*.

His next novel, *Badlands* (1975), "is profoundly moving and humane. [It] is a strange and splendid work of fiction" (Moss 209) which centres around the 1916 Dawe Expedition down the Red Deer River valley. While one of its focal points is William Dawe's quest for a complete set of dinosaur bones, to be dug out of the layers of time in order to grant him eternal fame, the narrative frame and controlling consciousness of the story is the quest of Anna, the expedition leader's daughter. Sixty-five years after the event. with the field notes he left behind in hand, she (re)searches the life of a drowned father whose body was never found and her own beginnings at the original site in the Badlands.

This context allows Kroetsch to demonstrate his archaeological method in literal application. In her attempt to reconstruct her family history, Anna Dawe is assisted by Anna Yellowbird, who in 1916 had been with Dawe and his crew as a budding Indian

girl and who functions as counter-memory to his notes. The metaphorical digs of these two women, recapturing and transforming his literal excavations, lay bare Dawe's egotism but also move from the portrait of a machismo-skeleton to an Orphic descent into the mythical underworld. In their camp, the palaeontologist and his crew form a social microcosm which, while they keep digging deeper and closer to his dream, explores a set of increasing inner tensions that range from injuries (both physical and psychological) to Tune's being buried alive under clay and the tail of a Daweosaurus. Their site of feverish archaeological activity (a mirror of their states of mind) is not only visited by Coyote, the trickster, but also by the photographer Michael Sinnott who snapshoots the unearthed bones and their guardians. As an artist who does (not) sin against the laws of representation, he both opposes and complements Dawe's desire to exhibit and describe the world by 'documenting' it in an imagistic re-creation of reality.

Dawe's field notes and Sinnott's photographs are the questionable documents from and against which Anna Dawe – and the reader – must proceed. By reading, glossing over and rewriting these documents, she "mimicks the writer / reader's desire for patriarchal hypotexts" (Vauthier, "Voices" 172) and deconstructively narrates the / her story of his personality. In combination with Kroetsch's overriding mythology, *Badlands* performs a rich intertextuality which fosters the reader's digging for fragments of meaning. Moreover, the intertextual *reticulum* that is particularly complex in terms of a psychologically charged father-daughter relationship allows to be stretched from the individual to the national level: By reading Anna Dawe as phonetically close to 'Cana-Dawe,' Bruce A. Butterfield suggests that "the process of coming-of-age is quite similar for both Anna and her country" ("The Mediator" 198).[132] When she takes out her father's last field book which he concluded, "'I have come to the end of words,'" she throws it "into the lake where it too might drown" (BL 269-70). She has counteracted the traditional appropriation of female lives by male narration, has changed her father's story into her own, and by discarding the material remnants of that male quest[133] signals the completion of her own psychological journey[134] in this profoundly feminist novel which is also a prime example for Kroetsch's historiographic metafiction.

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132 Cf. Claire Omhovère, who reasons that Anna's "pilgrimage [. . .] achieves the scope of a nation's odyssey in the anonymous, collective narrative" ("No Man's Land" 10).

133 Kroetsch conceives *Badlands* as a female take on the male story of the "knight out (the night out!) questing or hunting" (LV 170).

134 In analogy to Anna's coming-of-age, the book went through a troublesome period in terms of its title. Before settling for "Badlands," Kroetsch pondered a number of possibilities: "Field Notes; River of

A ceasure in Kroetsch's fiction writing is represented by *What the Crow Said* (1978). It has been his most-criticized novel, mostly because its date of publication coincided with the climax of magic realism, with which it shares the playful fusion of realist and fantastic elements. While the author has articulated his appreciation of Gabriel García Márquez,[135] critics all-too-readily accused him of trying to transfer *Cien Años de Soledad* (1976) onto the Canadian scene – and of failing in that attempt. In the introduction to the 1998 edition of *What the Crow Said*, Robert Wilson points out that "its distinctive narrative techniques appear elsewhere in Kroetsch's fiction" and that much of what is associated with South American magic realism "is only a new version, with its local geographical and social variants, of traditional European fantasy" (viii; xvi). Hence, when not seen through the narrowing lense of an imagined dominating influence,[136] the novel which is set in an indefinable space between and beyond provincial borders of Alberta and Saskatchewan, in an isolating distance from the rest of civilization, offers a number of new literary facets in Kroetsch's canon.

In this fabulist space, the unexpected can happen, the impossible can become possible, and the world can be turned upside down. The opening scene narrates Vera Lang's being raped by a swarm of bees, and the offspring she later throws to a pack of wolves returns one day, nursed by coyotes, to converse with the crow, show a "genius [. . .] for understanding weather" (WCS 139) and speak a language of his own;[137] Vera's mother, Tiddy, is a prairie-Penelope who after succumbing to either Gus Liebhaber (the local printer, a lover of words and *alter ego* of Kroetsch[138]) or John Skandl (the ice merchant whose building a lighthouse made of ice earns him her marriage agreement) gives birth to JG – the most beautiful young man in Big Indian who lacks the ability to talk. Then there is a card game, the game of schmier, which lasts for 151 days and in

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Bones; Dryland; Dawe; Anna Dawe; Horses of the Sun; Bonehouse Man; Web; A Strange Country; Maiden Voyage; Badlands – The Nightmare Season" (MsC27.16.3.).

[135] In *The* Crow *Journals* (1980), Kroetsch notes: "John Barth visiting campus [of the University of Binghamton] today. His saying about Marquez [sic] what I recognized, felt in my blood – that he, Marquez, is at the center of postmodern in this last half of the 20th century" (CJ 18). *The* Crow *Journals* – which its keeper calls a "not quite-a-book book [that] came into being as an accumulating heap of notes in a shoe box (hiking boots)" (CJ 4) – operates as gloss, as addendum and echo to *What the Crow Said* and as fragmented autobiography.

[136] Kroetsch admits to a split position with regard to magic realism: "I am uneasy about the whole South American school of 'magic realism.' But I am also totally seduced by it . . . that allowing into language of *every* story possibility, and thus the whole world" (LV 158-59).

[137] Vera's Boy appears a hybrid version of Caspar Hauser, *L'Enfant sauvage*, and the wise fool.

[138] In his profession as typesetter and through his experiments with letters and alphabets, Liebhaber is a forerunner to the sad phoenician's trading in language. Van Herk maintains: "It is possible that Liebhaber tells us more about Kroetsch's relation to the act of writing than all of Kroetsch's reflexive comments about writing do" ("Biocritical": xxxi).

which the ghost of Martin Lang (Tiddy's deceased husband) participates; there is also Jerry Lapanne, a prisoner who built an aeroplane to escape but realizes, while flying, that he forgot to construct wheels to land on and is therefore sentenced to keep on journeying the air in loops and upside-down.

All this is presented by a multiplicity of telling voices which lack a centripetal force. Instead, the narration is mediated as collective memory, speculation and fabulation, in a tale-telling community where the selves lean towards being transindividual.[139] This collective voice and the book's unusual combination of ordinary and fantastic elements calls so much "for a reader as participant in a deconstructive-reconstructive activity" (Edwards, "Novelist as Trickster" 98)[140] that some readers are bound to be overwhelmed and shut out by this task. Asked how he would feel as an imaginary reader of *What the Crow Said*, Kroetsch comments in retrospect: "I think I'd be a little irked at the writer for making some of the demands he's making, for not giving me connectives" (LV 161). In spite of this problematization, what the writer achieves is not only a fresh look at the prairies, but also a continuation of his concern for female agency. Although women are portrayed as a source of desire, Tiddy,Vera, and Rita Lang (who writes hundreds of love-letters to imprisoned men without sending them off) are in control of their actions and desires as much as can be in the magical world of Big Indian. And in that world of infinite possibilities within the realm of language,[141] all traditional fiction accessoires – plot, setting, character, time and single voice – are stripped away.

Another major shift in Kroetsch's works occurred with the next two novels, *Alibi* (1983) and *The Puppeteer* (1992), which he refers to as his "Diptych." These two texts are partly set in Western Canada (the former mostly in Banff and Calgary, the latter in British Columbia) and move across the Atlantic to Europe (especially Greece) in a parodic search for origins. The quest motif itself becomes only "a shadow of the destiny that informs traditional work" (Arnason 127) while there is a movement towards and along surface in a deconstructionist game which views language – the Derridean fabric of traces – as a process evading definition and unambiguous representation. Both books are built around the notion of the collection – a favourite metaphor of postmodernism

[139] In his personal notes, Kroetsch opposes the concepts of "longing for escape from solitude," as attached to the figure of Liebhaber ("nostalgia for wholeness"), and the "need for sense of self that leads to a sense of isolation and the need for escape from self." See MsC27.17.7.

[140] It should be noted that Edwards does not discuss the book in terms of 'overstressing' the reader.

[141] See MsC27.17.7: "LANGUAGE: the novel, finally, is language: after story, after character."

which points at "the whole spectrum of problems associated with language, thought, and fiction" (Wilson, Introduction xii). Like the image of the archaeologist, this metaphor stands for the activity of collecting storied bits and small parcels of meaning the alert reader must engage in – even if that process is arbitrary and refuses completion. And while *Alibi* (see Chapter 4.3) operates primarily as a multi-layered journal which is under constant revision and thereby enacts a textual masquerade for both its keeper(s) and the reader, *The Puppeteer* (see Chapter 5.1) abounds in performative disguises which loose their deceptive function but induce shape-shifting in their wearers instead.

The Man from the Creeks (1998) is Kroetsch's latest novel and, according to Enright, "his most accessible book to date" (32). Instead of the postmodern play with the conception of the textual structure that readers have come to expect in his works, *The Man from the Creeks* presents the story in a clear line, although narrator Peek is one-hundred-and-fourteen years old. In a rhetorical extravaganza reminiscent of Backstrom from *The Words of My Roaring*, he looks back on his own and his mother Lou's role in the Yukon gold rush between 1897 and 1899. In this retelling and fleshing out of Robert Service's famous poem, "The Shooting of Dan McCrew," the novelist has worked towards "a sense of language that had a ballad quality" (qtd. in Enright 32). One of the effects is a mix of romance and reality, a balance which is new to his texts and has been criticized by some reviewers. As a character talking back to Service, Peek wants "to set the record straight, especially about Lou" (MFC 301) who, as Kroetsch feels, "'got pretty bad press'" (qtd. in Enright 32) in all earlier renderings. This new version chronicles the journey of mother and fourteen-year-old son, who as stow-aways on the *Delta Queen* are almost thrown overboard but redeemed by cooper Benjamin Redd, who gives two of his secretly stashed kegs of whiskey to the angered crew. With Lou and Peek, he must get off the steamer and continue in a rickety rowbaot. Their dangerous quest through avalanches, rapids, and impending starvation leads them via Skagway, the perilous Chilkoot Pass, the Yukon River and The Summit to Dawson City, where Ben wants to buy into the claim of his friend Dan McGrew.

In great detail, Kroetsch's novel presents a colourful setting with lively vignettes in the hostile North as last frontier and place of instability. Amidst a host of treacherous characters, the three entrepreneurs arrange themselves with city life and working the claim. Lou struggles with her grocery and tool store and takes on, to Ben's dismay, a job in the Malamute Saloon, while Peek falls in love with its major attraction and Dan's bride-to-be, Gussie Meadows. She teaches him to please her orally, which will remain

his only sexual encounter and leave him a virgin ever after. The pace of narration steadily increases towards the climactic thirty pages at the end, which revise the action of Service's poem. "Dangerous Dan" quarrels with Lou over a keg of fish, which belongs to Ben and, as she admits, contains "the best whiskey that money can buy" (MFC 293). Disbelieving, Dan rushes to the saloon, where he and Ben turn from friend to foe over a series of foul card games. In that charged atmosphere, Peek fires the first shot, allegedly to demonstrate that the keg on the piano is filled with whiskey indeed. While the bar lights are briefly eclipsed, Dan and Ben each fire three shots.

The corresponding passage in Service's poem reads: "And a woman screamed, and the lights went up, / and two men lay stiff and stark. / Pitched on his head, and pumped full of lead, / was dangerous Dan McGrew, while the man from the creeks lay clutched to the / breast of the lady that's known as Lou" (MFC n.p.). In *The Man from the Creeks*, Peek claims to write against poetic licence by presenting his eye-witness account of the obscure and chaotic situation: "What the poet and his poem do not tell you is that Ben and Lou had in fact been struck by one and the same bullet. It had entered into Lou's neck through her long, dark hair and her feathery crown and then into Ben's left ear. They had both been shot dead by Dangerous Dan McGrew" (MFC 300). While Peek's version ends on a romantic embrace in death of the tragic couple, his complete account has not only given a name to the 'man from the creeks,' but rehabilitated his mother. From a cold-hearted pickpocket in the old legends, Lou has become, according to Grace, "a woman far more complex and interesting than Joyce's Molly" (214). Exaggerated as that judgement might be, it underlines Kroetsch's achievements: With surprising twists and elaborations, he adds flesh and blood to Service's characters like Dan and Lou and invents an unusual centre of narrative consciousness. For Peek – participant, memory and voice in the legend – has never left the Yukon, keeps playing the piano for tourists at his old age and still surveys the valley from his house on the mountain, rolling his wheelchair from room to room to bring the proper amount of light to the story.

An Interim Report

To date, the writing life of Robert Kroetsch has been an ongoing illumination of the *conditio humana* in North America, particularly in the Canadian (North)West. His

historical and generic explorations range from the 1890s to the present day, and he has undertaken them with predominantly postmodernist instruments – that is, he has brought to use his own version of archaeology / genealogy (assisted by a deconstructionist view of language and the carnivalesque as the communal site allowing individual change) as an epistemological method prepared by Nietzsche and Foucault to resist official history and effect a plurality of alternative narratives instead. For his untiring efforts to give voice to the land, pay homage to his native Alberta and enrich contemporary Canadian literature with each new publication, he is widely acknowledged and celebrated. The 1994 "Kroetsch Symposion" at Niederbronn-les-Bains, near Strasbourg (the second European conference, after Frye in Rome in 1987, ever to focus on a Canadian man of letters), and the 1997 "A Likely Story"-Conference at Waterloo, ON in honour of his seventieth birthday testify to that, as do a number of monographs, many courses on his work both in Canada and Europe, and countless critical essays and reviews.

Not only a literary critic who argues that Canada moved directly from victorianism to postmodernism and thereby eclipsed modernism,[142] he has been one of the most active and versatile forces at home and abroad to help establish the post-era of modernism through an *œuvre* that reflects all its central elements – such as instability of meaning, polyvocality, narrative experimentation, a high degree of intertextuality, generic transgression, textual self-reflexivity and reader-response. His incessant efforts have generated, in a dream of origins come true, the 'Kroetsch country' that is peopled with unique characters and voices who share a "collective genealogy where the self is continuously and dialogically recontextualized, realized, as polyphonic identity" (Müller, "Disguise and Masquerade" 186). In that capacity, and on top of their being genuinely North American, these figures of discourse add to their appeal by possessing universal human facets. "I argree with what Bakhtin said about Dostoevsky, that you should let your characters have a lot of freedom," Kroetsch explains, "they can push you around" (J'nan 43). It is this freedom of the creative imagination which is at the heart of his poetics and makes readers hope for yet another story holding up the mirror to their

[142] Kroetsch has originally purported this argument in the fall 1974 issue of *Boundary 2*, which he co-edited with William Spanos at the time. In "Death is a Happy Ending," he extemporates and argues that "We went from agrarian to post-industrial in a leap that excluded high modern from our experience." In contrast to young Americans who entered the First World War at its end and found urban Europe in destruction and disarray, he argues, young Canadians entered at the beginning "literally to die in the fields" (206-207).

existence – both on the prairies and beyond. As the author himself intimates, "one feels always the lure that says I have to tell it *one* more time" (qtd. in Bessai [videotape]).

Chapter 3.1

Tailoring (to) Her Very Needs?
Grove's City, *Fanny Essler*, and Sartorial Enterprises

> With cities it is as with dreams: everything imaginable can be dreamed, but even the most unexpected dream is a rebus that conceals a desire or, its reverse, a fear. Cities, like dreams, are made of desires and fears, even if the thread of their discourse is secret, their rules are absurd, their perspectives deceitful, and everything conceals something else.
>
> Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities*

> The self is not clothing, tools, or possessions; it is to be found in the principle that uses these tools, a principle not of the body but of the soul.[…] The soul cannot know itself except by looking at itself in a similar element, a mirror.
>
> Michel Foucault, "Technologies of the Self"

> […] – is not the fair fabric of Society itself, with all its royal mantles and pontifical stoles, whereby, from nakedness and dismemberment, we are organised into Polities, into nations, and a whole coöperating [sic] Mankind, the creation […] of the Tailor alone?
>
> Thomas Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus: The Life and Opinions of Herr Teufelsdröckh*

Fanny Essler (1984) is the dramatic story of a young woman desperately trying to make her way in turn-of-the-century Berlin. In its German original, *Fanny Essler. Ein Berliner Roman* (1905) was Felix Paul Greve's first and moderately successful novel; in its English translation, it was the last of Frederick Philip Grove's books to become known to the Canadian reading public. There is plenty of irony in this fact, for FPG's first prose work, written in the vein of naturalism, already unfolds themes and techniques that run like a red thread through his entire *œuvre*. In particular, *Fanny Essler* employs metaphors of clothing to the full, already granting the status of motif to the metaphor of dress – a metaphor that incidates an identity in tension between essentialist and representational positions. Most notably, this applies to the struggling heroine, who is obsessed with fashion and depends on a great variety of clothes and accessoires to try to effect her rise on the stage of the theatre and in an outside world that is no less theatrical. Sartorial enterprises are thus at the heart of Fanny's *picaresque*; they are embedded in the conventional imagery of a *theatrum mundi* where the metaphor and the reality of the stage have become indivisible.

One crucial influence for Grove's novel charting an adolescent female's transfer to the city and to gradual self-destruction was Flaubert's much-debated *Madame*

Bovary.[143] The fate of Emma Bovary, based by Flaubert on an authentic suicide case, had so much penetrated the public consciousness that from 1892 onwards, Jules de Gaultier's term "Bovarysme" could designate the fatal discrepancy between ideal and reality as a typical, widely-spread attitude towards life (Roloff 608). Whereas such "Bovarysme" characterizes Fanny – and, among others, the protagonist of Fontane's *Effi Briest* – the major model for Grove's heroine is not taken from literature. Rather, Fanny Essler is the double of Grove's partner at the time, Elsa Endell; and the book itself, like its less intriguing sequel, is basically Elsa's story. Moreover, the figure of the unusually elegant, self-controlled and presumably rich Friedrich Karl Reelen, whom Fanny temporarily believes to be the longed-for prince, becomes her ultimate disappointment in a series of disillusioning relationships with men and is Grove's first authorial incarnation (see *Baroness Elsa* as well as Chapters 2.1 and 3.2).

Grove's *début* as a novelist and his former lover's autobiography almost automatically suggest themselves for parallel readings. Gammel, for instance, terms Elsa's fragmented account "invaluable in decoding" Grove's *roman à clef* ("'No Woman's Lover'" 458). She has examined Fanny's / Elsa's role in terms of gender politics and parody, as a new woman figure that opposes the trends of her time but either falls victim to the brutal coldness of her 'prince' and dies (FE) or emancipates herself as an artist of her own (BE). In Elsa's discussion of "Mr. Felix," her "first potent mate" (BE 61), there not only emerges a flexible blueprint of the *personae* of Greve / Grove, but a very demanding male of radical influence:

> I ever felt as though I couldn't stir on account of a tighfitting corset round my soul – as also I had to wear around my body. [. . .] I had to dress highly stylish – with false hair – because he did not approve of short hair or artistic individual hairdress – and for that I could dress highly elegant and believed I liked it – because it tickled and satisfied his senses and therefore mine. (116)

It is tempting to read Elsa's critique of Felix into Grove's treatment of his novel's heroine. In that regard, Gammel's feminist approaches, both in "'No Woman's Lover'" and in *Sexualizing Power in Naturalism: Theodore Dreiser and Frederick Philip Grove* (1994), put the stress on Fanny as the next-to-helpless object of repeated exploitation by males. Such a view may further be encoded by naturalism's agenda of depicting human

[143] For Flaubert's enormous influence on Greve / Grove, see Chapters 2.1 and 3.2; see also Divay, "Frederick Philip Grove's German Heritage," and her edition of *Poems / Gedichte by / von Frederick Philip Grove / Felix Paul Greve und Fanny Essler*, and Gammel, *Sexualizing Power in Naturalism.*

beings as higher-order animals that are governed by their instinctual drives and subjected to biological, social, and economic forces beyond their control or comprehension. Indebted as *Fanny Essler* is to the conventions of naturalism, however, Grove's text presents a tragic heroine that is not exclusively the object of uncontrollable forces, but often enough undertakes actions and decisions in full awareness of their possible consequences.

Hence, this chapter will not employ *Baroness Elsa* as a parallel text for reading *Fanny Essler* autobiographically, but rather as a point of departure to examine Fanny's particular attempts at fashioning herself an identity in an urban space. Grove's literary creation shares clothing as an essential material in that process with Elsa, who in her retrospective delivers a striking and plausible psychological interpretation of her former partner's motivation to shape her in specific ways: "He clothed my body georgeously to make me believe this is what I wanted – to buy my soul off me – to expand himself in his work – pretending he did it for my luxury – when he did it for his own vanity and success" (BE 120f). Her sharp critique and her metaphor underline the *teleological* use of clothing and everything that adheres to that. This echoes Carlyle's satirical "Philosophy of Clothes," *Sartor Resartus* ("The Tailor Retailored"), in which the author debates the ways of manipulating bodily appearances and concludes that clothes reveal our corruption but can also corrupt. In *Fanny Essler*, the male character that shapes and manipulates a female according to his own designs, tailoring her in quite a literal sense, appears at the end of this long novel as Grove's persona. But to equate Reelen's exploitative application of dress with the totality of Fanny's sartorial enterprises would be tantamount to simplifying the complexity of her multiple dress- and role-rehearsals. Far from being a mere dressmaker's dummy, she is often the agent (or at least co-agent) in a progression that constantly contributes to tailoring (to) her needs. Thus, to outline the contours of the psychic and social processes underlying the representation and manipulation of the (female) body, in the city that acts as a quasi-human character, forms a crucial part of this chapter's approach.

From Private to Public Space

It is no accident that the adolescent heroine is introduced while hurrying home through the streets of her native Baltic seaside town in 1894, after a night out with her lover,

Baron von Langen, and in a slightly deranged state, with her dress "wrinkled and dishevelled" (FE I: 17). As an indication of both character and plot, this early scene points to the heroine's escapist tendencies and, by alluding to her sullied appearance, to her ultimate downfall. *In nuce*, this opening reveals that Fanny is generally placed, as Gammel asserts, "in a naturalist tradition that is obsessed with the sexualized woman's death in a plot of decline" (*Sexualizing Power* 105). That development includes the protagonist's transfer from a rural environment to the city as a space of new, radical, and challenging experiences.

To render intelligible the necessity of Fanny's escape, and to underline the extent of her subsequent transformation, Grove's long novel first dwells in a setting that is "darkest domestica,"[144] governed by strict partriarchal laws. By way of punishment, Fanny is locked up in her room; this temporary seclusion and her having been sexually initiated afford her a crucial sense of playfulness, an awakening into theatricality.[145] She becomes aware, for the first time, of the arrangement of inner space, contemplating the furniture's positionings in her room – an implicit commentary by the narrator on her own position in this household and in the world that is about to change. In this particular psychological state, she dozes off briefly, then gets up and rehearses as if she were auditioning for a play:

> [Fanny] let down her not too plentiful dark blond hair, wound it into a fantastic bun, searched in her dresser for a large, triangularly folded Turkish shawl, wrapped it around herself, and stepped into a pair of dainty Turkish slippers with turned-up toes. In this attire she walked towards the big mirror. But she stopped, went back to the dresser, took a cigarette out of one of the drawers and lit it. Now, with affected, rhythmical, almost dance-like steps, she moved back towards the mirror, smiled at herself coquettishly and turned this way and that in order to watch her own thin body beneath the large shawl. (FE I: 30)

Her dressed-up performance before the mirror signals Fanny's desire to be Other (underlined by accoutrements that are fashionable and exotic, tinged with a notion of shadiness). Seen from the perspective of Lacan's "mirror stage," according to which the gazing subject (usually an infant) constitutes himself or herself through the internalized *imago* of another while scanning his or her reflection in the mirror (*Écrits* 2-3), Fanny's

[144] Riley and Spettigue, Introduction to MMH (7), ascribe "darkest domestica" to Greve / Grove's writings as a general setting.

[145] Cf. Gammel, who ascribes an "emphasis on the Oedipal family as the primary locus of sexuality" to *Fanny Essler*, arguing that this desire-generating constellation "energizes [Fanny's] journey into female independence" (*Sexualizing Power* 110).

use of clothing, styling of her hair, and playful acting both visualize and manifest the fact that she has begun to tailor her self-images in a process of "othering" her self. Of crucial importance is the fact that she dresses up *first* and *then* gazes at the product in the mirror – taking an already-stylized version of self as the norm or essence of her identity. Compared to the act of self-constitution at the level of infancy, Fanny thus can be said to discover an / her "Ideal-I" (Freud's *Ideal-Ich*) in the mirror. According to Lacan, such a technique of self-perception posits an 'I' (*moi*) "in a fictional direction" that precedes any form of social determination of identity, and that henceforth will have to suffer from an incongruence with its own reality as another 'I' (*je*) (*Écrits* 2-6). Even though this split is usually effected in infancy, Fanny's mirror-performance, coded as it is in the context of rebirth or awakening "from a dreamless sleep to the feeling of clean sheets" (FE I: 30), corresponds well with the early stage in Lacan's theory. What also corresponds with his theory is her gradually becoming initialized into the language of urban fashion.[146]

Hence, Fanny's formative display effects a number of things. It inaugurates the transformation (if not creation) of her theatrical identity as a modern female seeking to transgress the boundaries of conventional womanhood; it triggers a series of related mirror-scenes or reflections, most of which will take place out in the open (and not in seclusion anymore); it anticipates, also by evoking a particular subtext, her movement from private to public space and her emerging reputation (and problematic performances) as both actress and courtesan in Cottbus and Berlin. For this mirror-scene, with its stress on Turkish attire, on dance-like movements, coquetterie and the 'vampish' cigarette, possibly points to Mozart's light-hearted opera, *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* (1782). Set somewhere in an oriental empire in the 16th century, Mozart's *Entführung* playfully touches on notions of fidelity and licentiousness, personified by the presumably innocent figures of Konstanze and her maid Blondchen, who are both abducted to a Turkish harem but ultimately released into their lovers' hands.[147] Mozart's

[146] Lacan sees the crucial importance of the mirror stage – although it is a pre-linguistic occasion – in that it prepares and effects the child's subsequent acquisition of language, which he equates with its assuming its "function as subject" (*Écrits* 2; cf. Chapter 1.2).

[147] The abducted women's lovers Belmonte and Pedrillo have come to their rescue and wonder whether any damage has been done by pasha Selim and his warden, Osmin; while Konstanze is speechless and reacts with tears to Belmonte's suspicion of her infidelity, Blondchen answers Pedrillo with a slap in the face. This convinces both men of their sweethearts' faithfulness. By way of contrast, *Die Entführung* pre-echoes a later visit to Wagner's *Lohengrin* (1848), a tragic opera in which fate and the impulse for revenge deconstruct the idealized love between Elsa von Brabant (the congruence of her first name with Grove's partner's is purely coincidental) and the title-hero, who must return to his father, Parcival, and

daring opera – considered frivolous at the time – as a possible subtext underlines Fanny's desire to be abducted into a world of excitement, adventure, and otherness. She will perform in her own operatic drama that shifts from rather hopeful tones to more sombre ones.

Thus, the adolescent woman escapes the restrictions of her birthplace and takes the train to Berlin, where she rents a room with a working-class family. Fanny rather ignores the modest reality of this family in which neither wife nor husband have time to prepare a decent meal; her naïve and idealist eyes focus more on the enchanting aspects of the city. While out on its fashion-mile, *Unter den Linden*, she deems herself transferred from darkest domestica to the setting of a fairy tale; among a multitude of new impressions, she quickly feels "at home [...] like a princess travelling incognito" (FE I: 63) and is eager to attract and secure for herself the prince. But the world she has entered is one thoroughly shaped by the rules of industrial capitalism. For the bourgeois societies in 19th century capitals like Berlin, this produces, as Sennett points out, a "'mystification' of material life in public, especially in the matter of clothes"; this mystification encodes, for instance, the belief that clothing and speech would disclose the people's personalities, so that "the system of public expression bec[omes] one of personal representation" (Sennett 19; 25; 26). In conjunction with the fact that a wide variety of elegant dresses are now available to the bourgeoisie – and no longer exclusive to the courts and their imitative circles among the high society – there comes into existence a new taste and hunger for competitive self-stylization on a large scale. Fashion, as Poschardt maintains, is thus subjected to a process of "democratization" during the 19th century, which creates paradoxical urges towards individual distinction and mass consumption (165-66).

Fanny frequents the "large Berlin department stores," the institutionalized capitalist instrument for catering to (or creating) the consumers's desires, where "everything [is] tremendously elegant" (FE I: 63). She is entranced by their wealth of all imaginable types of clothing and accoutrements, and tries various appealing items, always weighing in her mind what is affordable, listing future expenses. The "love" she feels for these stores, the narrator insinuates, has "an element of the perverse mixed in with it" (FE II: 8). Without being aware of it, Fanny moves through secularized temples that tease her into narcissistic worshipping amidst a multitude of flattering mirrors.

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assist him in guarding the Holy Grail. In *Fanny Essler*, the heroine feels that attending this opera highlights her rise among the rich and beautiful, while she also senses an impending doom.

Repeatedly presented with altered mirror-images of herself, she buys – first a new hat, then a new dress, and gradually more and more items of increasing elegance that become, naturally, more expensive. With unfailing zeal, the stores conjure up the atmosphere of a fairy tale-world[148] and consistently nourish Fanny's yearning to be a princess. She enacts that role willingly, always following the *dernier cri*, attiring herself in ever-new garments that afford her psychological identification with her Ideal-I.

In the 1890s, as Sennett underlines, this enterprise of achieving womanly presence in public space is increasingly "complex and symbolic"; for "dressing the body now involve[s] adding a new, sexual layer" (189). With her exterior thus enhanced and her inner state correspondingly excited, Fanny has taken up the sensuous language of urban fashion. She begins to interact with the city life's various appearances, keeps encountering ever new models of elegance – both in the flesh, out on the street, and on mannequins in display windows and stores. This fosters what Peter Nicholls, in paraphrasing René Girard, calls "the practice of imitation and its attendant psychology of 'imitative desire'" (14). While this energizes her not-yet-fully-developed sexuality, it also fosters the effect of treating her own body as a mannequin. Hence, in McLuhan's sense of clothing not only "as an extension of the skin," but also "as a means of defining the self socially" (*Understanding Media* 119), Fanny runs the risk of mis-representing herself in a process of over-stylization, in a hyper-production of self-images.

As a communicative tool, however, her clothing does not fail to signal a presence and to prompt a response. Window-shopping, again, along the fashion-mile, Fanny suddenly becomes aware of a man "wearing a dark-blue unbuttoned imperial cape and a round felt hat, nonchalantly observing her through a monocle with exaggerated admiration" (FE I: 71). What catches her attention is a stylized posure, not uncommon in light of the "society's obsession with the self" that Sennett attributes to the 19th century; as he outlines, this obsession prevents authentic expressiveness but results instead in a "playacting [which] requires an audience of strangers to succeed" (28-29). Fanny provides that audience of a stranger for the unknown male who focalizes her through a lense, thus rendering her an object of his potentially appropriative 'speculation.' Unintimidated by his combination of elegance and boldness, she playfully turns around again towards the store, and realizes that he is "observing her reflection in the shop window." Since they both observe one another as reflections in the window, it

[148] Cf. Poschardt (164-65), who discusses Zola's notebooks from the mid-19th century on the French society's mosaic and points out the evocation of a fairy tale-atmosphere in the Parisian department stores.

is their mutually affirmative gaze that opens up a miniature theatrical scene: The male stranger moves his head backwards, causing his "hat to slip down his neck" and the monocle to fall (FE I: 71). Even if he, as Gammel suggests, engages in a parodic subversion "of the traditional specular pattern of male seduction" (*Sexualizing Power* 112), he has interested Fanny enough to talk her into strolling together.

In their *flânerie*, Fanny and her new companion form an unequal pair in terms of reading one another. "Captain" Axel Dahl has immediately recognized in her externals and conduct the recently-arrived, presumably naïve and easy-to-exploit new-comer to the city. Fanny, by way of contrast, is still inexperienced in decoding the appearance of men that seem elegant and polite; rather, she reads their appearance as an "index of character" (Sennett 169). She remains unaware that Axel's alleged sailor's uniform – with the brass buttons all cut off – and the cape (potentially concealing the imperfect apparel underneath) only copy a certain dress code without him actually belonging to the class he seeks to represent. With his playfulness, Dahl manages to pass himself off as an attractive Dandy to Fanny, even if that Dandy is rather a poor, perverted version of what Baudelaire, the city's paradigmatic *poète-flâneur*, had envisioned in his famous essay, "Le Peintre de la vie moderne" (1859 / 63):

> L'homme riche, oisif, et qui, même blasé, n'a pas d'autre occupation que de courir à la piste du bonheur; l'homme élevé dans le luxe et accoutumé dans sa jeunesse à l'obéissance des autres hommes, celui enfin qui n'a pas d'autre profession que l'élégance, jouira toujours, dans tous les temps, d'une physiognomie distincte, tout à fait part.[. . .] Le dandysme est le dernier éclat d'héroisme dans les décadences; [. . .] il est superbe, sans chaleur et plein de mélancholie. ("Le Peintre" 709-12)

Of this ideal Dandy *à la* Baudelaire, Dahl possesses very little indeed; rather, he comes close to Wilde's stance – expressed in "The Decay of Lying" and embodied in the figure of Dorian Gray – that life and art must engage in a competitive imitation of reality. With his phallic economy geared towards consuming Fanny, Dahl subscribes in fact to a frequent phenomenon in 19th century city life: "the issue [is], not being sure of a rank, but being able to act with assurance" (Sennett 69). His assured performance, which echoes the Wildean sense of the decadent's mask concealing his evil, very quickly extends to sexual and financial abuse of his new acquaintance. Upon their first private *séance* in Fanny's impoverished lodgings, Axel lifts her skirt and violently breaks her resistance in a rapist scenario; although she had secretly hoped to get some financial support from him, it is Axel who repeatedly borrows money from her. He is the first in a

series of urban males whose outward appearance deceives Fanny into an assumed companionship or sympathy that in reality is exploitation.

In need of money, Fanny visits her spinster aunt, Mrs. Blaurock, who owns a boutique, and becomes a trainee. She shows good skill in handling the male customers. With her aunt's assistant, Bertha Grabow, and with Axel, the heroine goes for frequent strolls, *spazieren* in the sense of Baudelaire's *flâneur* who takes delight in ambling aimlessly but is dressed to be observed at the same time as he discovers by chance the city's particulars.[149] As an increasingly self-conscious *flâneuse* in the public space of Berlin, Fanny nourishes her growing desire for accoutring her femininity; that she alters her style to a collection that has "something of the Berlin chic to it," wears a very costly new hat, and is observed in this kind of vanity fair all contribute to "her thinness [giving] way to feminine curves" (FE I: 105; 153). Consciously, Fanny is tailoring her appearance in the fashion she deems the most appropriate, seemingly approaching her ideal in that process of self-constitution.

Like the protagonist, the city of Berlin in *Fanny Essler* also constantly changes and manipulates its appearance, for various purposes, assuming special functions. For instance, the city acts as an agent that frequently entices the heroine into strolling, purchasing more clothes, and perpetually enhancing her self-images. Like a friend or even a *confidante*, Berlin provides ever new impulses for this young woman. Hence, Grove's city goes beyond a general literary topos, defined by Jane Augustine as "a locale which is the backdrop [for] individual consciences making choices in order to solve personal dilemmas," towards a "more anthropoid" entity that "takes on the mixed qualities and functions of a human character.[. . .] It becomes quasi-human" (Augustine 73-4). This analogy of woman and city goes as far back as Babylon, the big city and "mother of all evils" in the Biblical tradition, which has helped in grounding the notion of the whore as an allegory for modernity (indebted to Baudelaire and his view of the

[149] Baudelaire's notion of the Dandy might be seen as the prototype for his concept of the *flâneur*, which in itself is influenced by Poe's story, "The Man of the Crowd." Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du mal* (1857) – often considered as the text that initiates modernist literature – is partly built on and around the inscribed figure of the *poète-flâneur*, especially in the section "Tableaux Parisiens." Nicholls comments on Baudelaire's particular approach: "The crowded thoroughfares of the city now provided a setting for a private drama in which the artist as stroller (*flâneur*) could shift at will between postures of aloofness and surrender" (17). In a more general description, Sennett maintains that the *flâneur*'s "very life depends on his arousing the interest of others in the street" (213), while Benjamin reasons that in order to understand this "man of leisure," one would first have to understand the "principles of the art of seeing" (*Illuminations* 173). – It is important to note that according to Baudelaire, *flanerie* (as related to the concept of the Dandy) is an exclusively male 'occupation'; in *Mon cœur mis à nu*, he writes, "La femme est [. . .] toujours vulgaire, c'est-à-dire le contraire du dandy" (*Journaux intimes* 53).

perverted city as a dangerously organic, psychic unity in *Les Fleurs du mal*). Therefore, it is also a favourite naturalist topos that underlines how a figure's environment often operates in subconscious, irresistible ways – which applies to Fanny, who as a newly-arrived city-dweller is neither fixed in her personal identity nor in her social role.[150] But she has entered an interactive process of mutual assimilation and reflection, has taken up elements like the Berlin chic from the seductive city and mirrors them for all passers-by to see: "out on the street she [. . .] looked quite citified when she gathered up her skirts and even showed some daring and grace" (FE I: 153). With the "network of streets [that] belonged to her" like a personal catwalk, she has become her own mannequin in this city of "Berlin [that] she owned" (FE II: 8).

Fanny's rapid transformation into a citified young woman poses repeated problems, some of which revolve around questions of style, taste, and necessity in terms of whatever new dresses and accoutrements she buys or has tailor-made. When, surprisingly, a bundle with the clothes she carefully selected but left behind at Kolberg upon her sudden escape to Berlin arrives, there is friction with her aunt. For Mrs. Blaurock has contacted Mr. Essler, to effect his consent to her taking care of his daughter, and now remarks after having sorted through these clothes: "'You're set for at least a couple of years.'" Fanny is "of a different opinion" (FE I: 97), which underlines how much the public arena of Berlin and its inhabitants have already tailored her self-conception; the bundle of what recently seemed essential clothing to her, as a projection of her identity-to-be, has become insignificant, an empty cocoon from the past testifying to Fanny's metamorphosis *en procès*. In her naïve determination, she is not fully aware of the fact yet that her enormous hunger for elegance, Axel Dahl's initial mirror-performance, and his subsequent sexual conquest have begun to turn her into an organic part of the city's bodily commerce.

***Theatrum Mundi* and the Literal Stage**

Out on the street, Fanny learns to tease strangers while strolling with Bertha, and meets and partly entertains a number of new men at restaurants, mostly through Axel's

[150] Augustine argues that "the city as character is present when the human characters [. . .] are in physical and cultural flux." As a third category, she adds the state of "mental flux," that is, being "shaky and uncertain in personal identity and consciousness " (74). Fanny fulfills all three categories.

introduction. She assumes a real presence in and becomes increasingly initiated into the theatrical space of the great city. The "scenario" of this theatrical space, as Sennett reasons, "is principally the search for reputations" (119). Whereas her notable (and much-noted) physical presence in Berlin already threatens to earn her the image of a *femme fatale*, she decides to take acting lessons, hoping that way to meet her prince, but is unaware of the potentially negative image boost her new activity entails. At first, these lessons afford her a sense of progress, and help her overcome "the traces of her north German origins" in the way she talks (FE I: 140). They also land her a few minor roles and, after her insistence on her capability, even the male part in the comedy titled *Out of Uniform*. It is this performance as a trousered woman in the guise of a man which attracts the university lecturer Dr. Moritz Plinius, a representative of the *vita contemplativa* who is ironicized by Grove, though not without sympathy, as an asexual being. Dr. Plinius becomes Fanny's well-intentioned companion, offers her cultured comfort and many presents as well as the chance to act the role of potential bride, until she tires of him and breaks off the relationship.[151]

In several ways, Fanny's cross-dressed performance marks a crucial phase in the novel. Dr. Plinius's surprise "that a young lady was wearing the uniform" (148) underlines her noticeable androgynous appeal. Such an impression of androgyny – discussed by Howard as "the erasure of sexual determinacy" (32) – is reiterated through the narrator's comment that in Fanny's walk there is "something of a contradiction [in relation to her feminine apparel]: a boyish awkwardness"; or when Charlie Fürst, hoping to pick up a virgin-type girl after the show, remarks with regard to her short hair-cut, "'Ya look like a boy'" (FE I: 153; 181). At least in part, the heroine's appearance is androgynous on and off the literal stage. Most importantly, her cross-dressed performance in the theatre serves to problematize her role as a woman in *Fin de siècle*-Berlin. For if cross-dressing, as Marjorie Garber suggests in *Vested Interests* (1992), is "an index [. . .] of many different kinds of 'category crisis'" and "offers a challenge to easy notions of binarity, putting into question the categories of 'female' and 'male'" (10; 16), Fanny's part in *Out of Uniform* illustrates the crisis of cultural gender construction

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[151] The figure of Dr. Moritz Plinius bears some affinity with that of the protagonist in Heinrich Mann's novel, *Professor Unrat* (which, in its 1930 film version, *Der Blaue Engel*, launched the international career of Marlene Dietrich). In Mann's book, the petty bourgeois high-school teacher Dr. Raat, nicknamed "Professor Unrat" (that is: filth), falls prey to a small-town courtesan, thereby ruining the fundaments of his existence. Grove's character is too rational to fall into that trap, and Fanny still too considerate a female. As both texts appeared in 1905, Mann's poor Professor could not have informed Grove's Dr. Plinius.

that she undergoes. As signalled by the exploration of her sexuality that has only just begun, her identity is very much in process; she cannot (yet) announce a proper, standardized and clearly-defined sense of female self to the outside world.

Not aware of the solution suggested by the play's title – namely, *deliberately* getting, or being, *out* of the uniforming conventions that subject women to male-dictated dress codes – Fanny reverts to *con*forming to the notion of gender difference as based on binary patterns as soon as her performance is over: out of masculine trousers, into feminine skirt and blouse. Within a plot that is obsessed with the heroine's incessant affirmation of herself as a desirable female, it is the cross-dressing experience in the theatre that offers her the most radical solution to escape society's norms (and, thereby, to abandon her childish quest for the prince). Unconsciously, though, Fanny opts against an ambivalent or even male style of dress that would represent more accurately the androgynous appeal of her identity.[152] Instead, she continues her subjugation to the traditional mechanisms of *theatrum mundi* as opposed to becoming her own avant-garde spectacle beyond the literal stage.

Therefore, participation in *Out of Uniform* does not amount to a threshold experience for the protagonist. But the cross-dressed role becomes a meta-textual statement about how Fanny's identity as a young woman is currently tailored: by her own ambitions as a female actress that allows for socio-cultural gendering of her sex, by the desirous gazes of men (and even a few fellow-actresses), and by the city that functions as both director and character in a theatrical world. In this great, fluid space where reputations are much easier created than corrected, Fanny struggles hard to advance in her career. On impulse, she quits her job with Mrs. Blaurock over repeated quarrels, and signs up with the smaller Korso Theatre, a move that only speeds up the tragic development of her own drama. Under-equipped, Fanny is envious of her new fellow-girls, especially Lisa Jung, who owns exclusive lace and silk underwear and stockings. With her imitative desire operating again, the protagonist feels that she "would have to become like [Lisa]" (FE I: 191); oddly enough, the fetish which usually arouses male desire – underwear – is in this case observed (and desired) from a female specular position. While this underlines Fanny's being different from the girls and her wish to bridge this gap, it stresses how she has internalized the dependence on male-

[152] Lou-Andreas Salomé (1861-1937), muse to Rilke and Nietzsche, and a constant object of envy and debate, is one of the best-known examples for a woman consciously displaying an androgynous appeal.

created, or male-desired, forms of female self-construction with the help of sensuous fabrics.

When they all perform as street girls – the "on-lookers," as one of her colleagues explains, for some soldiers on the stage (181) – the actual performance is a meta-dramatic pre-echo of what Fanny herself will be engaging in. Her colleagues turn out to be routined in attracting and entertaining rich males after the shows in exchange for money (190). Urged by Lisa, Fanny reluctantly joins a group of men at a *salon*, and ends up with Benno von Gram in bed in the barracks. He offers her the ridiculously low sum of ten Marks the next morning. By taking them hesitantly, Fanny has been plunged into her grieving 'career' as a prostitute by von Gram (the German name literally meaning 'of grief'). Although she worries about her reputation and "despise[s] herself because she did not wish to appear what she was" (203), she has now become like the others, pressured by her economic inferiority as a woman.

Antony Riley, in "The Case of Greve / Grove" (50), has outlined "the plight of small-part actresses in Berlin" by quoting the author of *Berlin Alexanderplatz* (1927), Alfred Döblin, and the social marxist, August Bebel. The latter's *Die Frau und der Sozialismus* (1879; 1918) provides a passionate analysis of the historical suppression / exploitation of women and provocatively speaks of "prostitution as a necessary social institution for bourgeois society, comparable to that of the police, military, church and entrepreneurship" (176). For Berlin alone, Bebel estimates some 50,000 prostitutes in 1890; in 1897, he adds, fifty-seven prostitutes were tried in court *per diem*.[153] In light of such figures, Fanny's fate appears anything but singular; Döblin even argues that the "chorus girls in the theatres are with rare exceptions almost all prostitutes. The more so if they are unfortunate enough to be beautiful. To earn enough to eat and to continue their education they have to work for miserable wages, and they themselves have to supply their own, extremely expensive costumes into the bargain."[154] This is the dilemma Fanny faces, first in Berlin, then in the provincial theatre at Cottbus. She has

[153] "Die Prostitution wird also zu einer notwendigen sozialen Institution für die bürgerliche Gesellschaft, ebenso wie Polizei, stehendes Heer, Kirche, Unternehmerschaft.[. . .] Die polizeilich eingeschriebenen Prostituierten bilden auch in Berlin nur einen sehr kleinen Bruchteil der Prostitution, die von fachkundiger Seite auf mindestens 50000 geschätzt werden.[. . .] Von den im Jahre 1897 sistierten [sic] Dirnen wurden 17018 dem Amtsrichter zur Aburteilung vorgeführt – es kamen demnach auf jeden Gerichtstag zirka 57" (*Die Frau und der Sozialismus* 176; 196).

[154] Quoted in and translated by Riley ("The Case of Greve / Grove" 50), but originally from Alfred Döblin, "Modern. Ein Bild aus der Gegenwart," *Jagende Rosse/Der schwarze Vorhang und andere frühe Erzählwerke*, ed. A.W. Riley (Olten and Freiburg i. Br.: Walter-Verlag, 1981) 18-19.

no money, only allows for a few affairs that pay a lot less than those of her fellow-girls, and is, although talented, constantly denied access to better roles for lack of a wardrobe.

At the small but ambitious Cottbus theatre, she is not even offered a role in a piece of the telling title *Renaissance* (Grove's way of implicitly underlining that his heroine will be granted no 'rebirth').[155] After she has been "praised to the sky by the critics" for a tiny role and a small part in *Don Carlos* respectively, producer Eckstein holds out the prospect of giving her the lead as Juliet in Shakespeare's play – an offer she must decline, since even the rental of the necessary items, including wigs, would be "more than her salary could pay for." She adds that Eckstein better not get her any parts at all, thus prompting him to reiterate the absolute necessity for her procuring a wardrobe. (FE I: 210-11). But the monthly costs of a wardrobe are in utter disproportion to the actual wages she earns; Bebel cites a case from 1891 in which a talented actress's salary of 100 Marks is opposed by wardrobe expenses of 1000 Marks, with "the deficit covered by a 'friend'."[156]

Whereas Grove's heroine lacks such a friend, Heinrich Mann sketches an 'ideal' sponsor in *Die Jagd nach Liebe* ("The Hunt for Love"; 1903), which bears striking thematic similarities with *Fanny Essler*. Located in a bohemian turn-of-the-century milieu which is corrupted by materialist ambitions,[157] Mann's novel centers around young Claude Marehn, who has made a large inheritance. Tragically infatuated with Ute Ende, an aspiring student actress, Marehn is unable either to handle his financial

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[155] No proof could be found that a play titled *Renaissance* was put on stage in Germany during the 1890s. It is possible that Grove wanted to allude to Walter Pater's essay collection, *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* (1873), a central *décadence* document which had influenced Wilde strongly and marked a radical break away from the Victorian view of art as a function of moral, religious and political aims; in its preface, the book discusses the notion of beauty and the artist's need to develop full susceptibility to its impressions, and celebrates solipsistic sensuality. Whereas Spettigue argues that Wilde "put into practice Pater's search for sensations" (*FPG* 52-3), David Williams, in quoting Philip Cohen, outlines how "Wilde came to feel 'that he had been led astray by Walter Pater's writings, especially by *Studies*'" (*Confessional Fictions* 46). That process of rejection is reflected in Wilde's 1891 publications, *Intentions* and *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, which were both translated by Greve and form traceable subtexts to *Fanny Essler*; the latter text's motto might be read as a rejection of Pater's aristocratic stance that the masses with their vulgar tastes should not be the object of art: "All true art adressed itself to the masses: even when its 'public' is not a part of the masses.[. . .] All true art is, in the strictest sense of the word, moral" (FE I: 4). Pater's *Marius the Epicurean* appeared in Greve's translation in 1908.

[156] Bebel argues: "Auch ein großer Teil der Schauspielerinnen, deren Garderobekosten zu ihrem Gehalt in krassestem Mißverhältnis stehen, ist auf solche schmutzige Erwerbsquelle angewiesen." In this context, he refers to a study from 1891 by one Dr. F. Mehring, and relates "daß eine nicht unbefähigte Schauspielerin an einem sehr bekannten Theater mit 100 Mark monatlicher Gage angestellt war, daß aber ihre Ausgaben allein für Garderobe in einem Monat sich auf 1000 Mark beliefen. Das Defizit deckte ein 'Freund'" (*Die Frau und der Sozialismus* 199-200).

[157] Set in the rivalling city of Munich, *Die Jagd nach Liebe* is designed as a counterpart to Mann's satirical caricature of Berlin society in the 1890s, *Im Schlaraffenland. Ein Roman unter feinen Leuten* ("In the Land of Milk and Honey. A Novel amidst Polite People"; 1900).

responsibilites orto conquer a *protegé* who never discards her coldness and ruthless sense of determination that parodies Nietzschean will-power. Unfit for life, he throws himself into decadent adventures, only to suffer the stronger from his incapacities, and finally dies at age 25. But the intensity of his support for the mildly talented Ute provides a striking contrast to Fanny's plight: Marehn pays her apartment, the 'chic' furniture and, above all, lavishes more elegant clothing on her than she needs. A visit to the tailor captures the essence of her skilfull exploitation of this weak male who never even gets a chance to have sex with her:

> Her ambition awoke not before it came to stylizing her own person. She stood in the dressing-cabinet of the fashion dealer. Her skirt was about two inches on the floor, flowing around her feet. It arched spaciously all the way up to the knees, heavily embroidered, a dome heaped with leaves, tendrils, plants. Out of this, there rose, triumphantly, the black, steep line of thighs, hips, breasts and shoulders. The arms were hanging on the side, tragically stiff. Magnificently, the hair showed dark, violent ardour above this pale head, this head which was leaned backwards and burst into white blossom above the edge of a high collar. Claude devoutly claimed that this presented a more gratifying treasure than if you were to decorate your desk with a figure called "Medusa" or "Diseuse". (*Die Jagd nach Liebe* 96)[158]

In his satirical attack suffused with imagery of religion and regeneration, Mann portrays Ute Ende as a living, ridiculous *objet d'art*, the self-conscious creation of which is but a bad parody of the birth of Venus;[159] Claude, although criticized as her naïvely enchanted worshipper, compares her to the oppositional pair of an earthly cabaret artist and the mythological, awe-inspiring Medusa, a Gorgon who could turn to stone anything that met her gaze. In fact, his intellectual powers are completely deactivated by the student's presence, on whose selfishness the narrator comments: "Ute thought the investment basically unnecessary for the theatre. It would be about getting as much as

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158 "Ihr Ehrgeiz erwachte erst, wenn es an die Stilisierung der eigenen Person ging. Sie stand im Anprobekabinett des Modehändlers. Ihr Rock lag um ihre Füße her eine Handbreit am Boden. Hinauf bis zu den Knien wölbte er sich weit, schwer bestickt, eine Kuppel von gehäuften Blättern, Ranken, Pflanzen. Und ihr entstieg triumphierend die schwarze, steile Linie aus Schenkeln, Hüften, Brust und Schultern. Die Arme hingen daneben, tragisch steif. Das Haar prunkte mit dunkler und heftiger Glut über diesem bleichen Kopf, diesem rückwärts gelehnten, auf dem Rande des hohen Kragens weiß aufgeblühten. Claude bemerkte andächtig, dies sei eine reicher lohnende Kostbarkeit, als stellte man sich auf den Schreibtisch eine Figur namens 'Medusa' oder 'Diseuse'" (*Die Jagd nach Liebe* 96).

159 Ute's posture in new apparel bears a strong resemblance with Fanny's performance as *tableau vivant* (see later). Both female figures also share their self-confidence's dependence on being dressed properly. Mann's narrator comments on the effect of a compliment Claude pays his *protegé*: "Am Bahnhof, während man ihr Gepäck einschrieb, sagte er ihr, wie schick ihr Reisekostüm sei. Und das wiederkehrende Bewußtsein, gut angezogen zu sein, gab Ute ihr Selbstvertrauen zurück" (*Die Jagd nach Liebe* 108).

possible for your money's worth, hence, something chic and unsolid." So she explains to Claude: "'With the small theatres, you always have to perform everything, but everything. You need more costumes than on the great stages.'" Eager to please, Claude adds in total agreement: "'To impress your director [. . .] can never do any harm'" (97).[160] Ultimately, Miss Ende's capriciousness will be the literal end for Claude, an anti-hero that is not fit to play a part in his own theatrical world.

In contrast to Mann's successful manipulator Ute Ende, Fanny has neither a blind believer like Claude to support her, nor the necessary costumes to impress even her producer, let alone the director. The only thing Eckstein can offer her is street-wise advice: "Why don't you get a rich man to support you?" (FE I: 211). Without providing genuine help, but subscribing to the commodification of women for men, he thereby functions (as his name's literal translation into English suggests) as the negative cornerstone for Fanny's serious theatrical aspirations. Her sartorial capacities are crucially limited; the wardrobe, as emblem of an actress's enabling power, is not only unattainable, but becomes an instrument of its own that turns her into the opposite of a princess.

But Grove, whose narrator does not hide his symphathy for the tragic heroine, uses Fanny's interlude at Cottbus for a serious attack, by way of subtle intertextual reference, on a non-professional, pseudo-artistic theatrical practice. When Fanny protests that her low salary of 70 Marks would not even help her in starting a wardrobe, secretary Mr. Timm retorts: "Piece something together. Historical accuracy doesn't matter" (FE I: 210). Below the communicative surface, which seems to suggest to Fanny a possible way out of her impasse, Timm's utterance is the exact negation of what Wilde had promoted, with emphasis, in his 1891 essay, "The Truth of Masks: A Note on Illusion." In that essay, Wilde contemplates the remains of the "costume-wardrobe of a London theatre" after Shakespeare's Globe burned down, and stresses the importance of historically accurate dress: "For the dresses of one age do not artistically harmonise with the dresses of another; and, as far as dramatic value goes, to confuse the costumes is to confuse the play" ("Truth of Masks" 234; 253-4).[161] To make the theatre officials at

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[160] "Ute fand die Anschaffung im Grund überflüssig für das Theater. Es käme darauf an, möglichst viel zu haben fürs Geld, also schick und unsolid.[. . .] 'Bei den kleinen Theatern muß man immer alles spielen, aber alles. Man braucht mehr Kostüme als auf ersten Bühnen.'[. . .] 'Deinem Direktor zu imponieren [. . .] kann nie schaden'" (97).

[161] Felix Paul Greve's translation (1902) reads: "Denn das Kostüm einer Zeit stimmt künstlerisch nicht mit dem einer anderen überein; und für die dramatische Wirkung heißt die Kostüme verwirren, das Stück verwirren" (Wilde, "Die Wahrheit der Masken" 265).

Cottbus ignore Wilde's *dictum* is Grove's way of exposing their lack of artistic seriousness. Fanny, by refusing to fake it, emerges as the 'true' artist figure in the debate over costumes (or, implicitly, over values) in the theatre.

Wilde's essay provides another argument that is felt by the heroine, both in its historical dimension and for her present state of being, and most likely shared by her author: "Costume is a growth, an evolution, and a most important, perhaps the most important, sign of the manners, customs and mode of life of each century" (254).[162] However, without this badly needed sartorial support, the proper wardrobe, Fanny cannot prosper artistically and is doomed to fail. Wilde's verdict that "until an actor is at home in his dress, he is not at home in his part" (262),[163] rings sadly true for her as well. If, as Greve maintains in his essay "Oscar Wilde und das Drama," the "element of movement in drama is in the struggle of an individual [. . .] towards the discovery of the symbol hidden within himself,"[164] that process is repeatedly suspended in *Fanny Essler*; for if the symbol is expressed, in Williams's gloss on Greve, "in man's conception of the world, of 'the self-knowledge of *Gestalt*' [or mask]" (*Confessional Fictions* 45), clothing in general and the costume wardrobe in particular assume the strongest expressions of such an essential identity marker in the course of Fanny's drama.

The heroine's being exiled from her artistic ambitions thus becomes a guiding theme in the novel. As a result of a tentative *liaison* with Lieutenant Pollack, who writes poetry, is sensitive but poor, she encounters the small town of Cottbus as an agent of "distrust and animosity": the local tobacconist and a fellow-actor have filed a complaint against her affair with this soldier "for the purpose of earning money" (FE I: 211; 221). It is bitter irony that only Fanny, and none of her more versatile, more financially successful fellow-girls, is now branded a prostitute, and threatened with the prospect of arrest. She falls victim to an urban "milieu of strangers" that can quickly indulge in condemning prejudice on the basis of mere speculation, because, as Sennett reasons, "we usually lack the external knowledge to judge the reality for a stranger's behavior"

[162] Greve's translation: "Das Kostüm unterliegt dem Gesetz der Entwicklung und es ist ein wichtiges, vielleicht das wichtigste Zeichen für die Sitten und Gewohnheiten, für die Lebensart eines jeden Jahrhunderts" (Wilde, "Die Wahrheit der Masken" 265).

[163] Greve's translation: "Außerdem ist ein Schauspieler nicht eher in seiner Rolle zu Hause, als bis er in seinem Kostüm zu Hause ist" (Wilde, "Die Wahrheit der Masken" 265).

[164] Qtd. in David Williams, *Confessional Fictions* (45), from Martin Kuester's recent translation of Greve's "Oscar Wilde und das Drama" (originally 1903), which figured as introductory essay to *Oscar Wildes sämtliche Werke in deutscher Sprache*, Bd. 7 (Wien und Leipzig: Wiener Verlag, 1908).

(39). Thus accused of selling herself, clad in a tight, ill-fitting reputation, the disillusioned heroine returns to Berlin and joins the Korso Theatre chorus girls again.

The feeling of being "at home here" (223) soon fades. When "crazy Naumann," a notorious visitor and reputed bon-vivant, makes a pass at her after a show but realizes that she does not wear black silk stockings, the potential transaction of body for money is aborted. Fanny lacks the fetishized fashion utensils that function as agents of desire for the consumer; the silk stockings figure once again as an absence that marks her difference. Correlatively, a mysterious, sympathetic stranger's recent assertion, "You don't fit in at all" (205), keeps resonating inside her. Upon noticing how none of her dreams have come true, Fanny marks a ceasure in her life at age 25, quits the Korso and abandons her acting ambitions. She exiles herself from this world of the theatre.

***Cul-de-sac*, or: Artist Circles and Authorial Cameo**

So the heroine begins "a year of starvation in order to buy herself the most essential pieces of clothing and underthings" (235). Whereas her desire for elegance is still unquenchable, the author's choice of words becomes increasingly ironic and double-edged. Fanny's new job keeps her travelling for free through Germany and to places like Breslau and Vienna, on top of a good salary, "in exchange for her portrayal of marble statues" (235). It is no accident that posing as *tableau vivant* will remain Fanny's best-paying occupation, for in her almost nude poses, she serves a new, eager clientele in a *fin de siècle*-world. With the taste for *stimuli* changing among the rich, as Laure Adler points out, the "consumption of the sexual act was abandoned in favor of visual orgasm" (qtd. in Gammel, *Sexualizing Power* 114). This particular feature is inscribed, in explicitly self-reflexive ways, from a postmodern theoretical perspective, in Angela Carter's novel set in 1899, *Nights at the Circus* (1984). Sophia Fevvers, the mysterious half-bird, half-woman protagonist, recounts her childhood years of posing as Cupid in a brothel: "'I was a *tableau vivant* from the age of seven on.[. . .] so it was I served my apprenticeship in *being looked at* – at being the object of the eye of the beholder" (Carter 23). Carter's Sophia and Grove's Fanny function as static objects for the specular, compensatory, sexual pleasure of mostly male observers. Besides "Venus

chastising Cupid,"[165] Fanny also represents "Ariadne riding on a panther" (FE I: 235), yet another one of the author's implicit commentaries on his heroine's fate: As Ariadne was instrumental in helping her lover Theseus succeed in the labyrinth at Crête, only to be deserted afterwards on the island of Naxos, Fanny is about to encounter a god-like male that also makes use of her assistance before turning a cold back on her. Foreshadowed by the poses of stillness she now holds as various *tableaux* (and that echo with an image of death-in-life), the heroine will then be subjected to emotional starvation.

The dramatistic plot[166] of *Fanny Essler* brings another change for the heroine. Coming late for a rehearsal, she has a row with her employer and is fired on the spot. Returning to Berlin, the place she "considered [. . .] her own" (FE II: 8), she resumes her elaborate *flânerie* in a quasi-organic reunion. Dressed in high-class garments, it is as if her fairy tale world were briefly to come to life again, as if she were ennobled herself:

> And if she came to a display window in which there were large mirrors she would stop and look at herself and try to see herself as a stranger would see her. And each time she was surprised all over again: this was Fanny Essler? And she laughed at the image in the mirror; this, after all, was a lady who was drinking and eating well and who had enough money left over to be able to allow herself all sorts of luxury: a lady, and an elegant one at that. (FE II: 8-9)

In spite of its rather celebratory cadence, this scene's double sense of reflection – Fanny produces an optical replication of her self and muses over its simulating function – underlines the crucial difference between the external image she represents and the non-corresponding poverty, or lack of class, hidden underneath that deceptive appearance. By applying what Gammel calls the "internalized 'stranger's' gaze" (*Sexualizing Power* 113),[167] Fanny describes herself, however unconsciously, as the product of capitalist society's rules; the elegance that she so admiringly (or self-lovingly) notes is effected by

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[165] Cupid, according to Greek mythology, was the son of Venus and boy-god of love. He was famous for having become the lover of his mother's rival, Psyche, before abandoning her upon her disobedient act of checking his beauty. In literature, Cupid is best known from the first book in Virgil's *Aeneid*, in which he is sent on a mission by his mother to excite Dido in love for Aeneas.

[166] Gammel (*Sexualizing Power* 105) also points out the (naturalist) affinity of Grove's novel with drama. Her sequence of "five focal points" that supposedly equal five acts, though, omits the official part four ("Marriage") and instead begins with what functions as the book's exposition, but is a long, non-numbered section: "The Heroine Is Introduced." The five-part sequence is titled "Berlin," "The Theatre," "Love," "Marriage" and "Death."

[167] Cf. Ernst Bloch, in whose psycho-pathology of life in capitalism, the mirror assumes the role of a projected stranger's perception (e.g., that of an employer); hence, the mirror becomes the instrument for subordinating and externalizing the individual to the ruling gaze (*Ästhetik des Vor-Scheins* 1: 59).

her own desire for individual excellence and by society's powerful, levelling conventions that prescribe female beauty as a norm. In terms of Baudrillard's view on different stages of narcissism that approach a manipulation of the (female) body as economic value, Fanny fits the category of "secondary narcissism." Distinct from Freud's concept of "primary narcissism" which concentrates on cultivating one's own beauty, propelled in autoerotic loops by *Schaulust*, [168] to receive 'love' as a form of self-confirmation, Baudrillard's "secondary narcissism" shifts the focus towards the ego-ideal, in a projection (and then repression / sublimation) of the untroubled state of self-love in childhood. This results in viewing the body and its eroticism – which are *mis en scène* – as a separate unit or mirror-self; that self is integrated by way of (re)cognition in the mirror and through the gaze of the other.[169]

But if Fanny is only grappling at this stage with self-construction in the dangerous psychological domaine of narcissism, the men she now relates with have exclusively subscribed to "a view of reality in which the Other is a mirror of the self" (Sennett 325). Among the Berlin artist circles she has entered, the males in need of a muse and / or lover subject her to the function of acting as mirror for their narcissistic selves. Grove has fittingly embedded these figures in his attack on "the ideologies of the German *Neuromantik* [which] are at once satirically and bitterly examined and found to be thoroughly wanting" (Blodgett, "*Alias* Grove" 126). In his *roman-a-clèf*, he thinly fictionalizes his own past, his temporary association with 'Master' Stefan George's circle at Munich and the aesthetic, new Romantic movements that are everywhere imbued with Nietzschean stances. Hence, the first target of Grove's satire is a Berlin 'Master,' Nepomuk Bolle. Famous for his stained-glass compositions, Bolle (who is based on Melchior Lechter[170]) fetishizes Fanny's hands, likes to read Nietzsche and Wagner aloud

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[168] In "Triebe und Triebschicksale" ("Instincts and Their Vicissitudes"), Freud discusses the early stage of the pleasure of looking at objects as "autoerotisch," arguing that the "Vorstufe des Schautriebes, auf der die Schaulust den eigenen Körper zum Objekt hat, [. . .] gehör[t] dem Narzißmus an" (*Studienausgabe* III: 93-94).

[169] In his section titled "Der gesteuerte Narzißmus" ("Controlled Narcissism"), Baudrillard argues that fashion and advertisement effect a redefinition of the body, thus producing a change in the underlying psychic structures: "Dabei wird eine merkwürdige Strategie verfolgt: eine Umlenkung und Übertragung der Besetzung des Körpers und der erogenen Zonen auf *die Inszenierung des Körpers und der Erogenität.*[. . .] Dieser *Neo-Narzißmus* verbindet sich mit der Manipulation des Körpers als Wert. Es ist eine gesteuerte Ökonomie des Körpers [. . .]. Das alles begründet einen gewissermaßen 'synthetischen' Narzißmus, der von den beiden klassischen Formen des Narzißmus zu unterscheiden wäre: 1. Primärer Narzißmus: verschmelzend. 2. Sekundärer Narzißmus: Besetzung des Körpers als etwas Verschiedenes, als Spiegel-Ich. Integration des Ich durch das gespiegelte Erkennen und durch den Blick des Anderen. 3. Tertiärer Narzißmus: 'synthetisch'." (*Der symbolische Tausch* 174-5).

[170] Divay ("Abrechnung" 24) points out that Fanny's model Elsa had lived for about one year with Lechter, "der eine neugothische Kunstrichtung vertrat und gerne Nietzsche und Wagner bei Kerzenlicht in

during candle-lit *séances*, spends all his money on dead *Jugendstil* objects while undernourishing his muse.

This personification of pure, bloodless aestheticism is satirized just as much as the man into whose potent arms the heroine flees from Bolle, Erhart Stein (that is, Ernst Hardt). A playwright on the edge of becoming established, he briefly appears to her to be the much-desired prince,[171] although he keeps her short of money. Upon learning of Fanny's / Elsa's past, Stein / Hardt changes; in relation to his view of himself as ideal(ist) artist, he proves unable to endure her image as *femme fatale* and exiles her emotionally. Some of the feelings and prejudices contained in their conflict are refleced in an often-quoted letter written by the graphic artist Marcus Behmer to Elsa's former lover Ernst Hardt on 19 February 1907. Behmer, who as a book designer had collaborated with Greve on a translation of the *Arabian Nights*, tries to comfort the addressee by outlining his biographical interpretation of FPG's first novel: "Fanny Essler is really marvellous: If Else Ti hasn't yet become a whore, despite her whore-like nature, well she has finally found her pimp, who is now prostituting her more than if he were to allow her to be mounted at 50 pfennigs a trick" (qtd. in Riley, "The Case of Greve / Grove" 48).[172]

In the novel, Fanny escapes Stein's cold egotism with the only exception to the otherwise exploitative males, Heinrich Stumpf (that is: Richard Schmitz). This man without a nose offers a brother-and-sister relationship to Fanny and takes her on his travels to Rome. Spoiled by her sympathetic companion who never wavers in his respect for her, Fanny blooms and has "one light and one warm dressing-gown made for her, and a coat for outdoor wear, all in black cashmere." She calls the best materials her own, has everything tailored to her needs. Still without the proper male to excite and deserve her love, however, Fanny hungers for more clothing, more elegance. She keeps

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Mönchskutte las." *Fanny Essler* provides an accurate portrait of his mannerisms. Gammel ("'No Woman Lover'" 454) ranks Lechter among one of "the lesser 'masters'" in Grove's attack.

[171] The Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven Collection at the University of Maryland, College Park, contains a number of poems that Elsa addressed, trying to 'get even,' to some of her former lovers. Among the pieces published by Divay for the first time, there is one dedicated to Ernst Hardt; it opens: "Es hat mal einen Ernst gegeben / Der war für mich das Salz zum Leben," but then chronicles his change of attitude and subsequent marriage, for rational reasons, to Polyxena, a Greek diplomat's daughter, at Athens ("Abrechnung" 25-6).

[172] The German original, Ernst Hardt, *Briefe an Ernst Hardt: Eine Auswahl aus den Jahren 1898-1947*, ed. Jochen Meyer (Marbach: Deutsches Literaturarchiv, 1975) 53, is quoted in Gammel ("'No Woman Lover'" 458): "Fanny Essler ist ja fabelhaft: Wenn Elsa Ti solange keine Hure geworden ist, trotz ihrer Hurennatur, so hat sie nun endlich ihren Louis gefunden, der sie mehr prostituiert, als wenn er sie à 50 Pfennig besteigen liesse." The unusual name 'Ti' (and its phonetic quivalent in English, 'Tee'), mean "'mistress' in Chinese" (Riley, "The Case of Greve/Grove" 49). Grove often used this address when writing to his wife Catherine. See Pacey (*Letters* 83-85).

directing her libidinal energies to the images reflected by the mirror, eager to dress her narcissistic self in ever-new facets of fashion that produce changing appearances of an Other. Her state of being trapped in this ontological paradox reaches her consciousness in a moment of shock: "the more I get, [. . .] the more I want! Where will it end?" (FE II: 91). Her rhetorical question lays bare the uncontrollable nature of her obsessive desire for tailoring herself through incessant identity rehearsals – a desire that feeds on itself and makes her sartorial enterprises operate in tautological loops.

That vicious circle continues upon arrival at Munich in January 1900. With a small inheritance from her deceased mother, Fanny has come to take art lessons, but her "first concern [is] for clothing and unterthings" and she has several exclusive pieces of silk and linen tailored by an expressly recommended seamstress (99). Lured again into interaction with the chic and conventions of the city, and in harmony with its growing consumer mentality, the heroine keeps perpetuating what Poschardt calls the "dialectics between adaptation and self-realization" (166). As part of a repetitive pattern, she aborts her art training, for want of patience, but not of talent. She has befriended a young writer, Eduard Barrel, whose lack of masculinity she notices but whose marriage proposal she accepts nonetheless.

Fanny and Eduard move to the outskirts of Berlin, get married, struggle materially. Eduard misses Munich, Fanny the inner city and sexual fulfillment. In their quickly deteriorating marriage, the new Miss Barrel develops a "feverish" condition accompanied by "crying fits and hysterical outbursts" (FE II: 132). Familiar with Freud's by-then revolutionary theories, Grove thus reflects one of the most dominant social neuroses of the late 19th century – a dramatic expression of what Sennett calls "psychic distress" and "sign of the trials of personality in the family" (182). Hysteria, as outlined by Joseph Breuer and Freud, in *Studies in Hysteria* (1893-1895) and in related works, is understood as the physical (somatic) result of emotionally severe tensions or experiences that have not yet been resolved (or, in Breuer's terminology, "abreacted"). As Freud reasons, hysteria and obsessional neurosis are often combined with anxiety neurosis, which can result in anxiety attacks (e.g., the newly-wed wife's fear of her husband's sexual failure), sensations of vertigo or fever.[173]

[173] In "On the grounds for detaching a particular syndrome from neurasthenia under the description 'anxiety neurosis'" (1895), Freud maintains that for anxiety neurosis, the source of excitation lies in the somatic field, but for hysteria in the psychical one. Cf. the German original, "Über die Berechtigung, von der Neurasthenie einen bestimmten Symptomenkomplex als 'Angstneurose' abzutrennen" (1895), in which he views "die Angstneurose [. . .] als das somatische Seitenstück zur Hysterie" and specifies: "Hier

This theoretical context – questionable from today's scientific point of view but *en vogu*e at the time – is conjured by Grove in Part IV ("Marriage") of *Fanny Essler*. With her lust for life enchained by domestic chores and an impotent husband, Fanny develops the classical symptoms of this pychological malaise. This parodies the frustrated and untameable sexual drive of the real-life model Elsa, who never entertained hysteria and asserts, "enlargement of experience – knowledge – personality – was with me reachable only through sex" (BE 148); Grove also delivers a biting satire of her architect-husband, August Endell, who in her memoirs is reported to have sent her "to a sanatorium at the shore of the North Sea – to be away from him and to have by-the-way [sic], for his impotence my womb massaged, so that he should not look the only guilty one" (BE 60). In the figure of Eduard Barrel, the same compensatory mechanisms are operating, and he turns from well-meaning husband into a complacent pseudo-scientist who diagnoses his wife's disease[174] before sending her off.

On their way back from a supposedly recuperative trip to Italy, the couple stop in Munich and attend the so-called 'jour' at Dr. Katzwedel's – Grove's caricature of the George circle and its famous host, the socially active poet Karl Wolfskehl.[175] Most importantly, the author has inserted an irritating self-portrait, first spotted through Fanny's admiring eyes as a "new phenomenon: [the] strikingly tall and slim, strikingly blond, strikingly elegant" (FE II: 134) Friedrich Karl Reelen. This authorial cameo turns out to be a friend of Eduard's, visits the Barrels at Berlin and brings flowers for the heroine. The "completely enigmatic" (147) Reelen becomes the epitome of elegance for her. After her interlude at the sanatorium, he appears, in a melo-dramatic scene, early

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wie dort tritt an Stelle einer psychischen Verarbeitung eine Ablenkung der Erregung in das Somatische ein; der Unterschied liegt bloß darin, daß die Erregung, in deren Verschiebung sich die Neurose äußert, bei der Angstneurose eine rein somatische (die somatische Sexualerregung), bei der Hysterie eine psychische (durch Konflikt hervorgerufene) ist. Es kann daher nicht verwundern, daß Hysterie und Angstneurose sich gesetzmäßig miteinander kombinieren [und] daß die Hysterie eine Anzahl von Symptomen einfach der Angstneurose entlehnt" (*Studienausgabe* VI: 49; 35-38).

174 Eduard argues that "her sensuality had explosively repressed itself and now ran rampant in psychopathological ways" (FE II: 141). His role as pseudo-psychoanalyst is further underlined when he, in full acknowledgement of his inability to satisfy her sexually, encourages a verbal openness that mimicks the talking cure (which Breuer and Freud had developed in the context of their *Studies on Hysteria*).

175 Whereas Knönagel ("Grove's Beginnings" 73) ascribes "a scathing satire of the whole George movement" to *Fanny Essler*, Gammel ("'No Woman Lover'" 454) is more careful in differentiating Greve's parodic intentions and points out that he tried "to articulate his critique of the circle and at the same time to pay homage to the 'master'." In contrast to Greve's controlled attack, *Baroness Elsa* lavishes explicit criticism on the hollow art of both Wolfskehl (as "Dr. Phil") and George ("Stefan") (cf. BE 138-9; 161-2).
works out how Greve attacks the lesser masters, and BE the biggies; fn 8 + Kn. on scathing satire (Ga 455)]

one morning, kisses her in front of Eduard – who whines and collapses with "his tie [. . .] missing" (188) – and abducts her on the spot.

This new lover of irresistible determination, "a young Nordic god" (195) who finally affords Fanny her first orgasm, is the long-awaited prince. Friedrich Karl takes her to fine addresses at Hamburg, Paris, in Normandy and on a voyage to Lisbon by boat. They both appear in tailor-made clothes of almost equal grace, and at the Paris State Opera, Fanny senses the beauty she eradiates in "her most elegant evening ensemble with a feeling that it was completely appropriate" (210). But in contrast to having reached the pinnacle of her sartorial aspirations, the protagonist grows increasingly insecure in the face of Reelen's conduct that is always guided by calculating ratio; his love-making is pure will without passion. An incarnation of the Nietzschean Superhuman, Reelen can be seen as a "cold gaze the author turns on himself" (Riley and Spettigue, Intro FE I: 8), a deliberate mix of authorial self-mockery and self-assertion. Beyond the façade of wealth and indisputable intellect, this man who asks Fanny "to learn to observe certain conventions" and to stop "confusing your*self* with your past'"[176] (FE II: 200; 209) attempts to direct her life, intent on transforming her into an image of his liking. Reelen is merely the product of self-fashioning, a *simulacrum*, and the appalling projection of a persona that fuses Übermensch and evil Dorian Gray; Fanny is merely woman-in-process. She sports "a new hairstyle on Friedrich Karl's account" while her "slimness almost [has] the effect of being statuesque" (212). The re-transformation thus brought about by Reelen's impact not only echoes Fanny's former occupation as *tableaux vivants* (and rigid, almost life-less figures), but recasts her androgynous appeal in a process of desexualization.

In the Portuguese hills of Cintra, she collapses emotionally in a longing for her lost mother and for Berlin in a conflated image of painful nostalgia (222).[177] In this state of regression, she goes through moments of unusual insights; she calls the people in the hotel, including Reelen, "puppets, marionettes," but also credits him with effecting her "grand, ladylike behaviour" (223-4). Alone in her room, Fanny realizes that all the

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[176] Reelen inhabits a Nietzschean stance of overcoming the past in a teleological fashion without looking back. He completely ignores Fanny's need to differentiate herself from her past of having been an actress and *femme fatale* by consciously working through it: "'Your past is none of my business![. . .] it's good that all of that took place because it shaped you into who you are: but I don't always want to hear about it'" (FE II: 208-9).

[177] Correlatively, Gammel (*Sexualizing Power* 111) debates Fanny's unease and comments that the more she "feels the splits and contradictions of her subjectivity, the more she feels the need to ground this subjectivity by yearning for a maternal home, for a space of origin (that she will never be able to recover)."

splendour and sartorial enhancement of her own appearance have not advanced her in her quest for an integral, emancipated self and for the fitting mate by her side.

She has penetrated the treacherous function of dress as a supposed indication of inner values and essence that Carlyle's Professor Teufelsdröckh criticizes: "For my own part, these considerations, of our Clothes [. . .] and how, reaching inwards even to our hearts of hearts, it tailorises and demoralises us, fill me with a certain horror at myself and mankind" (*Sartor Resartus* 45). When she passes away with malaria on the seventh day, she has received only half-hearted attention from the man who by tailoring her according to his needs had put a tighfitting corset around her body and soul – which runs analogous to Greve's effect on Elsa, who in her memoirs describes his attempts "to hold a mask before his true face – for discretion's sake – to repulse public comment – but *that* mask was *his face* and what it should hide was only his adolescent desire for adventure" (BE 109). Elsa's diagnosis underlines how mask and man have become one, present a façade behind which there is maybe nothing than a vacancy and absence; Fanny's ultimate moment of triumph follows her own diagnosis and coincides with her ultimate impasse: she inquires "'Who is Friedrich Karl?'" (232), then asks to see her dog Troll[178] and dies.

Coda: Sewing Threads

Fanny Essler is a remarkable *début*. FPG not only satirizes the artist circles in turn-of-the-century Berlin and Munich, but presents a female protagonist who, in keeping with naturalism's conventions, is bound to fail in her ambitions in a theatrical world that subjects women to male exploitation. Fanny's struggles and conflicts are reflected in the focus on the dresses she wears or keeps longing for and on how she constantly tries to alter her self-images in a dialectical process of seeking an identity. In the course of that *picaresque*, Grove sketches the city of Berlin (and, to a lesser degree, Munich) as an organic space that acts like a character and so becomes an agent in his concept of *theatrum mundi*. But "the notion of character as theme and *actant*" which Blodgett ascribes to Greve's German novels ("*Alias* Grove" 146) finds its most striking

[178] Spettigue ("Fanny Essler and the Master" 59-60) points out the "consistent association of Fanny [. . .] with animal imagery" and argues that it "reinforces [her] sentiment and sympathy; it contrasts with the artificiality of the worlds of art and convention, and it represents the untamed, even the cruel and indifferent in the natural world."

incarnation in the authorial cameo, Friedrich Karl Reelen. His self-fashioning according to the stances of Nietzsche and Wilde is an accurate, if irritating, mirror of FPG's early attempts at public images. In light of an imitative desire that also characterizes, although to different ends, the heroine, it is only logical to raise the question "whether not only Reelen but Fanny herself – challenging social stereotypes, asserting her right to be herself even when that self becomes a kind of fate – is also a persona of Grove" (Riley and Spettigue, Intro FE I: 11). Through their obsession with elegance and the idea of self-creation based on elaborate dress coding both characters converge noticeably as facets of an authorial persona.

The novel's concentration on sartorial enterprises is thus no accident. Based strongly on FPG's own views and experiences, and partly on Elsa's,[179] *Fanny Essler* employs the clothing metaphor in a revealing and formative manner. With regard to Grove's later Canadian works, it represents a kind of *ur*-cloth out of which he was to fabricate further textures (see, for instance, *Settlers of the Marsh*). Phil Branden, another key-persona, would first become the embodiment, then opponent, of Carlyle's ironic philosophy of clothes in *A Search for America*. In the New World, the author would leave behind the scenery of a citified theatre and approach his variations of one particular theme in the Canadian wilderness: man's tragic struggle against nature. To equip his characters – and himself – in that drama, FPG would repeatedly go back to the tailor's shop which his first novel had become. In its *Kleiderkammer*, he would find all the appurtenances, fabrics, tools and designs to continue his incessant *Kleiderarbeit* (dress work). For Grove envisioned very particular sewing threads: as an immigrant novelist, he aspired to become Canada's first sartorial authority.

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179 In her memoirs, Elsa keeps stressing that their tastes often diverged: "Felix didn't cherish my fanciful artistic clothes [. . .] although of course I should have liked to be elegantly dressed in his eyes" (BE 86).

Chapter 3.2

A Melancholic Scripting of Felix and Elsa? Appearances, Sexuality, and Catharsis in *Settlers of the Marsh*

> Were I without thoughts, I would make myself up
> As ordinary as an old boozer
> A debased or a sick one. But I will
> Appear as a beautiful person that is ruined
> With yellow skin, once soft, now ravaged
> Once desirable, now a horror
> So that everybody will ask: Who
> Has done that?
>
> Brecht, "Soliloquy of an Actress while Putting on Make-up"[180]

From its original inception through its publication (accompanied by rumours of a ban which was never effected), through decades of reception and diverse readings, *Settlers of the Marsh* (1925) has emerged to stand out as one of Frederick Philip Grove's major books. It was only in the wake of Spettigue's discovery of Grove's past as Greve, however, that critics began to look more deeply into the psychological dimensions of FPG's writings and to relate the characters of both the German and Canadian books to the author's psyche. In "Grove's New World Bluff," K.P. Stich applies "psycho-biographical considerations in the light of [Grove's] provocative autobiographical games with the reader" (114). Demonstrating how the novel's "splendid play on the word 'bluff'" works with one English meaning, a clump of trees, and the "only German sense of 'lie' or 'false front,'" he speaks of "Grove's veiled comment on his own exile [. . .] and his confidence in a new career in the New World behind a well guarded façade concealing his past" (113).

False appearances not only abound in and serve as a structural device within the book, but are frequently drawn attention to by the identifiably male narrative voice. The narrator displays clear sympathy for Grove's protagonist and persona, Niels Lindstedt, whose quest for self remains a superficial ascent to material success before his painful

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[180] "Wäre ich gedankenlos, dann schminkte ich mich / Einfach wie eine alte Säuferin / Eine verkommene oder kranke. Aber ich werde / Als eine schöne Person auftreten, die zerstört ist / Mit gelber, einst weicher Haut, nun verwüstet / Einst begehrenswert, nun ein Abscheu / Damit jeder fragt: Wer / Hat das gemacht?" Bertolt Brecht, "Sebstgespräch einer Schauspielerin beim Schminken" (286). This is actually the last of three stanzas.

descent into his interior self begins. Trying to assert himself in the New World, the young, naïve and innocent immigrant repeatedly encounters façades and false fronts, particularly in the figure of "the gay widow" (SM 26), Clara Vogel. This, however, is part of a "misogynist ideology" of Grove's plot (Gammel, *Sexualizing Power* 228)[181] that presents Clara as a notorious woman of stylized appearance and worldly manners who manages to become, to the prairie district's utter amazement, Mrs. Lindstedt. Increasingly frustrated over his unhappy marriage with what turns out to be "the district whore" (SM 214), the stubborn, unenlightened but successful pioneer kills his wife. With his prison term shortened for impeccable conduct, and now appearing as a more understanding person, he returns to his land and house to be united with the other woman in his life, Ellen – an independent farmer who had originally turned him down but has been waiting for him all the time.

These character constellations invite a comparison with FPG's life. The argument that "Niels, Ellen and Clara were purely a product of Grove's imagination," as Makow ("Grove's 'Garbled Extract'" 49) proposed in 1982, now seems insufficient; in a more compelling interpretation, Stich – who had had access to the German version of *Fanny Essler* (1905) – saw the author's "self-portrayal in the disguise of a female character [and thus] Clara's role as a surrogate of Felix Paul Greve, the old Grove" ("Bluff" 120-21). Stich attributed similar functions to Fanny, but could have no knowledge of the autobiography of Greve's German lover, which was not published until 1992 – and that text makes quite a difference in demonstrating how close Clara comes to the original of Greve's partner, but not necessarily to FPG himself. In that context, Gaby Divay believes that *Settlers of the Marsh* – which gives no local references except for the fictional "prairie town Minor" (SM 7) – is set in Manitoba's Riding Mountain area; she suggests that the "entire setting [. . .] is a lateral transfer from the Sparta, Kentucky region where Greve and Else lived in 1910 / 11" ("Names, Pseudonyms" 112) and where he left her all alone after she had come to America only for his sake (BE 66; see also Chapter 2.1). Hence, with the autobiographical subtext of Felix Greve and Else / Elsa Endell in mind, this chapter focuses on the importance of the psychological disposition and performative identity of Clara Vogel, and her tragic relation to the Grove-persona, Niels Lindstedt, as a Canadian variation of the male-

[181] Gammel speaks of a "naturalist plot" (228); in light of the missing details for locale, working conditions, characters's past, etc. that ususally inform a naturalist text, her categorization is a problematic one. I am indebted to Paul Morris for pointing this out to me.

female relationship that *Fanny Essler* had problematized in the Old World. In that context, the roles of these characters are examined with regard to the process of conceiving, writing, and publishing *Settlers of the Marsh*. This "drama of ignorance and understanding" (La Bossière 145) is approached by combining some Freudian theories on sexuality, narcissism and melancholia with a critique of Grove's gender stereotyping through the motifs of clothing and the mask.

Citing / Siting Sexuality

FPG must have had his reasons for disappearing finally from Kentucky in 1911, although Elsa offers no explanation. But her unusually frank account, *Baroness Elsa*, details her many love affairs and the nature of her promiscuity. Although her "poignant sexdesire was always *Felix*," Elsa could not be tamed according to his vision: "[. . .] I do not believe I could have done quite without men – out of natural vivacity – feminine vanity – and physical habit. It was *the* thing that made me feel *I* was *I*![182] Otherwise I was vague" (BE 186-87; 113). In *Settlers of the Marsh*, Grove sketches a figure of similar disposition. Clara Vogel wanted Niels for many years, as she confesses in her daring critique of their failing marriage (SM 182-89). She is associated with promiscuity and even prostitution.

When Grove's friend Arthur L. Phelps commented in his review of 5 December 1925 in *Saturday Night*, "In matter of sex the book does not preserve the usual Anglo-Saxon delicacies" (qtd. in Pacey, *Frederick Philip Grove* 112), he involuntarily prefaced the impression that *Settlers of the Marsh* was an obscene and indexed book. Although never actually banned, the novel indeed tested the limits of Canada's Anglo-Saxon sensibility. One daring element was Grove's criticism of abortion as a practice not unusual on the prairies. In detailing the fate of Mrs. Amundsen, Ellen's mother, as a woman abused by the hardships of farming and by her husband, who would repeatedly force her to abort, Grove presented a shocking but accurate account of the pioneer reality for women. Another element, influenced by Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* and Grove's own experience with Else Endell, was the introduction of the *femme fatale* on the prairies. Clara Vogel is the novel's most outstanding and ambiguous figure of

[182] Niels is ascribed a similar stance, "He could not help himself; he was he" (SM 192); this echoes one of Grove's major refrains voiced in ISM and other writings, "I must be I" (see ASA 41; cf. Chapter 4.2).

intellect, theatricality, and a sexuality that transgresses the borders of what was generally considered decent or acceptable. Her sexuality is the touchstone of the community's sense of self-definition, and especially that of Niels.

The first time the young Swedish immigrant meets Clara at the community's gathering place, the Lunds's house, he is still "in *terra incognita*"; without much knowledge of the English language or prairie geography, his "condition [is that] of a man enmeshed in translation, a stranger in a strange land" (La Bossière 141). Throughout almost the entire book, he lacks self-knowledge. But as part of a design that subjects the novel's figures to authorial control, Clara's first appearance is already (as always afterwards) viewed in relation to Niels: a female who forms "a rather striking contrast to all other women present[, eradiating] something peculiarly feminine"; introduced to him as "'the gay widow of the settlement,'" her physical appeal arouses "his protective instincts, the impulses of the man in him" (SM 25; 26). Repeatedly registered – and juxtaposed by the narrator to the other figure who attracts the immigrant, Ellen – Clara's appearance dominates Niels's senses with her dancing eyes and mysterious smile, even if she appeals "to something in him which was lower, which was not worthy of the man who had seen Ellen" (SM 46f). It is obvious from the beginning that Grove wants this "something lower," sexuality, to be a repressed entity, not a natural force, for his protagonist.

Thus, the author has laid out a constellation of two incompatible figures. Niels, aptly identified by Axel Knönagel (*Nietzschean Philosophy*) as one of Grove's Nietzschean personae, tries to overcome his passions with a will to assert power over himself. Clara, who reads like a Freudian case study of a strong narcissistic libido driven to melancholia, is all sexual energy and allurement. If for Elsa, "Sex was the only adventure" (BE 149), Grove does not explicitly ascribe such an identity-constituting aspect to Clara, but rather has his biased and misogynistic male narrator frequently indulge in descriptions of her appearances in negative terms. Niels, in contrast to that, is an unenlightened, naïve and utterly passive man – a distorted self-portrait of FPG that is in striking contrast to what the Clara-equivalent remembers about "his mastery of the situation – of *every situation*" (BE 75) – in their mutual confessions of love. Felix, as Elsa's memoir chronicles his words, had "'known it all the time'" but had waited "'To see how long it would take me,'" adding: "'Well, Elsa [. . .]. You know – you belong to me'" (BE 75).

Such a sense of belonging together is not encoded in *Settlers*. Rather, Niels figures as the victim of Clara's incessant sexual powers. During one of their chance meetings in town, he is finally seduced and, in a flash of "moral mania" (Knönagel, *Nietzschean Philosophy* 110), marries her. Clara would later explain to Niels with astonishing accuracy the mechanism operating in him: "You married me because [. . .] you could not bear the thought of having gone to bed with a woman who was not your wife" (SM 183); the initial emotional gap between them steadily increases and, as the book implies, their intercourse is never repeated. Different from this fictional constellation, the real Felix Greve and Else Endell were never verifiably married, even if they would occasionally refer to each other as husband and wife,[183] but they had a more intensive sexual relation: Elsa describes how Felix, in Palermo in early 1903, was the first man ever to afford her "the still missing orgasm – [which for him] was a task and obligation" that in the end "he could do so excellently well [. . .] – yes – like doing sport" (BE 89-91).

The intimate subtexts from *Baroness Elsa* reveal both striking differences and a series of similarities between Grove's former partner and the conception of Mrs. Vogel. Whereas Elsa should not be regarded as the sole or major source for his portrayal of a Canadian *femme fatale*, she has informed that figure. In fact, one of Elsa's accusations regarding Felix's notorious knack for proper public performance reads like a formula for the 'creation' of Clara by Frederick Philip Grove: "My whole lifeconduct I had to artificially alter – playact for his benefit" (BE 116). A closer look at her narcissism, her accoutrements and in particular her facial appearances will interrogate whether Clara is playacting for the author's benefit.

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[183] In his reply to Else's apparently reproachful but not extant letter, the Insel publisher Anton Kippenberg addressed her as "Frau Else Greve, Berlin" and spoke of the allegedly drowned Felix as "Ihr Herr Gemahl" as well as "Ihr Gatte"; Kippenberg's letter from 21 September 1909 employs the terms of husband, wife, and spouses not without an ironic undertone, thus indicating his knowledge of the absence of a legal base for their union (Pacey, *Letters* 548-52; cf. Chapter 2.1). See also Greve's letter to André Gide, from 22 June 1908: "Here is another bit of news: I shall be divorced" (Pacey, *Letters* 548). In Canada, FPG would modify that notion in the moment of his legal union with Catherine Wiens. In his "Registration of Marriage," issued 2 August 1914, at St. Stephen's Church, Swift-Current, Saskatoon he claimed Russia as his place of birth and widower as his marital status (see Ms. 2.22.6, Archives and Special Collections, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg).

Narcissism and the Fashion Theatre

A crucial part in FPG's programme of arriving in the New World was processing his Old World 'baggage' in *Settlers of the Marsh*. Originally begun in German, this novel was temporarily titled "The White Range Line House" in a phase of creative rebirth, in which Grove worked on various projects simultaneously and explicitly spoke of remodelling things into English (see Chapter 2.1). In fact, remodelling, also via translation, is an accurate notion of the author's effort to transcend the past and (part of) his German work by restaging his autobiographical characters Friedrich Karl Reelen and Fanny Essler, both with altered connotations, on the Canadian Prairie. Although in his locale – which is more puritan than the reality of the early 20th century – Grove applies no psychological terminology (which would have been an usual topic for conversation on the prairies), the setting reveals a clear, if somewhat enforced, structure of dramatizing the human psyche. The immigrant author had brought extensive knowledge of current cultural and scientific developments from his former existence as Greve in Europe. He had already incorporated Freud's notions of hysteria and catharsis in *Fanny Essler* and was likely to have been acquainted with Freud's by then ground-breaking examination of the sexual instinct from its earliest beginnings in the child to all its aberrations in adulthood (published as *Drei Abhandlungen zur Sexualtheorie*, 1905). Having ventured into problematizing youthful and naïve female sexuality vis-à-vis detached and calculating masculinity before, Grove now attempted to sketch an artful, mature and sex-driven woman in her relation to an unassuming, victimized male.

Through the multiple references of her sexuality as a source of danger, Clara is identified as a site of narcissism. As Freud would posit in *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, one can "describe ego-libido as 'narcissistic' libido"; he calls this "the great reservoir [for all psychical energy transactions, adding that] the narcissistic libidinal cathexis [– i.e., concentration of psychical energy in a certain direction, usually towards the object-libido –] of the ego is the original state of things" (84).[184] Accordingly, in a person of 'normal' psychological disposition, the narcissistic libido assists in approaching the sexual object. In this model, narcissism is inherent to everybody in its

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[184] Freud's theory of the libido as a reservoir of all-dominating sexual energy has been attacked during the past century for the implied reduction of human actions to a sex-drive. C.G. Jung detached himself from his mentor and presented a new theory of a non-sexual libido as a reservoir of much more general, all-encompassing psychical energies in his seminal study, *Wandlungen und Symbole der Libido* (1912). To examine the sexual tensions between Clara and Niels, however, Freud's model (with which FPG was likely to be familiar) is well suited.

primary manifestation as an essential, libidinous self-defending and self-affirming component of the human psyche.[185] An impartial reader who is *not* conditioned by the male narrative voice of Grove's novel *could* interpret Mrs. Vogel's being "gay" as narcissism that reflects a strong and healthy libido; Grove, however, seeks to promote a different view of Clara's sexuality by contrasting the community's puritan reservedness with her appearances which reflect decadent attributes that cast her in the role of a Dorian Gray-figure.[186]

Already preconditioned by small-scale descriptions, the reader receives a full picture of Mrs. Vogel's appearance and her effect: Niels, having done business in town and waiting at the train station, notices a "lady dressed in the height of fashion, a long, narrow skirt enforcing a short, tripping step; a mannish summer coat of 'tango' colour; and a wide lace hat – bergère style – under which a peculiarly engaging, smiling, and dimpled face looked out as if it were used to the attention she attracted" (SM 98). Mrs. Vogel, the main upholder of fashion trends throughout the book, appears as "the object of the local young ladies's absorbed attention" (SM 99). She embodies a fashion principle the young ladies only dream of, and they, in turn, serve as her mirror by affording her the affirmative gaze. Somewhat different from their reception of the spectacle, Niels is transfixed by Mrs. Vogel's artfully manipulated body, unaware what to do. This key scene thus underlines Grove's use of the clothing motif as "a reliable signal of the intended moral evaluation of [the author's] characters" (Potvin 222). Encoded in Niels's gaze, though not felt by him, is also a social practice common since the mid-19th century: that of trying to define a woman's class and sexual status by observing "little clues in her appearance which mark her as a 'loose' woman" (Sennett 165). The stylish apparel stressing her *physique* and the lacy material she wears evoke associations of a woman of little morality as well as of strong sexual desires.

The function of the clothing motif to unveil human habits highlights Mrs. Vogel's inclination towards performance. That she is used to the attention she attracts indicates a habit of consciously staging herself on a platform; at the railway station, as in other places, and in analogy to the usually male Wildean Dandy figure attracting female attention, she marks herself as a woman *inviting* the male gaze. As "every

[185] In "Zur Einführung des Narzißmus" (1914), Freud discusses 'primary narcissism' (in opposition to its enhanced, secondary form that can result in schizophrenia) as "die libidinöse Ergänzung zum Egoismus des Selbst-erhaltungstriebes, von dem jedem Lebewesen mit Recht ein Stück zugeschrieben wird" (*Das Ich und das Es* 51).

[186] I am indebted to Paul Morris for pointing out Clara's decadent features in the style of Dorian Gray.

participant in the public theatre [of fashion] can imagine," Poschardt argues, "accessoires and performance of a person represent her or his fate and fortune in crucial ways" (89).[187] With Clara's stepping up to Niels and addressing him as "a friend" (SM 98), he not only becomes a participant in this spectacle; he is now suddenly the recipient of two forms of communication – one operating in a dress code, and one in a verbal code. Lacking communicative skills, however, he can decode neither language in appropriate ways but registers inner turmoil about her narcissistic display, in which dress surface and bodily movements underneath form an organic union signifying sensuality.

As an extension of the clothing motif and as another central element in this theatrical staging of the self, the facial expressions one 'wears' are frequently studied. In the railway passage, the three qualifiers used to describe Clara's face ("engaging, smiling, and dimpled") are even amplified by the preceding "peculiarly." Thus narrowing the focus on the stylish 'lady' further down, Grove's technique of thematizing the face as the epitome of a figure's general character is revealed. Such a technique is pondered, for example, in Roland Barthes's "The Face of Garbo": interrogating its inherent essence as opposed to its apparent function, the French semiologist argues that Garbo's "face was not to have any reality except that of its perfection" (Barthes, *Mythologies* 57). Similarly, Grove's novel keeps questioning the reality of Clara's face as a mirror of her inner qualities or her outer actions. In that process of measuring her narcissism, and in the narrator's partial view, her face assumes the characteristics of a deceptive mask behind which lurks – as in the case of Dorian Gray – a psychic abyss.

This crucial scene at the railway station manifests Grove's method of characterization: *Settlers of the Marsh* registers the humble working dresses of Niels, Bobby and Ellen in a few words, but abounds in elaborate descriptions of Clara's apparel, marking her as a misfit on the prairie. She may, initially, be nothing more than a modern woman, energetic, educated, used to thinking in independent ways – but her fashion, her makeup and her determination expose her as something far beyond that, thus to seal her fate by presenting to the people's eyes the markers of an enhanced femininity; even if the gaze of the unsophisticated Niels, tinged with fear of sexuality and simultaneous attraction, does not decode this, the male narrative voice does and conditions Clara for the reader, in a way analogous to the way the community

[187] "[. . .] wie sehr Ausstattung und Auftreten der Personen ihr Schicksal und ihr Glück repräsentieren [wird] für jeden anderen Teilnehmer am öffentlichen Theater nachvollziehbar" (Poschardt 89).

conditions her, as a prostitute. In contextualizing Clara thus, Grove modifies the major portrait of his former German lover Else. Like Fanny Essler, Clara seems to insist on her difference, rejoices in wearing fancy outfits and making up her face through repeated acts of performing gender identity. And like Fanny's, Clara's aura of prostitution problematizes the role of self and other, challenges gender stereotyping as well as the parts men play in commodifying women. But unlike Fanny, who is somewhat protected by Greve's text that "sanitiz[es] and tam[es] her sexual exuberance" (Gammel, "'No Woman's Lover'" 459), Clara is inscribed as an aggressive site of female sexuality, maneuvered into the position of the careless whore.

Muted Bedroom Stories, or: Woman as Frontier?

Settlers of the Marsh subscribes to the author's programme of exposing Clara's position by a contrastive pattern and presents a figure of rather androgynous quality: Ellen Amundsen.[188] She is the first woman Niels meets on the prairie, and he soon believes to have found in her the mate capable of fulfilling his vision "of himself and a woman [in a cozy home], with the pitter-patter of children's feet sounding down from above" (SM 34). Since Ellen dresses in overalls and works like a man on her father's farm, her appearance signals emancipation from the usual status of woman as object of male appropriation; her behaviour and dress communicate freedom from an ideology of sexual images, "displaying a flexibility that is in stark contrast to the rigidity of both her father and her future husband" (Gammel, *Sexualizing Power* 226). But Niels, still suffering from a lack of self-knowledge and understanding, fails to read this coding, too. Furthermore, in his longing for a future wife and family, he "has subconsciously filled the position" (Thompson 21) with the memory of his dead mother (cf. SM 41; 117); in a vision of transformative sequences that foreshadows his "downfall [based on] the confusion of sexual allure with mother love" (Thompson 22), a triad of women appear to him, changing from the image of his mother to that of Ellen and, finally, of Clara (SM 59).

Unaware of the hybridity of his vision which superimposes past images onto present desires of contradictory nature, Niels proposes to the sexually undefined Ellen.

[188] Cf. Lorraine McMullen (75), who asserts: "Throughout his writing, Grove has been moving in the direction of an androgynous society, in which roles are no longer sex stereotyped."

She refuses his proposal, pleads for friendship and confesses to Niels why she promised her abused and exploited mother never to marry. Irritated, ignorant, and unable to enter the dialogue, he turns away and escapes into materialist ethics, focusing all his energy on the mechanics of farm labour. Working with dogged determination, he becomes prosperous, but with "the farm own[ing] him; not he the farm" (SM 134f). Assisted by the loyal orphan Bobby, he leads an existence of isolation and stubbornness, a slave to his passions – or, rather, to their sublimation. He is "able to control his passions temporarily, but [. . .] becomes inhuman rather than superhuman" (Knönagel, *Nietzschean Philosophy* 131) in the process. In his frustration over life as "the dumb shifting of forces," he transforms his vision of old into another flight of fantasy: "a longing to leave and to go to the very margin of civilisation, there to clear a new place; and [then] to move on once more, again to the very edge of pioneerdom, and to start it all over anew.[. . .] Woman would have no place in his life" (SM 117; 139). His identification with and quest for the forefront of pioneerdom, the frontier, suggests that the restless immigrant is not yet fit to contribute to more refined forms of civilization within his community. His desire to flee from women implies that his search for self is far from complete; he is, except for his material success, where he was at the beginning – in *terra incognita*.

The quest for a new frontier indicates his repression, the symptoms of which "represent a substitute for the impulses the source of whose strength is derived from the sexual instinct" (Freud, *Three Essays* 30). This repression will soon be unleashed into its opposite, though only temporarily, by the fateful incident that causes Niels encounter the ultimate frontier he was hoping to escape: his sexual intercourse and subsequent marriage with Clara Vogel. But tied as he is to a code of repression and of a possibly nondescript appearance, Niels has no means of bridging the distance between himself and the elaborate dress of a "wife [who] was a stranger to him" (SM 148). Shortly after the wedding, Grove's persona is confronted with a crucial site: In his wife's absence, Niels is suddenly surprised to find that the "interior of the house was much changed," because of the "furniture of her own" he had helped bring from the city:

> It had converted her bed-room into something which he did not understand: upholstered chairs, rugs, heavy curtains, and a monstrously wide, luxurious bed with box mattress and satin covers; a mahogany dressing table covered with brushes, combs, flasks, jars, and provided with three large mirrors two of which were hinged to the central one; a chiffonier filled with a multitudinous

> arrangement of incomprehensible, silky and fluffy garments, so light and thin that you could crush them in the hollow of your hand; a set of sectional bookcases filled with many volumes; a couch upholstered in large-flowered damask; cushions without number; and above all mirrors, mirrors. The whole room was pervaded with sweetish scents. (SM 149)

Within the confines of a single room, Grove unfolds a panoramic view of what he calls the "appurtenances of modern femininity" (SM 145) – no doubt influenced in his description by Flaubert, Balzac, and Zola.[189] The abundant interior of this bedroom appeals to the senses and is instrumental in helping a fashion-conscious woman stage herself. In the Paris of the 19th century that Clara frequently reads about, having such dressing rooms was imperative. Her bed chamber transfers the world of old, on a smaller scale, into her Canadian present – and this is a display that makes Niels, with his more pragmatic notion of prairie-life, uneasy. Suddenly encountering a different frontier than the one he had envisioned not long ago, he finds himself at a threshold of symbolical implications that completely elude him.

To a man versed in worldly matters, this sight would appear like an open book yielding crucial information. But, as "a dumb and baffled reader before the enigmatic text of existence" (La Bossière 144), Niels remains outside of things. Neither physically nor psychologically does he enter the room. Thus, the connotations of monstrosity aroused by the bed of unusual size represent his subconscious fear of sexuality and his relapse into a repression that will ultimately take on hysterical dimensions.[190] Similarly, the books come from and speak of a distant world that is both unknown and inaccessible to him; likewise, the garments are "incomprehensible" for their texture, colour and material which he cannot identify in relation to the functions he is used to; and the mirrors, "above all," unsettle him profoundly as a symbol of his wife's narcissism and a fear that he might encounter a hollow image while trying to find himself in one of them. As a detached and already conditioned spectator, then, guided by fear and given to repression, Niels misses entering his wife's world to see and acknowledge her as his Other beyond the category of being a 'loose' woman. Instead, he remains ensconed on the threshold, not grasping the bedroom's significance as telling reflection of Clara's

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189 Cf. Sennett, who comments that Balzac's "methods of characterization [are] based on decoding isolated details of appearance, magnifying the detail into an emblem of the whole man" (169).

190 Cf. Freud (*Three Essays* 30): "The character of hysterics shows a degree of sexual repression in excess of the normal quantity, an intensification of resistance against the sexual instinct ([. . .] in the form of shame, disgust and morality), and what seems like an instinctive aversion on their part to any intellectual consideration of sexual problems."

complex identity and of their marriage as a chance for the evolution he could undergo if only he were to try.

Incapable of accepting his wife, Niels shuts out the possibility of listening to, or creating with her, bedroom stories. Instead, he pours his muteness into the bedroom, silencing it as a symbol of fruitful marriage. In her vague attempts at marital communication, Clara provides another chance for him to enter her world by handing him her copy of *Madame Bovary*. He never finishes the book which could be understood as a message to him to try to avoid disaster. "The story of this little doctor's wife amazed and terrified him. What might it be written for? [. . .] In vain he searched for something that might enlighten him as to his mentality, that dealt with problems which were his . . ." (SM 160). The parallels between Clara and Flaubert's heroine could not be more striking in their growing despair over living isolated and disregarded in the country while missing the city life with its attractions. It should not have taken Niels too much effort to identify with Emma Bovary's somewhat naïve husband, Charles, but he fails miserably in this task. Just like Madame Bovary to Charles, Clara is to Niels an oddly inaccessible text: "He could not see his way through her psychology. He had no means of reading [her] mind" (SM 197). What the narrator omits is the fact that Niels has no means of interpreting his own mind, which propels forcefully the drama of the book.

Read in conjunction with Elsa's and the author's own comments, this passage underlines Grove's affinity for Flaubert;[191] as Grove's former lover maintains, he "esteemed [the French writer so] highly as a stylist [that] he tried to be Flaubert" (BE 65) while writing his two German novels. Close imitation surfaces, too, in Grove's explanation for the disappointing sales of *Settlers*: "it was the old story of Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* over again. A serious work of art was classed as pornography; but with this difference that the error, in Flaubert's case, increased the sales; he lived in France. In my case, and in Canada, it killed them" (ISM 352; 381). Of all the figures in Grove's works, it is surprising that it is the negatively sketched Clara Vogel who reads and recommends the French writer to Niels. In this regard, one could speculate whether this might be a conscious part of Grove's literary reshaping of his former partner through a

[191] See also Chapter 2.1, which discusses "Flaubert's Theories of Artistic Existence" (1904), a kind of poetics of FPG's post-Wildean era. One of Greve's most intriguing utterances underlining his view of the French writer can be found in a letter to André Gide, from 17 August 1905, in which he juxtaposes Wilde and Flaubert: "Certainly there is scarcely a man I should less have liked to live with than Flaubert: but *Madame Bovary* and *Bouvard et Pécuchet* – they are *something*" (qtd. in Spettigue, "Unpublished Letters" 31).

kind of melancholic gesture, which might have been done to pay Else back for her apparent dislike of Greve's infatuation with Flaubert.

Regardless of this speculation, Grove ascribes to his persona Niels the inability to connect Flaubert's novel with his own marriage. The unbridgable distance between husband and wife not only serves to expose and enhance Clara's narcissism, but causes its transformation into a more radical version characterized by melancholia. Clara becomes a living anachronism in a microcosm of her own; she retreats more and more into the past world of French life, signalled first by her books through which she "could spin [her]self into a cocoon with reading" (SM 185), and then by her fashion-coding and the bedroom with its many mirrors. Arranged as a tryptich, these mirrors allow the spectator a critical self-scrutiny; depending on the angles in which the two side-mirrors are turned inwards, a reflection can even be multiplied *ad infinitum*. Inviting the gazing subject's manipulation of herself according to individual visions of self, mirrors thus reflect and simultaneously effect narcissism as Freud would define it – that is, as a refocusing of the libido from the external world to the ego.[192] It is one of the book's major ironies that Clara's existence and her fatal surplus of vanity may depend too much on narcissistic self-mirroring, whereas Niels is shunning self-scrutiny altogether and does not care for his own external appearance. He never lets the gaze rest on himself but uses it only to judge others.

The consistent bias that *Settlers of the Marsh* displays towards Clara Vogel almost creates the impression as if author, persona and narrator had formed an alliance against her. Niels Lindstedt's condition of detached male spectator in the unknown and unknowable marital territory apparently *is not supposed* to alter significantly; the subjective male gaze on woman is predetermined and attempts to appear normative, which is essentially tragic in the face of repeated violent attitudes – such as the protagonist's desire "to strip all that costly tinsel off [Clara in order to see] the bare, ugly, life-worn specimen of humanity" (SM 188). In this context, the husband who cannot properly read his wife or himself is gradually and ironically becoming obsessed with scanning her appearance as an indication of her character. For Niels, registering Clara's surface becomes analogous to 'knowing' that person. This means nothing more than that he sees only what he wants to see: discovering that her hair is dyed, "a new

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192 In "Zur Einführung des Narzißmus" (1914), Freud writes: "Die der Außenwelt entzogene Libido ist dem Ich zugeführt worden, so daß ein Verhalten entstand, welches wir Narzißmus heißen können" (*Das Ich und das Es* 52). See also Chapter 3.1.

suspicion ripened into certainty. Not only the colour of her hair was artificial, but the colour of the face as well" (SM 156). Although somewhat hard to believe for the reader, this is the first time Niels becomes aware of the fact that Clara uses makeup. The reality now signalled by her face – "she use[s] powder" – "he d[oes] not understand nor approve of" (SM 156). Looking at his sleeping wife shortly after this realization, he is sure to make out the 'reality' of her existence: "From behind the mask which still half concealed her face, another face looked out at him, like a death's-head: the coarse, aged face of a coarse, aged woman, aged before her time" (SM 157). The difference the protagonist believes to perceive between previous projections and this bare image of his wife is reminiscent of Dorian Gray's unaltered external appearance in opposition to the portrait which keeps changing in accordance with his inner development.

Niels's reception of this spectacle, which the narrator later recalls in identical words (SM 204), is defined by his disappointing discovery of his wife's artificially enhanced presence. The moment that façade is at least partly removed, the ideology of his male perception transforms radically and he categorizes her aged expression as "the face of decay" (SM 157). Having once been attracted to this female, he now fails to comprehend that it is this appearance's artificiality that contributes to the definition of a modern woman as "someone whose makeup is impeccable" (Garber 51); through a gaze devoid of intellectual powers, he ignores that the definition of his own masculinity depends on the interrelatedness of the sexes and on perceiving woman as his Other. What he demonstrates instead is the dynamics of gravity and repulsion in his response to Clara before and after their marriage.

Niels's unfair and inconsiderate reaction reflects his unwillingness to imagine his wife's psychological position. In contrast to Mr. Lindstedt, Mrs. Lindstedt realizes that she has temporarily deceived herself by idealizing him before their marriage. This "overvaluation[, extended from the appreciated body onto] the psychological sphere [of] the mental achievements and perfections of the sexual object" (Freud, *Three Essays* 16), will have fateful consequences for both parties. Her intensified narcissism is only the first step of a growing and ultimately destructive melancholia. Characterized, in Freud's definition, "by a profoundly painful vexation of the soul, a dissolution of the interest in the external world, and the loss of the ability to love," melancholia – as opposed to the case of mourning – deals with the symbolical, and not the literal, loss of the object of

love.[193] That object is Niels, who turned away horrified after their wedding. In their only talk – which is rather a monologue, for the husband has no language in the face of the truths his wife utters – Clara not only accuses Niels of a sentimental and conservative attitude towards marriage (see SM 183); she also delivers an astonishing analysis of the transformation from hope to despair, from initially believing that "you were really in love with me" through her "continuing in love with what I thought you were," before testing him by going to the city – "I threw myself away, body and all.[. . .] I revelled in my revenge . . . And yet, [. . .] I still saw you when I was in the arms of another" (SM 183-187).

Although that maneuver was a last effort to shake up Niels, nothing proves useful; as a piece of gender critique, Clara's analysis of his suppressions and his self-righteousness can serve only to enhance his stubbornness. When she asks him to let her go, pleading twice for release, Niels – who again "did not understand" (SM 187) – refuses. Clara's behaviour is a more temperate version of melancholia that engages in fights in which hatred and love are struggling with each other for the object[194]; now, in the absence of even the slightest effort to accomodate from his side, the full dimension of her melancholia becomes manifest: "'Yes, I hate you; I hate you [. . .]. You have made me live through hell. I shall give you a taste of the same thing now.[. . .] This house [. . .] is going to be a famous house on the Marsh; [. . .] and you are going to be the laughing-stock of the settlement. Mark my words, you will rue this day!" (SM 187-189).[195]

Clara's prophetic words match Freud's definition of the advanced stage of melancholia that engages first in a redirecting of love from an object to the self through "narcissistic identification"; then, this shifting of libidinous energy often results, "by detour of inflicting pain on the self, in taking revenge on the original object(s) of attention."[196] Clara puts her announcement into practice. In her successive

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[193] In "Trauer und Melancholie" (1917), Freud writes: "Die Melancholie ist seelisch ausgezeichnet durch eine tief schmerzliche Verstimmung, eine Aufhebung des Interesses für die Außenwelt, durch den Verlust der Liebesfähigkeit, [. . .]. Das [vormals] geliebte Objekt ist nicht etwa real gestorben, aber es ist als Liebesobjekt verlorengegangen (z.B. der Fall einer verlassenen Braut)" (*Das Ich und das Es* 174-75).

[194] "Es spinnt sich also bei der Melancholie eine Unzahl von Einzelkämpfen um das Objekt an, in denen Haß und Liebe miteinander ringen, die eine, um die Libido vom Objekt zu lösen, die andere, um diese Libidoposition gegen den Ansturm zu behaupten" (Freud, *Das Ich und das Es* 187).

[195] "Clara's denunciation of Niels," as Stobie (*Frederick Philip Grove* 80) points out, "follows very closely certain passages in Flaubert['s *Temptation of St. Anthony*]," which Clara read in an earlier version of the novel.

[196] "Hat sich die Liebe zum Objekt, die nicht aufgegeben werden kann, während das Objekt selbst aufgegeben wird, in die narzißtische Identifizierung geflüchtet, so betätigt sich an diesem Ersatzobjekt der

transformation, she leads "[s]till more [of] an indoor life" and appears "to carry on," in Niels's eyes, "a purely animal existence" (SM 193). They evade each other whenever possible; but when, by chance, they meet again in the house, Grove creates a scenario that underlines both the detachment of the couple and the impending catastrophe by involving the clothing motif in two stages: the moment Niels burns his fingers by touching a hot lamp in the dark, the narrator comments, "there was a swish of clothes, quite nearby"; when the lamp is lit, Niels can see that his wife "had been in her nightgown, with a dressing gown thrown over her shoulders. The dressing gown was of light blue silk; the nightgown, of pink organdie or some other light, filmy material, profusely adorned with lace" (SM 195).

In the first stage of this scene, Clara is referred to by her clothes only, whereas the previous descriptions of clothing have already gone beyond the mere functional level (for Clara's many garments are more than just a material to warm, cover and decorate her body), their connotations are now further expanded: through a metonymic move, the dress substitutes for its wearer and assumes the dimensions of a character that is fleeting and operates in the dark. In this context, the swishing noise evokes the topos of the tempting serpent. The second stage reveals what both Niels and the reader already know – that the Eve-like figure in the room must be Clara, who is morally categorized by the light and filmy material and the exotic colours of the lace and silk. Embedded in a contrast of darkness and light, this scene effects a negative inversion of the envisioned frontier by alluding to the Biblical story of the fall from Grace and subsequent expulsion from Paradise.

Life in the Lindstedt house has become hell. Not only the bedroom is muted, devoid of marital exchange, but all other potential meeting places are filled by silence. Yet Clara communicates, even if in different ways. In her advanced stage of melancholia, reading French sentimental novels and romances, which represent the remembrance of a past lost and dreams unfulfilled, cannot compensate for the loss of the love object; as the often pain-inflicting narcissistic identification of her current stage projects her hatred against her husband, who cannot "help spying upon her sometimes" (SM 200), she engages in (or resumes) polygamous sexual activities by giving herself away to other men in the district. Reflective of a self-destructive narcissism, her adventures are an elaborately dressed protest against Niels.

Haß[. Es] pflegt den Kranken noch zu gelingen, auf dem Umwege über die Selbstbestrafung Rache an den ursprünglichen Objekten zu nehmen [. . .]" (*Das Ich und das Es* 181).

Paying attention to her appearance in obsessive ways, Niels registers how his wife is dressed for these adventures, with "her hair [combed] in the latest fashion, [holding] a parasol of pearl-grey silk [and showing] a perfect makeup" (SM 203) – but still not decoding her elaborate garments and accoutrements. In the second threshold scene, however, he witnesses her literal fall, looking out the window:

> There, at the end of the lane, the woman that was his wife was picking herself up from the ground. In stumbling, she had stepped on the hem of her frock and torn it so that it was hanging about her feet; and she stumbled again. She raised her head and looked dazedly about. Her face was bleeding. Earth and chaff, such as gathers on farmyards, were sticking to the make-up of her cheeks. She reached for the corner of the building to steady herself and groped her way along to the door, stumbling once more, bending down, and picking up the torn edge of her gown. At last she disappeared inside. (SM 206)

Introducing a new body image by admitting blood, earth and chaff onto Clara's manipulated face, this scene deconstructs her façade. Her outward appearance (with the original appeal reversed into its opposite) becomes the mirror of Niels's inward projection, with a perverted rape fantasy (the torn gown, her triple stumbling, and the bleeding face) fused into the picture. The final murder of this sinner figure is thus anticipated – and encoded by Grove's ideology as an inevitability. Now that ultimate bit of information will make Niels see the dimension of his misunderstanding. It is delivered by the Dahlbeck woman, another sinner, who informs Niels about his being married to the district whore. Niels, who has long been subjected to "a gradual disintegration of will and purpose" (SM 211), shoots his loyal horse Jock in a perverted compensatory act which seeks to punish sexuality. Soon afterwards, he directs his aggression towards its alleged source when he encounters his wife with two lovers who quickly escape through door and window. She sits and smiles at him, "wrapped in silk," and he shoots her with his gun, "the silken slipper [falling] in the centre of the table" (SM 225f).

As the dramatic climax, the shooting of Clara implies an intellectual awakening of the unenlightened immigrant. What is not questioned by Niels, however, is her status as a loose woman – although it cannot be established with certainty whether the "gay widow" has resumed her old profession or has just recently taken to literal whoring as a form of melancholic protest. For Niels, though, a definite categorization can be established by receiving word from another woman and by understanding the

community's demonstrative behaviour of not visiting as a kind of sanction against presumed prostitution. The woman who apparently has been producing bedroom stories with a host of other men is a frontier he cannot endure. Therefore, he must silence her.

Fake Catharsis, or: The Happy End Which Is Not

Imprisoned for ten years and encouraged by the warden, "who sp[eaks] to him of Ellen," Niels begins to take classes and acquires "a vocabulary that would enable him to read real books" (SM 236). His progress in learning shows him reverting to the Biblical wisdom of Solomon that he had pondered during his marriage to Clara: "What had it all to do with the real problems of life?" (SM 236). Hence, what has often been described as his enlightenment, as maturing and acquiring a sense of self,[197] is only the emergence of a slightly different outlook on life which is still characterized by detachment and emotional repression.

Released after 'only' six-and-a-half years in prison, Niels returns to the setting of his crime and, in contrast to Grove's attempt at writing a realist novel, enters a world that is strangely composed of the fairy-tale, the popular historical romance, and the prairie reality which has conditioned the protagonist's reductionist approach to life and to women. In breaking with his realist representation,[198] Grove permits his novel's major flaw by enforcing an unconvincing happy end. Although the district has outwardly changed, the loyal Bobby, now patriarch of a poor but happy family, has increased Niels's wealth (a wishful image for the money-obsessed FPG?); Bobby and Mrs. Lund, who now runs the post office in Lindstedt's house, make him understand that Ellen, too, has been checking up on his farm.

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[197] See, for example, Stobie (*Frederick Philip Grove* 81; 79), who links the killing scene with "an awakening of the soul" and asserts that "Lindstedt's [crisis] is a mental one, from which he recovers in prison [in a kind of] paradoxical freedom from the imprisonment of his life during his marriage." Lindstedt's imprisonment can be seen as an autobiographical gloss pointing at Greve's time at the Bonn prison in 1903-04.

[198] "Grove's particular brand of realism," as Konrad Gross (204) suggests, "has to be seen in contrast to the assumed lack of truthfulness in the literary practices of the adventure romances which dominated English-Canadian literature until the 1920s."

Ellen is a physically changed woman, with "square [features and] the face of a girl [in which] lay hidden the dream, the unfulfilled, uncompromising dream of a virgin child" (SM 257). Even this meeting is dominated by silence, and when they walk to the place in the bush where Ellen once turned down Niels, "imponderable things, incomprehensible waves of feeling pass to and fro between them: things too delicate for words: things somehow full of joy and disquieting though not unpleasurable expectation" (SM 261). Since Ellen is freed from the shadow of her mother, and Niels from that of his mother as well as Clara, they can begin anew. "It is not passion that will unite them; what will unite them is love" (SM 263).

Settlers of the Marsh "should have ended with the tragedy," Thomas Saunders argues in his introduction to the 1966 edition (qtd. in La Bossière 145). Correlatively, Knönagel (*Nietzschean Philosophy* 131) maintains that "by portraying Niels as victim and victimizer and by creating for him a potential happy ending[, Grove] departs significantly from the message conveyed by the main portion of the novel." What was primarily tragic suddenly becomes something else – almost (involuntary) comedy.[199] The novel's genesis may be partly responsible for this enforced nature of a dissatisfying happy end. Contrary to what Grove was trying to make his readers believe by refering to "a garbled extract" of an originally "three-volumed novel [. . .] called *Pioneers*" (ISM 352), a two-volume manuscript was the base for the novel, which, as Henry Makow reasons, "accurately represents Grove's intentions"; more than that, the dubious third volume was rather an independent fragment, "likely an attempt to write a sequel" ("Grove's 'Garbled Extract'" 38; 52), but informed the published novel's last chapter, "Ellen Again."

The questionable quality of "Ellen Again" as a piece that appears tacked-on may have psychological implications. In a triangle of novelistic characters that bears autobiographical traces – representing, to some degree, the author between a woman of his past (Else) and that of his present or future (his Canadian wife Catherine) – a clear and unmistakable transition had to be encoded.[200] Clara Vogel represents the book's strongest link between Europe and North America; from a tentative autobiographical point of view, the *femme fatale* had to be systematically suppressed and finally erased

199 In a private conversation in May 2000, David Arnason has voiced his belief that Grove's ending was intended "to be poetic and symbolic, so that his novel would transcend mere realism."

200 In his Jungian reading of archetypal characters, Stich ("Bluff" 121) reasons that "Grove has dramatized versions of his *Persona* (Niels), his *Shadow* (Clara) and his *Anima* (Ellen)."

by the author in order to make an arrival in the New World possible for FPG. In that sense, his novel appears to have targetted a healing or cleansing effect.

Promoted by Aristotle's *Poetics* as a main effect of tragedy (and, thereby, of all 'good' literature), catharsis has become a central target of what Freud called the "talking cure." The cathartic method is characterized by a complete illumination of the previously obscured memory of experiences that have had a traumatic effect and by the awakening of its accompanying affect. In the course of this reliving of the past, hysterical symptoms or traumatic neuroses are experienced again, *in statum nascendi*, and thereby processed through free and uninhibited speech. Catharsis frees the suffering subject from the symptoms.[201]

With regard to *Settlers of the Marsh*, the cathartic method cannot be regarded as a conscious or intended process, although it may appear so in retrospect. The autobiographical affinities of both Niels and Clara, however, may point in that direction, as does a comment about the novel in one of the many cryptic passages in Grove's official autobiography: "To this day I am not quite sure that it conveys to others what it conveys to me. If it does, nobody has ever said so" (ISM 379). Freud's assertions that "unprocessed reminiscences" are at the root of the problems to be relieved by the talking cure, which itself is based on the key concept of *cessante causa cessat effectus* (cf. Leuzinger 22-25), would also suggest to think of Grove's first prairie novel as a potentially cathartic confession to the page.

The possible (unconscious?) effect which the writing of the book might have had for Grove can only be speculated about; his persona Niels, in spite of the novel's enforced happy end, does not really achieve catharsis. To begin with, he is a non-flattering persona and character of modest dimension, guided by incredible stubbornness[202] and blind dominance of will.[203] In that context, Niels reflects what La Bossière (143) calls the novel's "governing theme: the obscurity of the innermost life

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[201] "Wir fanden nämlich, [. . .] daß die einzelnen hysterischen Symptome sogleich und ohne Wiederkehr verschwanden, wenn es gelungen war, die Erinnerung an den veranlassenden Vorgang zu voller Helligkeit zu erwecken, damit auch den begleitenden Affekt wachzurufen, und wenn dann der Kranke den Vorgang in möglichst ausführlicher Weise schilderte und dem Affekt Worte gab. Affektloses Erinnern ist fast immer wirkungslos; der psychische Prozeß, der ursprünglich abgelaufen war, muss so lebhaft als möglich wiederholt, *in statum nascendi* gebracht und dann 'ausgesprochen' werden." (Breuer / Freud, qtd. in Leuzinger 22-23)

[202] Cf. Stobie (*Frederick Philip Grove* 83), who criticizes that "Niels's [. . .] adolescence or innocence is so protacted as to border on sheer stupidity."

[203] Cf. Knönagel (*Nietzschean Philosophy* 131): "Unable to sublimate the strongest and most basic passion, his sexual desire, Niels tries to subdue it and falls into the moral mania that Nietzsche had envisaged as the consequence of an erratic attempt to overcome one's passions."

and the powerlessness of words to grasp and communicate the truth of that life." As a reflection of blind self-delusion, this theme is universal in scope and applies to Grove himself, who did not so much employ language as the primary medium for therapy than rather use it, over and over, as a means for literary self-creation (or self-deception). His attempt to manage a successful passage from troubled past to care-free present may have helped in shaping a persona that differs from the Old World sample, Friedrich Karl Reelen, mostly in his lack of elegance and a focus on the rural environment as opposed to decadent cultural stances. As a reflection of the author's (melancholic?) desire to ensure narcissistic satisfaction, the ego ideal Grove sketches through Niels is distinctly different in that it is strongly conditioned by repression.[204]

More 'spectacular,' Clara is positioned in a theatrical setting in which her tragic performance is dominated by her appearance as a figure with makeup and stylized French fashion, external aspects which repeatedly tend to overshadow her potential role. In a transfer of a typical Old World malaise, she embodies narcissism as a symptom of general psychic distress or social neurosis (see Chapter 3.1); Grove employs her as a contrast to the allegedly healthier disposition of the pioneers. Her promiscuity, however, which may not be whoring initially but the expression of a strong narcissistic libido, questions the entire logic of the prairie's patriarchal society. Ellen, on a smaller scale, achieves that, too, but lacks character dimension and is rather too functional, as a character sketch or *début* figure, in trying to grant Niels a happy end.

Thus, the novel's major female player, most complex character and catalyst for Niels's dramatic development is Clara. "Her whoring," Stich asserts, "parodies in grotesque fashion the hollowness of Niels's quest for self, wife and children" ("Bluff" 117f). This emancipated and subversive *femme fatale* is killed within the text, but her transgressions and her whoring obscure, expose and prolong the theme of striving for self-knowledge beyond the confines of the book. In that capacity, Clara – like Niels – can be seen as a reflection of the author figure, for whom the writing of *Settlers of the Marsh* signalled a new stage in his career, but also caused frustration over imminent failures and disappointing sales. Since they made him produce elaborate rationalizations which only hampered a better appreciation of his novel, there was added to the (melancholic?) attempt of transgressing an identity and complicated relationship grounded in the Old World a melancholia over an unsuccessful artistic design in the

[204] See Freud's "Zur Einführung des Narzißmus" (*Das Ich und das Es* 67-77).

New. With regard to these implications, FPG leaves behind the shadow of that other man he never ceased to be.

Chapter 4.1

The Masks of Odysseus:
Heroic and Narrative Roles in *Over Prairie Trails* and *The Studhorse Man*

> Why do you dress me in borrowed robes?
>
> William Shakespeare, *Macbeth*

> The *Odyssey* is assuredly one of the works in which the problem of identity is most acutely and profoundly perceived. A doubt is often voiced by its characters: And what if I am not what I am? And what if this guest is other than he seems? The spirit of Proteus runs through the entire poem. There is a repeated question: Speak, stranger, tell me who you are; have you ever encountered my father?
>
> Franco Ferrucci, *The Poetics of Disguise: The Autobiography of the Work in Homer, Dante, and Shakespeare*

> As long as Odysseus tells narratives designed to conceal his presence and protect him from confrontation with his enemies, those narratives replicate the distance between all stories told about heroes and the actions that make them heroic. He can only commemorate the great Odysseus as a figure from the past and can only himself be recognized as a luckless wanderer who had lost his claims to greater stature. As long as he remains in disguise, Odysseus is committed to the self-effacement of the poet.[. . .] He can only make himself recognized through physical actions, shooting through the axes and then at the suitors, which are finally distinct from speech.
>
> Sheila Murnaghan, *Disguise and Recognition in the Odyssey*

> Odysseus is the most important psychopath in Greek mythology.[. . .] He's a destructive crazy-man, but he's so fucking "*polytropos*" you're letting him get away with it!
>
> Charles Boer, "The Classicist and the Psychopath"

> L' *Odyssée* n'est pas pour rien la cible favorite de l'écriture hypertextuelle.
>
> Gérard Genette, *Palimpsestes: La littérature au second degré*

The use and evocation of Homer's *The Odyssey*, its mythic cosmos, heroic actions and narrative techniques, is a universal practice in the history of world literature.[205] Although it is a favourite of all pre-texts (or 'hypotexts', as Gérard Genette would call them), it is the first 'hypertext' – a secondary work in response to a primary one, in this case, to Homer's *Iliad* (Genette 200-201). Simultaneously, the epic poem introduces new modes of complex narration (including the *in medias res* device), focuses on individual adventure by centering the story on one hero, and paves the way for the

[205] Out of an almost infinite number of relevant examples, only three outstanding texts should be mentioned here: James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922), Nikos Kazantzakis' *Odyssey* (1938), and Yasushi Inoue's *Oroshiya koku suimutan* (1966; German title *Der Sturm*, 1996).

novelistic form to emerge much later (200-201). Hence, Homer's *Odyssey* presents the first case of being both a secondary work (in relation to *The Iliad*) and a primary one with respect to its innovative techniques of subject presentation and audience involvement. A similarly complex, hybrid nature might be ascribed to two formative texts in Canadian literature that both explicitly cite and employ Homer's classical book: *Over Prairie Trails* (1922) by Frederick Philip Grove and Robert Kroetsch's *The Studhorse Man* (1969).[206]

While *Over Prairie Trails* is a collection of seven carefully crafted sketches of a lone figure's challenging drives through rural Manitoba, *The Studhorse Man* is the story of Hazard Lepage and his adventurous journey through the Albertan Prairies to find the perfect mare for his stallion named Poseidon. Both books evoke the image of the prairie as sea (the Latin *mare*, or Greek *pontos*) and associate their protagonists with the Homeric hero – a connection with the mythic adventures of the old Mediterranean world that has not remained obscure to the eyes of Canadian criticism. W. J. Keith, for instance, has spoken of Grove's "deliberately presenting himself as a Ulysses figure" ("Re-Examination" 129);[207] W. H. New's discussion of Kroetsch's "freewheeling adaptation of Homer's *Odyssey*" (*Articulating West* 179-86) and his chart of correspondences between both texts entices Robert Lecker into calling Hazard a "mock-Odysseus" (56).[208] In spite of this attention to the Manitoban and Albertan adaptation of the classical Greek text, what has been neglected are the respective heroes's role plays. There is a clear impact of the masks employed by Odysseus on Grove's as well as on Kroetsch's transposition, an impact that extends onto the level of story-telling and helps condition these books's generic indeterminacy. Starting with Homer's original, therefore, this chapter sets out to elucidate this impact and the specific (narrative) forms

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[206] Of the five different types into which Genette divides the main category of what he calls *transtextualité*, at least two apply, in varying degress, to the texts by Grove and Kroetsch. For instance, Genette's definition of the type of "*intertextualité* par une relation de coprésence entre deux ou plusiers textes, [. . .] par la présence effective d'un texte dans un autre" applies as well as the definition of "*hypertextualité* [comme] toute relation unissant un texte B (que j'appellerai *hypertexte*) à un texte antérieur A (que j'appellerai, bien sûr, *hypotexte*) sur lequel il se geffe d'un manière qui n'est pas celle du commentaire." Rather, what is decisive here is the general definition of "*transtextualité*, ou transcendence du texte, [. . .] par 'tout ce qui le met en relation, manifeste ou secrète, avec d'autres textes'" (7-12).

[207] For further discussions of the 'Ulysses theme' (a term coined by W.B. Stanford) in Grove, see also Patrick Lane (Afterword 160); Walter Pache ("Greek to Us" [videotape]); Tamara Pianos, *Geografiktionen* 66-68.

[208] For further discussions of Homer as intertext in Kroetsch, see also Gunilla Florby (*The Margin Speaks* 37-43), and Carol L. Beran (192).

of disguises, impersonations and self-stylizations that characterize the two 'hypertexts.'[209]

Odyssean (Dis)Guises: Wandering Heroes and Their Adventures

Homer's Odysseus is a man of wisdom, strength, eloquence, shrewdness, bravery, cunning and endurance. He is a man that is always on the move – one of those wandering heroes for whom, according to C.G. Jung, "wandering is a symbol of longing."[210] Already in *The Iliad*, which shows Odysseus to be a central force in the Trojan war, his longing and his multiple capacities shine through. It is in *The Odyssey*, however, that the Greek hero demonstrates his full *polytropos* range. After the ten years of warfare in Troy, he needs another ten years to reach his native Ithaca again – and these wanderings as well as the recovery of his wife and kingdom provide opportunity for Odysseus to prove himself in a series of tests. Although this outstanding "man of many turns" – often also called Ulysses, from the Latin version *Ulixes* – has often been portrayed in literary history, he has generally preserved his status as an archetypal hero.

Such archetypal figures are what Joseph Campbell, in *The Hero With a Thousand Faces* (1949), terms the "symbolic carriers of the destiny of Everyman" (36). Odysseus endures endless toils and ordeals during his tedious journey homewards, is tested by the gods and shipwrecks several times. When he is stranded on the island of the Phaiacians, he has survived a number of incredible challenges but lost his entire crew. Received with honours at the King's palace, Odysseus's stories move the audience so much that King Alcinoös bestows precious gifts and robes upon his famous guest and has a crew escort him back to Ithaca. On that way, the ship is propelled and the sleeping Odysseus guarded by the secret intervention of Pallas Athena, the daughter of Zeus, who favours him. Throughout the book, she appears in many guises, as the hero's son Telemachus, or Mentor, the advisor to Odysseus's family. On the shores of Ithaca, she first hides Odysseus in a cloud of mist and then appears to him in the guise of a young shepherd.

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[209] Both Grove and Kroetsch have underlined the importance of the *Odyssey* for them. See Grove's letter to his friend Warkentin in 1914, in Pacey (*Letters* 6) and already qtd. in Chapter 2.1. Kroetsch, in "The Moment of the Discovery of America Continues," discusses the unending process of writing a long poem: "Homer's *The Odyssey*, forever being translated into new versions of the poem. [. . .] The self, returning from the self. [. . .] Metamorphoses please" (LTW 8).

[210] This quote from Jung's *Symbols of Transformations* is taken from the Robert Kroetsch Papers (MsC 27.10.1).

The returnee immediately greets this male figure but conceals, in their dialogue, his true identity, pretending to be a stranger to his native island. Pleased by Odysseus's careful performance, Athena changes her shape into that of a "tall and majestic woman, clever and intelligent" and teases her protegé: "'A cunning rogue he would be, a master of craft, who would outwit you! [. . .] Even in your own country you wouldn't desist from your tales and your historiological inventions" (*Odyssey* 143) With her divine ability for shape-shifting and endless transformation, Athena offers both instruction and assistance to Odysseus:

> I will disguise you so that no one will be able to know you. I will shrivel up the sound flesh of that muscular body, I will sweep off the brown crop from your head, I will wrinkle up those beautiful eyes, I will give you rags to wear which any one would be sick to see on a human being, and you shall seem like a shabby vagabond to the proud gallants, and even your own wife and son. (145)

Although his bravery and clever narrative performances have repeatedly enabled Odysseus to pass tests, he now depends more than ever on Athena's "divine favouritism" (Murnaghan 177) to help him complete his quest. Wishing nothing more than being reunited with his wife, he has to heed Athena's strategic advice – and refrains from rushing immediately to his palace. He stops at the enclosure of his old and loyal swineherd, Eumaios, to whom he tells the fictionalized account of his past years. Testing the validity of his disguise and his skills as storyteller, Odysseus remains unrecognized, reassured of the necessity of his deceptive appearance and careful plotting.

But after a night's rest at the swineherd's cabin, the protagonist sees his son approaching and understands that Telemachos, who has just returned from a journey (a miniature replica of Odysseus's quest), has become a man. Consequently, the father reveals himself to the son. He decides that "the swineherd shall bring [him home] like some old wretched beggar" (*Odyssey* 174).

Empowered by his own disguise, Odysseus goes through a series of deliberately delayed recognition scenes and the biggest challenge to his endurance and faith. Like the episodes of his odyssey before, this "folklore figure of the Cunning Lad, the Wily One, the Grandson of Autolycus"[211] (Stanford 244) demonstrates his capacity for

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[211] Autolycus named Odysseus "for 'odium' or contempt because he himself was held in such contempt" (Boer vii).

trickery. All these qualities are taken up and ironized by the figure of Hazard Lepage in Kroetsch's *The Studhorse Man*. The protagonist, characterized by van Herk ("Biocritical Essay" xxiv) as "a Proteus figure caught on the wheel of an odyssey that is beyond his control," stumbles accidentally into two disguises as part of a tragi-comic plot. The author's own notes, accessible at the Special Collections Archive at the University of Calgary, are revealing in terms of his novel's conception and of the paradoxical attributes Hazard was supposed to have: "vital, comic, murky, serious, idealistic, weak, sensual, enduring, brave, cowardly" (MsC 27.10.1). The name itself captures a concept of importance for Kroetsch: "I think the word *hazard* is really one of the words that informs my thinking – the chance and danger, all of the things Hazard can meet. . . . And I think a society needs its hazard figures, the people who disrupt or gamble or take a chance" (Maze viii). And this description would be transferable to the cunning and wily Odysseus.

Hazard Lepage shares more similarities with the classical hero. He is, as Kroetsch's notes further show, devised in "the tradition of the wandering hero" (MsC 27.10.1). With regards to the happy resolution in the *Odyssey*, though, *The Studhorse Man* works towards a different sense of ending. An unidentifiable clipping among the author's notes, cut out from a photocopy, reveals his approach: "I connect the essential difference between tragedy and comedy with two imposing impulses deeply rooted in human nature. Until we can find a way of reconciling the *antinomy* in our nature, we are all torn between the desire to *find* ourselves and the desire to *lose* ourselves" (MsC 27.10.1). Hazard, characterized by longing like Odysseus, embraces this antinomy forcefully – and disguise becomes essential to his being suspended between finding and losing himself. In a parodic expansion of the Homeric quest motif, Hazard has been searching for 24 years to find the perfect mare for his studhorse, Poseidon, the last in a line of six purebred stallions. As the last of the studhorse men in the 1945 post-war Canadian prairies, in a time of transition and reorientation, the hero has been engaged to Martha Proudfoot for 13 years but keeps being detained by adventures in the course of his lonely quest that makes him move in a geographical shape resembling a rectangle. One of these distractions – a sexual encounter with a curator – occurs after Hazard has lost Poseidon due to a fight with the Proudfoot family at his native village, Burkhardt.

In the city of Edmonton, Hazard finds his precious horse trying to confront its bronze stallion replication, in front of the Legislative Building. But in the attempt to calm Poseidon, Hazard slips and hurts his back. A lady named P. Cockburn has the

injured hero carried into the provincial museum inside the very building. Waking up "to the pressure of two confident hands massaging his spine, [. . .] in the most lavish bed" (SHM 35), Hazard yields to the curator's desire, and they make love. Suddenly, seeing "beyond the bed's thin curtains" (37), he realizes that they are surrounded by six life-sized waxen figures: "on one side the resplendent figure of an Indian chief, the buckskin of an early explorer, the red coat of a Northwest Mounted Police constable; on the other the black robe of a missionary, the coat and tails of an early premier, the black gown of a university president" (38).

Peeking around him, Hazard encounters depictions of Canadian history, images of the nation's genesis. Kroetsch focuses on their respective dresses in order to stress the power they signify and constrasts this with the role his hero is offered but refuses to inhabit. In a funny scene that hints at a tragic dimension, Kroetsch parodies the crucial transformation of Odysseus by Pallas Athena.[212] In *The Studhorse Man*, P. Cockburn measures Hazard's body and cries out, "I must make a model of you'" (37), in order to add him to the six other Canadian representatives. Kroetsch's hero, however, dreads the prospect of being turned into history while still alive and goes on love-making with the curator until she falls asleep exhaustedly.[213] Thus, he resists her impulse towards transforming him but takes action himself.

Having to urinate, Hazard takes the pillbox hat off the Northwest Mounted Police constable's head but fails to relieve himself because of an erection. His predicament makes him notice the completeness of the Mountie's equipment, and so he undresses the replica and "proceed[s] to dress as one of Queen Victoria's admirable redcoats," putting "the stiff and open-eyed figure into his place on the high bed" (43). Leaving behind the naked, lifeless male figure in the position he had previously inhabited, Hazard has exchanged his identity with the Mountie, filling the latter's outfit with life. On the one hand, dressing in the garments of this historical personification of law and order in Canada symbolizes the anachronism of Hazard's existence as studhorse man on the

[212] W.H. New (*Articulating West* 181) sees this episode as an equivalent to another scene in Homer and speaks of "the Cyclopean embrace of P. Cockburn in her Polyphemus' Cave-museum bed." A further possible Homeric sub-text is Odysseus's descent into Hades, where he encounters famous figures from Trojan history and is given directions to continue his journey (Book 11). Hazard, quite similarly, meets with dead figures (and their guardian) in the museum and seeks to escape their realm to continue his quest. With variation, the later scenes in the Home for Incurables repeat this parodic citation.

[213] Kroetsch here ironically inverts the traditional model of gender roles that would have the male falling asleep right after the sexual act. – When Cockburn expresses her wish to model Hazard in wax, he replies, "Make my horse live." (SHM 37); John Thieme ("Erotics" 96) comments on this: "Terrified by history, he opposes it with sexuality."

prairie; on the other, his reenactment of an aspect of Canadian history lets him gain agency, for he has dressed upward on the social scale. Hence, after borrowing a milkwagon to pursue his quest, he is saluted and even assisted by soldiers in recapturing Poseidon. The full irony of their collaboration resides in the fact that the soldiers speak of the search "for an insane killer who [. . .] turned loose hundreds of horses in an effort to escape" without noticing that it is Hazard they are talking about – and he himself even "expresses concern [. . .] and desires offender might be captured and punished" (46).

Hazard's challenge to the officials and his altered appearance are representative of the shape-shifting, archetypal figure of the trickster. According to Bennett ("Weathercock" 124), this figure is "Kroetsch's first means of breaking free" from social restraints; in the author's own words, the trickster

> breaks down systems. There is no logic to his behavior, or only anti-logic. . . . He's energy independent of moral structure and moral interpretation. He's very subversive, very carnivalesque. Furthermore, the trickster is often tricked. That intrigues me. I suppose there is a kind of sexual origin in the figure . . . but at the same time this instills a sense of the absurdity of all sexuality. (LV 99-100)

Like Odysseus, Hazard bears central characteristics of this figure, and does also get tricked. Although his guise of authority allows Hazard temporarily to approach the real authorities in a subversive way, he will experience the dangers of his Mountie outfit and get challenged twice as a representative executive of public power and order. His affinity for horses[214] brings not only Poseideon back into his hands, but also four more mares he hopes his studhorse will mount. Hazard's dress and the success he derives from it make him forget who he is; wanting to occupy all of Edmonton's streets with his horses and the milkwagon, he becomes "exuberantly reckless" and starts a verbal fight with a truck driver, whom he tries to chase off the street. Suddenly, by shouting "'you pandering redcoat peter,'" the trucker is "offending the very core of Hazard's being." Exchanging a number of words for the male sexual organ, both arouse so much public interest that a policeman interferes and asks Hazard, "'Just who are you, sir?'" (48-49). This disillusioning question from a representative of power illuminates the degree to

[214] This affinity relates to the subconscious and carries strong sexual overtones. See Jung (*Selected Writings* 188), who comments on the horse: "As an animal it represents the non-human psyche, the subhuman, animal side, the unconscious.[. . .] As an animal lower than man it represents the lower part of the body and the animal impulses that rise from there. The horse is dynamic and vehicular power: it carries one away like a surge of instinct."

which Hazard has briefly identified with his dress and the implied role-position; the inquiry makes him realize his error, and he flees for the Calgary Trail. According to the author, the protagonist "gets trapped. . . . We think of disguise as giving us freedom, but it also seems to take away freedom, or agency" (Maze viii).

Hazard shifts from hunter to hunted, and the ensuing chase leads him, by chance, into a "Home for Incurables, run by the Sisters of Temperance" (SHM 52). They take him for what he appears to be – a Mountie. In an episode that echoes the previous parody of Odysseus's descent into Hades (and that can be seen as another of the Orphic descent scenes so typical of Kroetsch, also recalling Dante's *Divinia Comedia*), Hazard enters the "perpetual game" of rummy in which he can do nothing but "go on winning and winning and winning" for days (52-60).[215] Although accumulating more and more money, this situation in which the binary of winning and losing is upset affords him the sense of entrapment and losing power. Hence, Hazard's first disguise functions ambivalently, from initially assisting him in his pursuit to hindering him afterwards. He will have to discard his Mountie outfit to continue his quest.

In contrast to the crucial and elaborate cases in the texts by Homer and Kroetsch, Grove's *Over Prairie Trails* employs little literal disguise – but displays throughout a high degree of self-consciousness. The seven 'essays' focus on different natural phenomena, in fall and winter, and on the respective mood, perception, and interpretation of the narrating traveller encountering them. Because the writer of and protagonist in the book share a European background, a new kind of exile and the position of teacher in Manitoba as well as the name, *Over Prairie Trails* "invites the reader to equate author and narrator," as Knönagel asserts, but with the narrator remaining "a creation of the author who filters and rearranges Grove's perceptions" (*Nietzschean Philosophy* 88). This figure is a blend of Rousseauian character traits,[216] the Nietzschean superhuman ideal[217] and a modern version of the classical hero: the

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[215]Kroetsch, influenced by Huizinga's *Homo Ludens*, is fascinated by the notions of game and playing and how they open up the text for author, reader, character (see, especially, the "Game" section in LV); one of his most famous game-settings is the game of schmier the men play for 151 days in *What the Crow Said*.

[216] Margaret Stobie (*Frederick Philip Grove* 36-41), in her chapter "Rousseau as Educator," discusses Grove's 1914 essay by the same title. Stobie argues that "without a study of the *Emile*, *The Social Contract*, and *The Origin of Inequality* we cannot explain a great part of Grove's writings. [. . .] we might also note that much of his writing is fictionalized applications of Rousseau's tenets" (38).

[217] On Nietzsche's influence, see, among others, Blodgett ("*Alias* Grove"), Knönagel (*Nietzschean Philosophy*), Divay (Introduction), but also Grove himself in *In Search of Myself* (1945); as Felix Paul Greve, he edited at least one volume of a larger Nietzsche edition in 1901 and published a review on his own edition.

lonely narrator-protagonist named Grove "casts himself in the role of Ulysses, wily and resourceful, travelling across dangerous and hostile territory, struggling against adverse forces determined to delay his return or even destroy him" (Pache, "Greek to Us, Grove").[218]

To create this composite persona, the writer Grove dramatically condenses and enhances the totality of his seventy-two trips into the book's seven selected sketches to keep on measuring his protagonist's will-power against the power of the natural forces. The protagonist never loses the awareness of his performance – even if he seems not to employ a literal masquerade – and explicitly aligns himself with the Greek hero, for instance by referring to "Homer's *pontos atrygetos* – the barren sea" (OPT 73). More specifically, the immigrant and his two horses fight for life in the prairie as sea:

> This was indeed like nothing so much as like being out on rough waters and in a troubled sea, with nothing to brace the storm with but a wind-tossed nutshell of a one-man sailing craft.[. . .] When the snow reached its extreme in depth, it gave you the feeling which a drowning man may have when fighting his desperate fight with the salty waves. (77)

While Poseidon's sea is a source of major trouble for Odysseus until he reaches the Phaiacians, the snow in *Over Prairie Trails* – personified, ubiquitous and dangerous – takes on the role of divine or supernatural antagonist. Nature becomes the primary background against which Grove seeks to define himself. One of the few exceptions, or extensions, of that principle occurs in the sixth sketch, "A Call for Speed," in which he receives news of his daughter's sudden illness and tries to reach home as fast as possible. "Where I had failed, she was to succeed," Grove reasons, and then meditates upon the effect of such emotions: "Nature strips down our pretences with a relentless finger, and we stand, bare of disguises, as helpless failures" (OPT 117-18). By way of implication, he suggests that masks may well be part of his repertoire – and that they are of no use in the powerful presence of nature but only in relation to man.[219] To prove his point in this crucial situation in which he has no time to lose, he comments upon

[218] The analogy between Grove and Ulysses has also been pointed out by, among others, Keith ("Re-Examination"), Patrick Lane (Afterword), and Pianos (*Geografiktionen*).

[219] This may be an echo from Grove's occupation with Rousseau. Cf. Sennett, who debates Rousseau's criticism of the "great city" as a place fostering role-play and the manipuliation of appearance; Rousseau "perceived [the city] as an environment wherein you cannot tell what kind of man a stranger is in a given situation by finding out how he survives" (118). Grove, while celebrating the loneliness and transparency of his daily survival in rural Manitoba, also demonstrates his ability to perform a certain role when dealing with human beings.

entering the town, where he hopes to get the proper medicine for his sick girl, "I deliberately assumed the air of a man of leisure" (122). Grove's pretense to heroic patience and even *nonchalance* in the face of utmost urgency is successful; he gets what he needs and can continue his journey.

This is one of the rare instances in which the protagonist explicitly performs a particular role as part of an interplay with other human beings. Kroetsch's assertion that "going into disguise is to enter into a certain kind of discourse," which "always [implies] a sense of interrelatedness, a *tableau* or something like that" (Maze vii; ii), applies to the performance of Grove's persona, who has not much opportunity or need for a disguise since human beings are marginal in this book. In this regard, the "Author's Preface" already expresses the traveller's preference and disposition in clear terms: "I am naturally an outdoor creature – I have lived for several years 'on the tramp' – I love Nature more than Man" (OPT xiii). Repeatedly, his journey through the Manitoban landscape stresses his association with the elements and animals. A wolf (or coyote), picking up small bits of bacon deliberately dropped by Grove during his drives, becomes his "regular companion" (7); this friendship as well as the expert way in which he selects and handles his two faithful horses, Peter and Dan, render him a version of the trickster figure who is usually an animal-human with special or magical powers and often has an animal companion that functions as a stooge. "I take to horses – horses take to me" (xiii). The narrator's trickster-qualities further show in his affinity for transformation: In the worst imaginable winter weather, he refers to being "changed [. . .] into a veritable snowman in snow-white garb," and later echoes his comparison by reasoning, "I am sure I looked like a snowman" (56; 103). His insistence on this self-image as snowman stresses the protean nature Grove ascribes to himself, in addition to associations of innocent whiteness, of evanescence, and of the man-made figure being open to human inscription or shaping.

Unlike Ulysses, Grove casts himself in such psychological roles by himself without external aid. His identifying with and copying nature is an artistic means of transgressing personal boundaries – but it falls short of Odysseus's or Hazard's kind of mimicry that Terry Castle, in the context of the 18th-century masquerades, defines as "a form of psychological recognition, a way of embracing, quite literally, the unfamiliar" (62). This lack of experience, not to mention the fact that Grove never has a crew to travel with and lose, does not meet many strangers, and is without divine protection, means that he depends mostly on encountering unfamiliar facets of himself – and / or

escaping others. But journeying endlessly over the wintry and allegedly impassable prairie trails allows this trickster-narrator to exercise what Kroetsch, in the poem "F.P.Grove: The Finding," calls his "coyote self" (SHP 47). In a parody of the Homeric myth, this Grove-as-Ulysses is motivated, as Pache suggests, "rather by the desire for absolute freedom, for restlessly being on the move. [E]xile has become the mode of his existence" ("Greek to Us, Grove ").

Within the repetitive pattern which "seems to attempt a retelling of a classical myth, from a radically modernist perspective" (Pache, "Greek to Us"), six out of seven sketches end with the hero's respective return[220] – and special emphasis is given by the central piece, "Snow." Upon arriving, with school and house shifting into view, the traveller reasons: "I felt somewhat as I had felt coming home from my first big trip overseas. It seemed a lifetime since I had started out.[. . .] My wife would not surmise what I had gone through" (OPT 90). The allusion to Odysseus's long travels could hardly be more explicit and makes the narrator's comment resonate richly with Homeric tales of heroism – and these tales are both repeated and artistically shaped in book-form, officially for wife and child to read by the fireside. Like Odysseus, Grove's character-narrator seems to follow the three-part "standard path of the mythological adventure" that Campbell describes in the following words: "A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man" (30). While *Over Prairie Trails*, by its repetitive pattern, resists the one-time enactment of the character's crucial adventure, the episodic *Odyssey* does not complete the hero's cycle in a simple linear plot, but "string[s] a number of independent cycles into a single series" (Campbell 246).

During the last stages of his journey, Odysseus depends on Athena's "divine favouritism" (Murnaghan 177) to help him complete his quest. In the disguise she has effected, he enters his own palace, which is besieged by Penelope's suitors. As a ragged beggar, he claims to have met Odysseus and thus awakens her interest, though neither his speech nor his gestures reveal his true identity to her. But Eurycleia, his old nurse who washes his feet in Penelope's presence, suddenly recognizes him by a scar made by the tusk of a wild boar. Hence, a small but unaltered bodily feature may expose the masked Odysseus to his enemies, though he fortunately manages to swear Eurycleia to

[220] The fifth sketch, "Wind and Waves," describes a journey away from home, ending in solitude with the words, "It was a cheerless night" (OPT 115).

silence in time (*Odyssey* 208-9). Assisted by Telemachos and some loyal servants, he prepares the great battle with the suitors in the hall, then enters the contest with the great bow Penelope has set as a task for her potential new husband. Still appearing as a beggar, Odysseus is not taken seriously but repeatedly humiliated for asking his try. But he proves the only person capable of stringing the old bow, and shoots an arrow through the twelve axe-holes with grace and ease, thus winning the contest.

In *The Odyssey*, this is the moment when the disguise is reversed: Odysseus strips off his rags; Athena makes his body stronger; he appears less as a beggar and begins to resemble his genuine shape again; all doors are locked and all enemies as well as disloyal servants slaughtered; the returned hero must face his ultimate test and win back his strangely detached wife. In *The Studhorse Man*, a similar contest-situation also precedes the discarding of a disguise: the eternal card game. In contrast to Odysseus, however, Hazard, far from both home and the object of his desire, is desperate to get away. He finds a set of clothes on a hanger in the dark.[221] Immediately, he "trade[s] his constable's bright uniform for the clothes he [can] not see. [. . .] and all prove[s] to be a perfect fit"; back in the furnace room, and alone, he finds "to his surprise he [is] dressed as a clergyman." Taking his money, he steals away with his gelding and milkwagon. On his way to Calgary, he stops to ask for directions – and decides to buy a set of encyclopedias. This time, though, he feels he is limited in his actions and does not "have the heart to quibble about the price; he [is] being accorded the deference due a man of God." Thus, having adopted the role-model of a priest, Hazard has lost agency, is not able to bargain and must fake interest by making "some pretense of examining a Bible" (SHM 63-64). Bound to the roles his respective outfits dictate, his appearances as priest and constable illustrate the status of dress as an inescapable signifier:

> Dress as a cultural phenomenon has several essential attributes. First, a person's identity is defined geographically and historically, and the individual is linked to a specific community.[. . .] Dress is an indication of the general social position of the person in the society.[. . .] As an emblem of power, one's position may be communicated by a crown, staff, or robe. Dress is also a symbol of economic position. (Barnes and Eicher, Introduction 8)

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[221] In his notes, Kroetsch refers to Campbell's *Hero With a Thousand Faces* and quotes: "the journey away is one into 'kingdom of the dark'" (MsC 27.10.1). Campbell maintains that the mythological hero passes this kingdom as a threshold, beyond which he "journeys through a world of unfamiliar yet strangely intimate forces, some of which severely threaten him (tests), some of which give magical aid (helpers)" (245-6).

Emblematic of the representation of traditional Canadian authority, the uniform and the clergyman dress worn by Hazard limit as well as extend his range of actions and possibilities, switching from an initial advantage and surplus of agency to a disadvantage and entrapment. The protagonist's sense of self is also affected by these disguises; they come close to fulfilling the function of masquerade as "the mysterious scene out of which the essential drama of the fiction emerge[s]" (Castle viii). Kroetsch himself speaks of "an enormous shift of power signalled by clothing" (Maze ii-v).

That power is signalled in both similar and dissimilar ways in the *The Odyssey*. Fine, precious robes reflect the status of elevated figures like King Alcinoös, the goddess Athena and the hero Odysseus, who all appear in dresses that signify the very lack of power. His bloody massacre of the suitors demonstrates how reliance on a dress code may be a tragic mistake if you judge the respective wearer only by his apparently valueless garments. Powerful both before and after stripping off his beggar's disguise, the Greek hero must yet pass the biggest test of all: to convince his wife of his true identity! In *Over Prairie Trails*, Grove's wife Catherine never displays any doubts as to who the returnee is, and in *The Studhorse Man*, it is the fiancée Martha who finds and literally besieges Hazard, but in the Greek epos, Penelope is reluctant to believe – or acknowledge – that the man in front of her is Odysseus. She seems to figure him a different person when she cunningly says: "Strange man, I am not proud, or contemptuous, or offended, but I know what manner of man you were when you sailed away from Ithaca" (*Odyssey* 242). She opposes her past image of Odysseus and the present appearances of an old beggar who has suddenly turned into a younger, more refined man claiming to be her husband. By a clever strategy of delay, Penelope pretends that their marriage bed could have been moved away from its permanent position; the enraged Odysseus tells her how he once had built the immobile bed with an olive tree as one of its bedposts. His disclosure of their mutual secret wins her over, and husband and wife are finally reunited. Her "unparalleled and unexpected reluctance to recognize Odysseus," though, as Murnaghan maintains, unveils some of the inherent ambiguity of masquerade; by taking agency herself, Penelope "causes him to experience directly that complete dependence on another person's mind that was evoked indirectly and impersonally through his disguise" (139f).

Such a sense of resolution through an explanation after a deceptive disguise – symbolized by the reunion of husband and wife – is absent in both *Over Prairie Trails* and *The Studhorse Man*. Grove's book presents the protagonist's being *en route* as the

major telos, and the last sketch not only ends with him having lost a night on the road, thus only able to continue homeward the next morning, but even with being on his nerves's edge. There is no sense of closure at the book's end, nor any indication of an imminent discarding of any masks. Kroetsch's parodic citation of the Homeric myths makes strong use of the motif of masquerade, though without Martha encountering her fiancé Hazard in disguise. His accidentally adopted disguises, affording him socially superior status temporarily, make him differ from Odysseus, who as the old, wretched beggar (Book XIII) not only performs a role of social inferiority to his true status, but also endures an existential game with patience. Whereas Odysseus distinguishes himself from his contemporaries in a Greek world in which "disguise is typically not a human but a divine strategy" (Murnaghan 11) and is able to complete his quest, Hazard's comic quest ends in tragedy. In a parody of the final palace scene in *The Odyssey*, Hazard's own house, described as a ship of fools, is besieged by Martha's suitors. Having entered his house through the backdoor, the Kroetschian hero is killed in a *finale furioso* by his own studhorse, Poseidon, precisely when Demeter, the narrator, makes a move at Martha.

Disguise is of varying importance in *The Odyssey* as pre-text and in its two Canadian adaptations. *Over Prairie Trails* only hints at literal disguise, having Grove's persona engage in a few role-plays without proper manipulation of his outer appearance; the book's movement "from the level of nature essays to the level of psycho-biography" and its "confessions of a fugitive" (Stich, "Extravagant Expression" 164-65), however, are based on the author's European past and his passage to the New World, for which the adoption of the name Frederick Philip Grove for Felix Paul Greve is but the most apparent aspect of a life in disguise. Hence, what is generally true for Odysseus – that the "maintenance of a disguise throughout this narrative [. . .] gives him an automatic advantage over other characters" (Murnaghan 176) – can be transferred to the author's life as an encoded subtext behind Grove's persona in *Over Prairie Trails* to be scrutinized by a curious reading audience. By way of contrast, this advantage is not automatically given in *The Studhorse Man*, due to Hazard's temporary camouflage. His visible and literal disguises, like Odysseus's, have the function of "an indispensable plot catalyst" which Castle (viii) attributes to masquerade. And what enhances, or even replaces, this catalyst is the linguistic accomplice and / or counterpart to a real masquerade: narrative performance and verbal self-stylization.

The Story-Telling: Narrative Performances

After his twenty-day-long journey from Calypso's island on a raft, Odysseus lands on the Phaiacian shores. As a stranger, he is welcomed at the court of King Alcinoös, and soon asks the poet Demódokos to sing of the Trojan War. Overwhelmed by the stories of his own fateful adventures and by the public praise that is attached to his name, Odysseus cries with tears and arouses the King's pity, who stops all poetry and inquires: "Tell me what name you go by at home, what your mother and father call you [. . .]. Now tell me all about your travels, what countries you have visited [. . .]" (*Odyssey* 92-93). The wandering hero then reveals his true identity and begins the narration of his own 'odyssey' over the past ten years – including the encounters with the Lotophagi, the Cyclops, the cannibalistic Laestrygones, his trip to Hades, his survival of the Sirens and of the sea-monsters Scylla and Charybdis, and his captivity on Calypso's island.

Within the complex structure of the *Odyssey*, these narratives at Alcinoös's palace have special significance. While part of the epic is told in a seemingly neutral voice, in the equivalent of a third-person point of view, this section (Books VIII-XII) not only looks back in the time sequence, offering to the audience details of Odysseus's adventures during the ten years of his wandering, but also has the events told from the perspective and in the words of the hero, in the equivalent of a first-person point of view. These alternating perspectives create a tension between versions of Odysseus that are not always in full congruence with each other; striving to present himself in heroic roles, for instance, Odysseus eventually adds imaginary facets to his adventures. In this context, Genette (201) remarks how Odysseus "lui-même est constamment dans une situation seconde: on parle sans cesse de lui devant lui sans le reconnaître." Although accustomed to following the image generated through the accounts told about him by others, he shifts into the position of story-teller at the palace of Alcinoös, revealing and proving his identity after having heard the praises sung by Demódokos. Such a narrative performance, catching up with and even enhancing his own image, will become crucial again in Ithaca when Odysseus is disguised as a wretched beggar and employs his cunning voice, though not to reveal his identity, but to keep it well-hidden from his enemies, his disloyal servants, and even his wife.

As much as the narrative performance at the King's court is a rehearsal for Odysseus's successful return, it is also already a reenactment of earlier role-plays in the

course of his actual travels. His adventures often involve linguistic trickery, most poignantly in the episode on the island of the Cyclops. Trapped, with the remainder of his crew, in the cave of the man-devouring, one-eyed Polyphemus, Odysseus immediately engages in a linguistic disguise the moment he has managed to get the monster drunk: "Noman is my name; Noman is what mother and father call me and all my friends" (*Odyssey* 100).[222] Not noticing the pun and mockery, the Cyclops takes this self-reference literally and shouts, after he has been blinded by Odysseus, "Noman is killing me by craft and not by main force" (101). Polyphemos's inability to see through his opponent's disguise, now reflected by the literal inscription of blindness, allows Odysseus and his crew to escape out of the cave and flee the Cyclops's island again. As soon as they are out at sea, in seemingly safe distance, Odysseus immediately discards his verbal masquerade and reveals his true name to the blinded, roaring monster. Thus, the now-remembered prophecy, once given by Telemos Eurymedês, "that I should lose my sight at the hands of Odysseus" (103), rings true for Polyphemos. And for Odysseus, it rings true that a disguise, even if only a linguistic one, "can never be shed without danger" (Murnaghan 177), for the enraged Cyclops blindly throws a huge stone after the ship, almost destroying the men after their successful escape.

Replicating this heroic act, which was accompanied by verbal disguise through his self-referential story-telling, the Greek traveller stylizes himself as a unique character worthy of the praise that preceeded him in the song of Demódokos. In *Over Prairie Trails*, Grove lays out a similar structure. His "Author's Preface" attempts a miniature self-portrait while explaining the motivation and reasons for designing the book. All of the seventy-two trips he made, the author stresses, "stand out in the vast array of memorable trifles that constitute the story of my life as among the most memorable ones" (OPT xiv). By stressing the role of memory and of story, Grove indicates that what is to follow are narratives, seven[223] tales that need to be treated by the reader with appropriate caution. In the context of hinting at the narrative enhancement that is to follow, he claims to be "naturally an outdoor creature" and that these drives "soon became what made my life worth living" (xiii; cf. 44). Not unlike

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[222] Most translators, like E.V. Rieu and Robert Fitzgerald, offer the translation "Nobody" instead of "Noman." In an essay titled "No Name is My Name", Kroetsch meditates on the potential of such a "nameless figure [who] may offer a plurality of identities" and concludes: "In a wilful misremembering of Homer's Odysseus we might say ambiguously, proudly, tauntingly, no name is *my* name." See LTW (52).

[223] It is no accident that Grove has condensed his seventy-two allegedly authentic trips into seven sketches: "Formulary number groupings," among which seven and three are the most popular, are "mnemonically helpful," as Walter J. Ong (70) asserts.

Odysseus with the Cyclops, he starts out with his audience in a similar "Noman-is-my-name" position, seeking, in the course of his tales, to blind his readers at least on one eye in order to make a name for himself.

The relation of the "Author's Preface" to the main part of *Over Prairie Trails* mirrors that of Demódokos's praise of Odysseus to the latter's own report of his heroic deeds. Homer's Phaiacian interlude has another corresponding aspect in Grove's central sketch, "Snow," though with the sequence of adventure and relaxation reversed. Due to a severe blizzard and a multitude of "disheartening words" (60) about weather and road conditions, Grove decides to postpone his regular weekend-return trip through the prairie from Gladstone to Falmouth, where wife and daughter live, till next morning. Invited by a well-wishing couple, an Anglican curate and his "radiantly amiable" wife, "about the only circle of real friends" in town (62-63), he spends Friday evening at their place with tea and supper. The host begins "to talk old country" before "stories of storms, of being lost, of nearly freezing" are exchanged for the pleasure of the present children. Finally, the narrator tells "one or two of [his] most thrilling escapes" (63). As with Odysseus at Alcinoös's palace, Grove's persona manages to both entertain his audience and secure their admiration; by telling stories and reminiscing about the past, fusing authentic events and fiction,[224] the narrator places himself in the tradition of the prototypal survivor, well aware that next morning, the biggest challenge is yet to come. That Homeric challenge will provide a marvelous opportunity for subsequent self-stylization as a hero through the act of writing.

The escape Grove manages must, as the reader is supposed to infer, surpass even the most thrilling of his previous escapes: "I knew that a supreme test was ahead of myself [. . .]." With his two horses, the author's persona covers more than sixty-eight miles in "inhospitable, merciless, and cruelly playful" (OPT 65-68) weather. In contrast to Odysseus, who even sleeps while being brought to Ithaca by the Phaiacians, the sea-trailing Grove-figure travels unassisted by a crew of human helpers, relying exclusively on his horses as well as his own will-power in this "troubled sea" (77). Peter and Dan are buried up to their heads in the snow, as if swimming rather than riding, and when they reach the crest of a snow-wave, Grove is surprised to realize that "what snapped and crackled under the horses's hoofs were the tops of trees." This instance, rather

[224] As part of his strategy to blur the lines between fact and fiction, Grove addresses the reader during a gloomy and rather incredible passage in the second essay: "In spite of my own uncertainty, I can assure you that this is only one-quarter a poem woven of impressions; the other three-quarters are reality" (OPT 41).

incredible from a physical point of view, affords him a "feeling of estrangement, as it were – as if I were not myself, but looking on from the outside at the adventure of somebody who yet was I" (86).

The narrator-character thematizes the slippage into an aside position from which he views himself as an author would do; earlier, during the dinner episode of "Snow," he had slipped from first- to third-person perspective by saying that his hosts take great care in "beguiling the hours of their dark-humoured guest" (63). Hence, if *Over Prairie Trails* reflects an awareness of inevitable incongruities between authorial self-image and projected narrator-hero, this can be related to Mikhail Bakhtin's examination of the author-hero relationship in the *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (1984). Bakhtin argues that "the hero interests Dostoevsky as a *particular point of view on the world and on oneself*, as the position enabling a person to interpret and evaluate his own self and his surrounding reality" (PD 47). Even if Dostoevsky attempts to treat the hero as an entity independent from himself, the similarity in Grove's book consists in that the latter utilizes his narrator-hero to explore versions of authorial selves in their New World environment. And in the process of doing that, the boundaries of author and hero constantly overlap.

This narrative endeavour becomes a *tour de force* in self-stylization. In "Snow," the Grove-as-Ulysees analogy makes the hero arrive home "a different man" to a waiting wife who asks him, "You had a hard trip?" With feigned cheerfulness, he responds: "I have seen sights today that I did not expect to see before my dying day" (90). The Homeric themes of transformation and of possibly estranged husband and wife are as well echoed here as a quotation from Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, "So foul and fair a day I have not seen" (50). The allusion to overvaulting ambition ending in death that characterizes Macbeth can be viewed as one of the many hints the author inserted about his former European existence and transfer to North America as part of a death-rebirth pattern. Along with these allusions and attributes, Grove ascribes to himself the roles of a new Adam in a "pre-Adamic" (72) environment,[225] of a teacher, good immigrant of strong nationalist feelings (14-15) and seemingly scientific observer, a doctor, astrologer, and animal charmer, experienced sailor, far-traveller and faithful,

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[225] Frye (*Anatomy* 319) discusses the related Christian and classical mythology: "Adam is, like Odysseus, a man of wrath, exiled from home because he angered God by going *hyper moron*, beyond his limit as a man." Cf. also Stanford's assertion "that in Homer's Odysseus there is a foreshadowing of men like Solon, Peisistratus, Themistocles, and Pericles, who [. . .] established the foundations of European civilization" (41f).

ever-returning husband and father. By an "incongruity of narrative perspectives" (Pache, "Greek to Us"), this composite of facets, constantly blending and superimposing on one another, amounts to a strange "cumulative self-portrayal" (Keith, "Re-Examination" 129) that resonates with mythic overtones. The result of Grove's multiple incarnations is a larger-than-life figure – more a (tragically) heroic type than a round, credible character.

Grove, as a narrator, constantly changes the perspectives on himself and on the world, and in "Fog" wonders "how much of what I seemed to divine rather than perceive was imagination and how much reality" (OPT 36). Similarly the narrator in Kroetsch's *The Studhorse Man* is an unreliable source of story-telling, but one rather in conflict with his object of narration, Hazard, and who inhabits a special position. For Demeter Proudfoot – a male thus named accidentally by his erring mother – sits naked in a bathtub[226] in a madhouse, purporting to tell the authentic story of his cousin, Hazard. But while the wandering hero on a double quest engages primarily in literal disguise, Demeter himself mocks this habit: "I too get dressed up – by taking off my clothes" (SHM 45). Although he is familiar with the concept of manipulating one's appearance – once, when approaching Hazard at a wedding, he wonders: "Should I disguise my true identity?" (111) – it is the manipulation of the story that Demeter is increasingly concerned with.

In reflecting upon the course of events leading to Hazard's death as well as on his own role this, Demeter looks out of the window in his bathroom-asylum through a mirror and arranges his index cards with quotations by the studhorse man. Both images – the mirror that provides a narrow reflection of reality the wrong way round, and the notes that give only limited access to the hero's life – underline the problem of the task he has set himself: to function as biographer[227] of his dead cousin. Musing over his ambition, Demeter unveils the ambivalancy of his approach when admitting to the need to "be interpretive upon occasion" (21). Not only does he confess to manipulating the facts; he insists on the impulse to create order and make sense out of an otherwise incoherent mass of information and speculation. Justifying himself, he goes into an elaborate version of psycho-linguistic disguise:

[226] Kroetsch likely had in mind the famous other bathtub philosophers, Diogenes (the cynic) and Archimedes.

[227] Freud offers a challenging opinion on this function: "Whoever undertakes to write a biography binds himself to lying, to concealment, to flummery, and even to hiding his own lack of understanding, since biographical material is not to be had.[. . .] Truth is not accessible." Qtd. in Kazin (74).

> I myself prefer an ordered world, even if I must order it through a posture of madness. It is the only sane answer to prevailing circumstances. I live amply off my nasty rich relatives who are embarrassed that I so much as exist. Because of their hypocrisy and pride and shame I am able to live regally.[. . .] And I have not worked a day of my life since that fateful summer of 1945. Because, you see, I prefer my studies and my privacy.
>
> Yes, dear reader, I am by profession quite out of my mind. (68)

Pretending to be only posing as mad, but believing to be sane while mocking official notions of madness, Demeter shows full awareness of addressing an audience. With his woman's name, he is not only "an androgynous figure who represents a sharp contrast to Hazard's assertive manhood" (Thieme, "Erotics" 98); he is a character-narrator who blends wisdom, foolishness, originality and unreliability, who increasingly layers his own story over Hazard's, oscillating between the self-imposed task of writing a biography, the irresistable temptation to produce an autobiography, and the possibility of mere fiction: "I had just recently [. . .] conceived the notion that I would write a few years hence a novel; Hazard was, I believe, flattered at the prospect of becoming a fictitious character" (SHM 136).[228]

Beyond compiling a biography on and writing a fiction about Hazard, Demeter moves towards centering the story on himself and takes over as the subject-matter of his own narration. The ultimate coup of his narrative performance is his becoming one with, and thus replacing, the rival of his love for Martha. This blurring of identities is prefaced by his ruminations on "the act of naming" that distinguishes man from animals: "They," he points out and thus enacts one of Kroetsch's artistic attempts at unnaming, "seem under no necessity to deny the fact that we are all, so to speak, one – that each of us is, possibly, everyone else –" (129-30). Demeter suggests the interchangeability of such elements through the relationship of Hazard and Poseidon; man and animal are inextricably linked. He becomes animal while whinnying in front of Marie Eshpeter, the animal becomes man through characterization, and the final cry in his death scene is half a horse's, half a man's. But the author goes farther: On some occasions, the "further collapse of separate identities" (Thieme, "Erotics" 99) makes those of Hazard and Demeter become confused, almost indistinguishable; (un)naming,

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[228]Thomas (62) speaks of "a fundamental confusion . . . about whether [SHM] is a biography (or 'history') of Hazard, as Demeter claims it to be, or something else." Beran (187) writes of the reader's "willing to speculate, with Demeter, about whether the story he purports to write is biography, autobiography, or fiction."

here, is of central importance: So it is Hazard who, while dressed as a priest, gets twice addressed as "Mr. Proudfoot" (SHM 64), and Demeter, who later claims: "That morning I was D. Proudfoot, Studhorse Man" (170). The temporary exchange of roles – at least in Demeter's version of the story – takes place when Hazard's question, "'Demeter? Is that you?'", is responded to: "'No. I am the man who breeds horses. Who are you?'" (176).

The narrator merging his identity with the story's actual – or supposed – hero is a facet that also characterizes *Over Prairie Trails*. For *The Studhorse Man*, Kroetsch has conceptualized "H[azard] as an extension / creation / wish-fulfilment of D.[emeter]," and has further noted a Jungian theory on one of his archive clippings: "split or double personality – complementary or compensatory relationship to the ego personality" (MsC 27.10.1). The (re)union of these split elements leads the storyteller to come up with a fractured autobiography, in which he repeatedly ironicizes his own role:

> The biographer is a person afflicted with sanity. He is a man who must first of all be sound of mind, and in the clarity of his own vision he must ride out the dark night, ride on while all about him falls into chaos. The man of the cold eye and the steady hand, he faces for all of humanity the ravishments and the terrors of existence. (SHM 165)

Not by accident does this passage resonate with allusions to *Over Prairie Trails*. Demeter's self-mockery (containing authorial irony) is reminiscent of the Grove-figure riding through chaos, following his own vision, along the lines of Demeter's definition of a biographer. Grove's narrator cannot escape the psycho-biographical impulse of his travels, prefaced by the "Author's Note" in poignant words: "I disliked the town – the town disliked me [and, at school,] there was friction in the staff" (OPT xiii). In the following seven sketches, the narrator named Grove does everything to present himself as a likeable and simultaneously very distinct man: in one of the roles he inhabits, he writes of the necessity of doing "this nation's work" in terms of colonizing Canada, labelling "this backwoods bushland [that he inhabits] God's own earth and second only to paradise" (14-15), recalling the image of the new Adam again; in another role, charting and claiming his travelling territory, he appears to represent its essence to the reader as a quasi-biography of nature that slides over into poetological expression:

> Underbrush everywhere, mostly symphoricarpus, I thought. Large trunks loomed up, charred with forest fires; here and there a round, white or light-grey stone,

> ghostly in the waning light, knee-high, I should judge. Once I passed the skeleton of a stable – the remnant of the buildings put up by a pioneer settler who had to give in after having wasted effort and substance and worn his knuckles to the bones. The wilderness uses human material up. . . . (10-11)

In his pose, the protagonist is far from being 'sober' and scientific but leans towards a poetic transformation of this space, shaping images of a prairie that is suited to his particular needs. In addition to that, he ends his miniature description with a philosophical summary, thus shifting already into his next role as philosopher. These slippages are characteristic for a book that frequently moves from natural descriptions to a narrator's pseudo-autobiography behind which one is supposed to view the author Grove – or "the ghost [that is his] hidden identity which he cleverly dramatizes" (Stich, "Extravagant Expression" 163). The surplus or transgressive quality of the multiple roles reflected by this figure has its equivalent in a blending of different generic elements. As a text, *Over Prairie Trails* fuses travelogue and memoir, nature sketches and survival manual, confession and exercise book.

Such generic indeterminacy also marks *The Studhorse Man*. Similar to the narrator named Grove, the storyteller Demeter engages in both potent and irrational narrative performances that may fool and betray the story, reader, and even himself, and also cause the boundaries of genre and identity to blur. His narrative acts are unable to capture the elusive hero Hazard or come up with a reliable self-portrait, render questionable any notion of representing subjectivity in language. Demeter is as deceptively disguised as his 'extension' Hazard is, not in spite of, but *because* he sits completely naked in his bathtub and can pretend at naïveté and innocence, claiming to be telling the truth.[229] Narration is all performance with Demeter, a tricky act in and of language that urges readers to enter the game of questing for a (biographical) subject and for a (subjective) autobiography. His playfulness as an ironic reflection of authorial power is part of a complex layering of (split) personalities that Beran (187) refers to as "the trickster Kroetsch behind the trickster Demeter behind the trickster Hazard." Kroetsch has deliberately linked himself with the author in the book by giving him the same age: "Demeter: born 1927 [–] in 1945 he is 18 [–] in 1967 he is 40" (MsC 27.10.1).

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[229]When I suggested this possibility of Demeter being disguised by or in his very nakedness, Kroetsch commented: "That's right on. And then, connected with our social notions of madness . . ." (Maze ix).

This overlapping and interplay of the figures of Hazard, Demeter, and Kroetsch bears resemblance with the revolutionary narrative technique Bakhtin has attributed to Dostoevsky: "he transferred the author and the narrator [. . .] into the field of vision of the hero himself, thus transforming the finalized and integral reality of the hero into the material of the hero's own self-consciousness" (PD 49). In Grove's *Over Prairie Trails*, a similar technical approach seems to be happening: Although a persona can be distinguished from an outside authorial figure named Grove, the narrator who becomes, repeatedly, the hero in this book never loses sight of his artistic creator; the self-consciousness of the hero appears as the author's look on himself and on the world. In Kroetsch's novel, however, this transfer of narrative power can only come about by Demeter's trying to take over the heroic position from Hazard. The resulting narrative force and playfulness present consciousnesses, in a typically postmodern fashion, in a "labyrinth of author pretending he is not there, character pretending he is a real person and the author who insists his work is history and biography while the reader seems, in addition, to be reading the narrator's autobiography in the author's novel" (Beran 186).

The wanderings, disguise and narrative performances of Odysseus have much to offer for other heroes. The ability to pursue his strategies accounts for Odysseus's enormous and timeless appeal, which W.B. Stanford has summed up:

> To watch, with awareness of his cleverness, a clever person at work is one of the most entertaining and instructive spectacles in life and art. Some may watch with admiration, some with dislike; some with a desire to imitate, some with an instinct to shout to the victims of his cleverness, 'Look out, he's tricking you!' As life and literature evolve from folk-society to higher forms of civilization, men's reactions to cleverness, intelligence, prudence, wisdom – whatever it may come to be called – will change. But the fascination of watching 'brains', *nous*, at work, for good or evil, will remain. And what audiences enjoy, professional writers will naturally produce. (244-45)

Odysseus may well be, as Charles Boer puts it, "the most important psychopath in Greek mythology" (ix), but his appeal, as the two Canadian adaptations demonstrate in different terms, has been undiminished into the late 20th century. Whereas Grove would want to claim both the Homeric narrative exclusiveness and the heroic extravaganza of Odysseus for himself as author and protagonist, Kroetsch makes a divergent use of heroic model and narrative technique. *Over Prairie Trails*, in which narrative perspectives are incongruent and generic boundaries transgressed, "departs not only

from convential concepts of reality but also from traditional modes of experience and of literary expression" (Pache, "Greek to Us"). In a multiplicity of roles, particularly that of Odysseus, Grove rides / writes over some of the trails laid out by the classic text and transfers them onto the prairie, shaping and bending them to his purpose, de/touring into his own narrative of heroic survival and return in a character-landscape emptied of human beings. He does all that through incessant acts of primarily linguistic (dis)guises and stunts, showing language to be a dress for thoughts, intentions and projections. The resulting complex persona – here deliberately congruent in name with the author – is as much the prototype for Grove's further New World personae as the book itself is for him a source of regained artistic vision and of a courage to tread new literary ground.[230]

In contrast to Grove's construction of a monomaniacal character-narrator named Grove, Kroetsch's innovative *The Studhorse Man* opposes a wandering hero who is given to literal disguise with his alleged biographer – and hero-rival – whose acts of story-telling call into question both the book's characters and its very genre. Within this constellation, Hazard's "disguise typifies his trickster-like subversion of the symbols of Western Canadian authority" (Thieme, "Erotics" 96). Like an Odysseus, he moves through the space of the mythical sea-like Prairies,[231] but has been foretold that "*La mer sera votre meutrière*" (SHM 14). Although "becoming a parody of Canadian history and the English-Canadian rationalization" (MsC 27.10.2), he simultaneously reflects Kroetsch's nostalgia for a time and space of the Prairies lost, for the hero figure of protean qualities must die his death for being anachronistic. Hazard's quest and tragic end are chronicled by Demeter, the unreliable and naked story-teller who performs an elaborate narrative disguise and asks, "Is the truth of the man in the man or in his biography?" (SHM 145). In the process of pursuing his biography's subject, Demeter not only resembles Telemachus – Odysseus's son, who searches for his father and helps to restore order on Ithaca – but at the same time rivals Hazard to take over the role of alternative hero. In so doing, Demeter both realizes the impossibility of an accurate biography and contributes to the untimely death of Hazard, the last of the studhorse men.

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[230] Makow suggests that writing *Over Prairie Trails* in the fall of 1919 marked for its author a kind of "rebirth" and the "recovery of creative power" ("Letters from Eden" 107). Grove's first Canadian publication already carries in it the germs for his first novel: "There hangs a story by this house," his persona writes about what he calls the "White Range Line House," adding: "Maybe I shall one day tell it...." (OPT 11). In 1925, that story would be published as *Settlers of the Marsh*. See also Chapter 3.2 and Makow (120).

[231] The book cites the Canadian motto, *a mari usque ad mare*.

Chapter 4.2

The New World Dressing-Room: Vested Quests for Self from *A Search for America* to *Gone Indian*

> The frontier is the line of most rapid and effective Americanization. The wilderness masters the colonist. It finds him a European in dress, industries, tools, modes of travels, and thought. It takes him from the railroad car and puts him in the birch canoe. It strips off the garments of civilization, and arrays him in the hunting shirt and the moccasin.
>
> Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History"

> We can discover the other in ourselves, realize we are not a homogeneous substance, radically alien to whatever is not us: as Rimbaud said, *Je est un autre*. But *others* are also *"I"s:* subjects just as I am, whom only my point of view – according to which all of them are *out there* and I alone am *in here* – separates and authentically distinguishes from myself. I can conceive of these others as an abstraction, as an instance of any individual's psychic configuration, as the Other – other in relation to myself, to *me*; or else as a specific social group to which *we* do not belong. This group in turn can be interior to society: women for men, the rich for the poor, the mad for the "normal"; or it can be exterior to society, i.e., another society which will be near or far away, depending on the case: beings whom everything links to me on the cultural, moral, historical plane; or else unknown quantities, outsiders whose language and customs I do not understand, so foreign that in extreme instances I am reluctant to admit they belong to the same species as my own.
>
> Tzvetan Todorov, *The Conquest of America. The Question of the Other*

> 'twas but a foolish quest,
> The which to gain and keep, he sacrificed all rest.
>
> Lord Byron, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* [Voice discussing Jean-Jacques Rousseau]

Grove's *A Search for America* (1927) and Kroetsch's *Gone Indian* (1973) have never been subjected to a detailed critical comparison. On the surface, they may appear different. The former text is long and episodic, mediated by a self-indulgent, first-person narrator named Phil Branden and spiced by its creator with supposedly autobiographical hints, while the latter is short and seemingly fragmented, has an intrusive narrator in opposition to an emancipative young protagonist called Jeremy Sadness, and is characterized by postmodern playfulness that demands an active reader. If this chapter examines, among other things, the latter novel as a deliberate reaction to, and subversive parody of, the earlier text, there is good reason for that: Kroetsch, reflecting the respective writing process, admits that "Grove and *A Search* were very

much on my mind at the time because I was thinking of changed identities."[232] In fact, the correspondences between both books begin with – and go far beyond – the shared structural motif of the journey to or through the New World as a search for self. "Quest," as Christine Arkinstall asserts, "partakes of a necessarily symbiotic relationship with travel" – and she adds "Luce Irigaray's words, 'one does not move without the other'" (3).

Both books engage their protagonists in many encounters with the figure of the Other: As an extension of this approach and to the same effect of outlining and problematizing the respective heroes's identity, the texts detail exactly what it is that the questers *travel with*, or *towards*, or *from* – be that cultural inheritance, a personal philosophy, literal and literary companions and opponents, the will of a father, a longing for the old home or dream of the new (and supposedly edenic) place. The most prominent of these identity-reflecting aspects is the variety of garments that either hero uses, finds, keeps and discards in the course of his transformative travels through North America. The clothing motif, inseparably linked to that of the journey, plays a crucial role for Phil and Jeremy. Disguise, in particular, shapes and characterizes the two texts and heroes; it "lies everywhere in [Grove's] book," W.H. New (Afterword 462) argues accordingly, while Aritha van Herk reasons that "layers of disguise are [in Kroetsch's novel] taken to their ultimate extreme" ("Biocritical Essay" xxvi). With this emphasis on clothing and on changing appearances for the questing figures, the New World becomes a dressing-room in which different versions of self are discovered and tried on.

The New World did function as a dressing-room for the immigrant author and con-man himself, Grove.[233] After its publication, *A Search for America* was hailed as a new kind of writing that eluded generic classification but presented to the reader *The Odyssey of an Immigrant* as a blend of imaginative and factual composition which suggests an autobiographical dimension. Hence, Phil, the travelling protagonist who seems to start out as a European tourist but is escaping from a past of posing among the high society and is now impoverished and roaming North America in search of his own place, was readily connected with his Canadianized creator, FPG;[234] this approach was

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[232] Robert Kroetsch, E-mail to the author, 10 August 2000.

[233] See, for example, another comment by Robert Kroetsch, E-mail to the author, 10 August 2000: "Grove as a lesson in how to begin a new life in the New World."

[234] The history of the book's reception – especially in regard to the autobiographical dimension – has undergone transformations not unlike those thematized by its very plot. For reviews of the late 1920s, see Pacey (*Frederick Philip Grove* 117-129); see also Grove's comment in his "Author's Note to the Fourth Edition (1939)," stating "that every event in the story was lived through;" he further stresses that

certainly facilitated by the fact that "metaphors of self-creation are interwoven with metaphors of national identity" (Gammel, "'Americanization'" 131) in both the book and the author's public talks. Kroetsch, who sees Grove as "an icon of change,"[235] has twisted his forefather's serious attempt at sending the reader on an autobiographical search into a tease: R. Mark Madham, the intrusive narrator of *Gone Indian*, has the same address that the author had while writing the book and teaching at Binghamton, New York. In addition, it is Madham who, in his capacity of supervisor, sends Jeremy Sadness from New York into Canada's northwest, where his doctoral student should get interviewed for a job. Instead, Jeremy reaches "beyond the frontier of ordinary reality" (Florby, *Margin Speaks* 54), to the place where, according to F.J. Turner's assertion, "the bonds of custom are broken, and unrestraint is triumphant." ("Frontier" 228).[236] By entering the imaginary and carnivalesque Albertan landscape of Notikeewin, Sadness seeks both liberation from the oppressions of academic life in the (American) East and initiation into a more open, non-categorized sense of identity.

It is this notion of transition – and not so much of autobiography[237] – that is the focus of this chapter. Textualizing this idea of the changing or protean self with the aid of the clothing metaphor, *A Search for America* and *Gone Indian* cast their questing figures into patterns that are supposed either to resemble (Grove) or subvert (Kroetsch) the traditional initiatic journey.[238] What Margaret Stobie describes for Branden's experience as "the passage from the world of Innocence to the world of Experience" (*Frederick Philip Grove* 68) may well be problematized by the world of Sadness, in which a Borgesian notion of reality as a construct goes hand in hand with a Bakhtinian

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"imaginative literature, good or bad, is necessarily at once both fact and fiction; [. . .] it is concerned with truth" (ASA 459). Then, when FPG published his 'official autobiography', *In Search of Myself* (1946), those critics influenced by Pacey's monograph (1945) began to ascribe more credibility to the latter work, reviewing the former as a basically fictional complement. Recently, however, *A Search* has proven more factually accurate and 'psychologically true' than hitherto assumed, e.g., in regard to FPG's passage from Liverpool to Montreal on a White Star Liner (see Divay, "Grove's Passage").

[235] Robert Kroetsch, closing remarks, *In Memoriam FPG Conference* (Winnipeg: Dept. of German and Slavic Studies, University of Manitoba, 2 October 1998). Videotape.

[236] The full quotation from Turner's "The Significance of the Frontier in American History" (1893) figures as motto in Kroetsch's book: "For a moment, at the frontier, the bonds of custom are broken and unrestraint is triumphant" (228). In *Gone Indian*, the motto serves as a guideline and gets transformed into a typically Canadian quest by exposing the self to the carnivalesque landscapes of the exterior and interior.

[237] However tempting or justified it may be to approach Grove's *A Search for America* primarily as an autobiographical text – as Gammel, Heidenreich or Divay have done with success and surprising results – the book will be treated here as fiction.

[238] The four parts ("books") of Grove's *A Search for America* have the telling titles "Descent, Relapse, Depths, Level." According to W.H. New (Afterword: 467), they "allude to the standard stages of progress in quest romances, during which the young quester characteristically survives his trials, overcomes his enemies, marries his bride, and comes into his kingdom."

carnival, its upsetting of hierarchies and "a *new mode of interrelationship between individuals*" (Bakhtin PD: 123). Therefore, while reading their multiple (dis)guises biographically, the exploration of the figures's searches will be structured according to the three stages of a rite of passage: exit / departure from one state of being, experiences of transformation and transition, and entrance into / arrival at a new state of being.[239]

I. Points of Departure: Poses, Overcoats, (Exchanged) Suitcases

In the opening paragraph of *A Search for America*, the first-person narrator begins by mentioning his transatlantic passage from Liverpool to Montreal at the age of twenty-four, which lies three decades in the past.[240] He then looks even further backwards and outlines his intensive training and study of the English language and literature, from the influence of his Scottish mother and his father, a rather anglophile Swede. With this hybrid background, Phil can indulge in a first critical retrospection:

> For many years previous to my emigration, I, too, had affected English ways in dress and manners; occasionally, when travelling in Sweden or in the countries bordering on the Mediterranean, I had connived at being taken for an Englishman. I am afraid, if I could meet myself as I then was, I should consider my former self as an insufferable snob and coxcomb. (ASA 11)

This self-evaluation marks the end of the first paragraph. Already at this early stage, the reader expects a complex account of self-presentation and radical metamorphosis to follow, a "discrimation of fact and fiction, of truth and falsehood" (Keith, "Grove's Search" 58); to underline its extent, the author's persona relates that he had been "deeply ensconed in artificial poses [and declared] the invariably best-dressed man" (ASA 12). His father, Charles Edward Branden had not only passed this initial sense of performance on to his son "during a lifetime in disguise"; he had also, during their last talk before his untimely death, expressed a "long[ing] to drop all pretence" and the need

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239 Arnold van Gennep (*The Rites of Passage*; 1909) was the first to define critically this initiation and speaks of a universal pattern characterized by the three categories separation, transition, and reincorporation. Peter Freese (*Die Inititiationsreise*; 1971) subsumes these categories as "Ausgang, Übergang und Eingang" (153).

240 Later in the text, Branden speaks of looking back "over a gulf of three decades" (ASA 117). Cf. the "Author's Note" from 1926, in which FPG claims: "This book, during the last thiry-two years, has been written and rewritten eight times, becoming a little shorter every time." Thus setting the book's action in 1893-94, he does not fail to acknowledge related "anachronisms" (ASA: vi).

for "shaking off ill-fitting clothes" (18; 15; 17). Having learned of his father's death and suddenly finding himself without further financial support, Phil's "state of mind was Byronic" (19), a disposition characterized by melancholy, contempt for the cultural and moral values of Europe, and a narcissistic comtemplation of one's own individuality by indulging in loneliness, restlessness, and weariness of life. As an incentive towards pilgrimage or emigration, this Byronic disposition had urged Phil to travel from Stockholm via Denmark to Hamburg and then to England, where he had decided to take the next boat that would go into any of the major outposts of the British Empire, thus buying, at Cook's tourist office, his passage for Canada.

With this ambivalent paternal and cultural inheritance, Phil arrives in the New World. Bringing with himself "fourteen pieces of luggage, with half a dozen overcoats on [his] arm and a camera," he feels "incongruous and out of place" (24) in Montreal. His passage from the Old World has not yet eased him of a desire for elegant self-presentation or of the habit of putting on airs and "keep[ing] his mask intact" (25). He needs to convince the customs offical that he "was not bringing all these clothes into the country in order to open a haberdasher's shop, but for personal wear" (25). On the train to Toronto (taken rather by chance), Phil reminisces about 'his' great European cities – London, Paris and Rome – that represent big dressing-rooms in which he could cultivate his role of a dandy. He also remembers having "studied a guide-book for tourists on the American continent" (27).[241] Whereas his elaborate wardrobe reflects a performative sense of identity passed on by his father, Phil's travel-book memories further symbolize his problematic relation to self-knowledge: as Roland Barthes has convincingly demonstrated in the case of the French *Blue Guide*, such books tend to function as "an agent of blindness," preventing the traveller from uninhabitedly observing his environment or from becoming part of it (*Mythologies* 76). As a young immigrant given primarily to appearance, to the ignorance and ideology of the culturally, but not socially, educated, Phil has to learn how to discover the 'real' America if he wants to succeed in his quest: "to found a home and an atmosphere for myself" (ASA 20). As is typical for the first phase of a rite of passage, Phil has been separated from a previously fixed point in the social structure. His real departure into a new existence has just begun; he is on the train, in motion.

[241] Gaby Divay speaks of "a much worn 1909 Baedeker travel guide to the United States in Grove's library" which helped shape the account of Branden; the library copy "has numerous markings in the New York pages" ("Grove's Passage" 125).

In *Gone Indian*, the hero's journey of transformative encounters is framed in a different way. The book opens with a letter by Professor Madham, who forwards his edited, manipulated version of the reports his student Jeremy Sadness had sent from out west before vanishing mysteriously with Bea Sunderman, the mother of addressee Jill Sunderman. The retrospective she reads is thus a hybrid of Sadness's first-person account (spoken on tape in the West) and Madham's intrusive commentaries as a rival narrative (transcribed in the East) layered over the original.[242]

Kroetsch's parody of the traditional quest motif and of the narrative of the western picaro is a book about the departure for and discovery of the New World. Just as much as "New York was a mere bridgehead of Europe in the western hemisphere" for Phil Branden (ASA 172), so Jeremy's birthplace Manhattan represents a strong connection with the Old World tradition and inheritance he needs to escape from: an odd mix of father figures and telling names. His biological father, a sailor or mock-Odysseus, wanted him "to grow up [. . .] to be a professor" (GI 52) and named him after Jeremy Bentham, the English philosopher, economist, theoretical jurist and critic of institutions famous for his investigative mind and for being an icon of permanence.[243] Jeremy's first surrogate father, a little tailor, often lent him the books of Grey Owl, Canada's best known icon of change besides Frederick Philip Grove. Originally George (or: Archie) Stansfeld Belaney, born 1888 in Hastings, England, Grey Owl "'died into a new life'" (GI 62) when he adopted a new identity by creating a legend about a non-existent Indian origin.[244] Having first tried to follow the model of Bentham by attempting a stable professional academic career, Jeremy finds himself increasingly attracted to Belaney's radical transformation; influenced by both role models, he feels the urge to quest for external and internal space, to conquer land and mind. Influenced too much by his second father-surrogate, Professor Madham, however, Sadness fails miserably to unite

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242 Correlatively, John Clement Ball ("Framing" 39) underlines the Canadian-American power-relationship and speaks of Madham's attempts at "reconstituting Jeremy's actions as a U.S.-based narrative."

243 Bentham, after his death in 1832, had his body dissected and then reconstructed, with a wax head to replace the mummified original. He can still be seen sitting in a glass display case with his head at his feet in University College, London – "All of him attired in his accustomed clothes" GI (51).

244 See *The Oxford Companion to Canadian Literature* (92-93). Cf. also Thieme ("Snow Business" 214; fn. 6): "Belaney [. . .] went to Canada in 1906. There he associated with the Ojibwa, married an Iroquois wife and, claiming in the first of his books, *The Men of the Last Frontier* (1931), that he was the son of a Scot and an Apache, began calling himself Grey Owl. In 1931 he began lecturing on conservation. In the same year he went to live in Western Canada where he wrote [his autobiography, *Pilgrims of the Wild* (1934), and three more books]. His true identity was only discoverd after his death in 1938."

or break his dualistic ambition as a student.[245] He is unable to write his dissertation – an attempt to explain the world through the very concept of the quest itself – has a long list of aborted titles and, as "[p]art of the Ph.D. syndrome" (35), cannot have an erection while lying down. The radical consequence for him would be to act out and experience what he cannot write about, to encounter, both externally and internally, the frontier and the transformation that his academically textualized mind cannot possibly afford him.

The decisive stimulus for Jeremy's transgression of both his intellectual and physical malaise comes from his supervisor, who has arranged a job interview for him in Edmonton. Although "saddled with a quest and an identity not his own" (Snyder 3), Jeremy ventures into the Canadian West, "governed by some deep American need to seek out the frontier" (GI 5). Already at Edmonton International Airport, he has his first frontier experience and initiation into the complex confusion of identities that marks the book's entire personage: his suitcase is exchanged for an identical one belonging to Roger Dorck, who owns a book titled *The Consolidated Rules of Court*, which could well have been written by Jeremy Bentham. Questioned by the customs official about the purpose of his trip, Sadness pronounces, "'I want to be Grey Owl'" but then cannot even remember his own name (6-7).

His mind temporarily a *tabula rasa*, and his original suitcase in the hands of Roger Dorck, his *alter ego*, Jeremy is deprived of his usual identity-accessoires. In an airport cubicle, where he and "the world's most beautiful blonde" have to undress, he witnesses how the blonde "takes off her tits." Unmasked as the man 'she' actually is, the transvestite also claims to have been a buffalo in "a previous existence" (9). Kroetsch makes the first allusion to the shamanistic principle[246] underlying his novel with Jeremy's comment: "This is a peculiar land.[. . .] Illusion is rife" (8). Sadness not only experiences his sexual other as being quite different from what he at first perceived;

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[245]Jeremy describes a scene where he leans "against a large bookcase, studying titles. *Wanderings of an Artist. The Double Hook. A Jest of God*" (GI 52). The very titles reflect his internal dualism and simultaneously testify to the author's own occupation with binaries; see, especially, "Death Is a Happy Ending: A Conversation in Thirteen Parts," where Robert Kroetsch and Diane Bessai discuss Watson's *Double Hook*, which for Kroetsch epitomizes the "total ambiguity that is so essentially Canadian" (215). With reference to Kroetsch's own effort to break free from this dominating binary structure (often not understood by the critics), J.R. Snyder (8) contributes an important assertion: "Kroetsch's position is not that we live in a dualistic, dichotomized world, but that the human mind seeks dualistic structures and easily assimilated binary oppositions."

[246] Thomas attributes central importance to this principle in Kroetsch's works. "Shamanism," he writes, "unlocks the unconscious images of a land where the interior world must be affirmed against the boundlessness of the outer." He further notes "Kroetsch's shift away from [the] referential Graeco-Roman myths to the individualistic descent and return of the shaman [who] embodies the comedy of survival in the place of absence, where the dead have few *evidences*" (78).

supported by his own temporary nakedness, he has begun to understand the illusory nature of appearances. And, symbolized by his stripping down naked and by losing his ID, he has – already *before* leaving the airport as a signifier of departure or exit – entered a liminal state between past and future identities. The carnivalesque encounters at the "labyrinthine airport" initiate Jeremy into his gradual metamorphosis towards his own other(s):

> I climb into my woollen longjohns. I put on my faded blue denim shirt. I pull on my red lumberjack socks, my levis and my beaded moccasins with their felt innersoles.
>
> Carefully, I arrange my two braids, stretch the red woollen cap down to but not over my ears, give a tug to the tassel. And now I slip into my fringed buckskin jacket.
>
> I've made a decision. I shall walk out of this place. I shall bravely, recklessly, escape from this suffocating dungeon: DISGUISED AS MYSELF (11)

The conscious choice and application of dress marks the beginning of Sadness's liberation into "the unknown" (10) – even if he starts out with a hybrid appearance that mixes white man's casual workwear with Indian aspects. That he "considers his own public self a disguise underscores the distinction between perceived self and the unconcluded self or selves concealed by that presence" (Snyder 9); but this 'disguise' also reflects his being on the way towards a new sense of self through a series of identity changes. For his current sense of personality, the Indian-like apparel that imitates his idol, Grey Owl, is an appropriate dress. The cubicle at the airport, entered in order to have his identity checked, becomes the dressing-room that launches Jeremy into his New World. He abandons the idea of the job interview, seizes the suitcase that is not his, and steps out to phone after its owner, Roger Dorck.

II. Discovering North America: Ideal versus Experience, or Self versus Other

For Sadness, the middle phase of a rite of passage partly coincides with the first phase: stripping off all manifestations of rank or role at the airport accompanies his exit from the old state of being. Grove does not cast his persona Phil into such a subversive pattern of initiation, but sends his ritual subject through a progressive, albeit episodic, series of encounters while journeying through North America. Their beginning is

unmistakeably symbolized by heading a train.[247] Going from Montreal to Toronto, Phil meets the first of many mirror images, representations of what he could become or has been, in the figure of the American worker Bennett. Misjudging, from his inherited position of superiority, this man because of "the apparel of a poorly-paid clerk," Phil experiences a temporary reversal of social roles when the American labels him "green" and "me boy" and prompts Phil to answer "sir" (ASA 29ff). Learning from that money-making should not be a problem, however, Phil immediately feels elated and superior again: "My clothing, I counted, would last me for years without renewing.[. . .] I, with my education, my knowledge of the world, of languages, countries – with my appearance" (35).

Phil's sense of self is synonymous with his appearance; clothing, style, conduct are identity attributes that have essential status. He keeps carrying his Old World habits and attitudes around and on him in elaborate dresses. The immigrant still needs "to strip his culture-*riche* appreciation of luxury to an unaffected sense of essential values" (Stich, "Extravagant Expression" 157). After a week at Toronto, he has not been able to secure work and begins to wonder "that my appearance – among other things the plainly old-country cut of my suits – stood in the way of my success" (ASA 38).

The implications of self-representation that Phil only dimly suspects have been outlined one century ago by the Norwegian immigrant Thorstein Veblen.[248] Arguing that "our apparel is always in evidence and affords an indication of our pecuniary standing to all observers at the first glance," Veblen further maintains that for power-conscious people, dress "should not only be expensive, but it should also make plain to all observers that the wearer is not engaged in any kind of productive labour.[. . .] Elegant dress [. . .] is the insignia of leisure" (167; 170f). He underlines the sense of wastefulness expressed by such fanciful garments, and exposes them as an emblem of human vanity, laziness, arrogance and high-brow attitudes. Fashion, in his view, seduces wealthy men and women to produce and stylize themselves on the stage of public life.

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[247] Gammel ("'Americanization'" 137) argues that from "an ironic perspective, the narrator evokes the railroad as an icon of power and movement."

[248] In *The Theory of the Leisure Class: An Economic Study of Institutions* (1899), Veblen applies Darwin's evolutionism to the study of modern economic life. He describes the ruling business men as survivors from a predatory barbarian past who are concerned with making money and displaying their wealth. His book focuses on, besides sports, religion and amusements, "dress as an expression of the pecuniary culture," and has coined, correlatively, the term "conspicuous consumption" (167-187).

Phil, without knowing it, represents the criticized ruling class. In the New World, his elaborate wardrobe reflects the insignia of leisure and active exploitation Veblen identifies with certain types of clothing. His appearance serves to distinguish and distance him from his social others when he should need to resemble them both visibly and psychologically. He holds on to the Old World notion of dress as an indicator of desirable social status, not seeing that in North America, the less spectacular and more casual tastes of the lower classes are governing model.[249] With stubborn blindness – still in the way of a Baedeker-guided tourist – Phil engages in a reevaluation of his former life in the Old World: "No matter how miserable I might – in Europe – have felt in my innermost heart, the mere deference shown by 'subordinates' to my appearance, my bearing, and my clothes would have kept up the pretence of a certain superiority" (ASA 40).

His lament and nostalgia are of no help in the New World, where Phil will have to start at the other end of the social spectrum by being inferior and servile. His first partly purging experience is structured according to the *descensus ad infernos* that represents a major form of initiation.[250] Applying as a waiter in Toronto but not being accepted affords him the "feeling of hopelessly sliding down into the bottomless void"; when he finally works at Johnson's Café, a "beastly place," he has to enter an "underground cave" to change into his newly bought waiter's outfit, and he compares his job to "Hell on Earth" (44; 45; 55; 68). Phil does well, soon rates second-best among the waiters, only surpassed by Frank, a con-man and grafter, one of the many foils against which the protagonist can prove his moral superiority. In spite of his relative success, Phil directs criticism at his colleagues: "The fact that my clothes, if nothing else, bespoke at least different tastes and a different origin, did not seem to penetrate their consciousness" (71). While demanding of them to perceive his difference and otherness – thus to acknowledge his superiority signified by dress – he does nothing more than categorize his colleagues (Frank and Ella excepted) as stereotypical workers and accuses them of looking down on him socially. When Phil does not get the promotion as head-waiter that he was rumoured to get, he leaves. His older self, in retrospect, describes this job "as something which you might do in disguise" (118), as if the

[249] Horst Immel (75) reasons: "In der Alten Welt diente die Kleidung zur Kennzeichnung der sozialen Herkunft und Schichtenzugehörigkeit. In Nordamerika wird selbst die feinste Garderobe nicht als Ausweis eine höhreren gesellschaftlichen Position oder besonderer Autorität angesehen."

[250] Freese (154f; 138-142) describes as the "wesentlichen Versinnbildlichungen des Inititiationsvorganges in seiner Gesamtheit [. . .] a. der *regressus ad uterum*, b. der *descensus ad infernos*, c. die Nachtmeerfahrt."

younger Phil had stopped to use his manipulative garments at the moment of quitting waiterdom.

The Inferno episode in Toronto marks an ambivalent passage for Grove's hero: "I was and was not the same. I had gone through what, for me, was a tremendous experience; it had changed my attitude towards life" (120). His symbolical descent to the realm of death should be a prerequisite for immortality or further heroic deeds as well as personal development. The course of his self-consciously labelled 'Americanization', a process in which he tries to test "the American ideal against the American experience" (Keith, "Grove's Search" 57), will have to prove the validity of his *descensus* episode; what he has not been purged of is his affinity for dress and disguise.

Compared to this, the change of Sadness is expressed in the ironic counter-movement of 'going Indian' that also involves subversive descent scenes in the death-rebirth pattern. 'Disguised as himself,' he becomes part of the American experience quickly, gets a lift to Notikeewin during the winter carnival season and is already mistaken for somebody else by the driving cowboy. Heading for Roger Dorck's office to exchange their suitcases, Jeremy finds Jill Sunderman instead, a young woman who is "creating *him*" out of his own suitcase by contemplating his garments and his dissertation notebooks. When she reads the final comment on the last page, scribbled by somebody else, "THIS, THEN, IS HOW IT ENDED," Jeremy turns away and leaves his suitcase unclaimed. Resisting the version of self that Jill, his other, saw reflected in the contents of his suitcase, he leaves behind his unfinished dissertation and the multitude of aborted titles, buys himself some food, a shaving set, and then "new socks, new shorts, a heavy sweater [and] three red handkerchiefs" (20-24).

The addition of special clothing and accoutrements to his Indian outfit as well as the alteration of his body by way of shaving signify a successful passage of ordeals for Jeremy. This is also expressed by his seeing Dorck, his *alter ego*, lying comatose in the hospital, and by repeatedly going through doorways, both at the hospital and at Bea Sunderman's house, which bears the unusual title, "WORLDS END." Led into a spacious bedroom inside this "imprisoned garden" (31), he dozes off into a deep

dream.[251] He has already begun to take the place of Bea's lover Roger Dorck, and that replacement will be repeatedly demanded by the entire community Sadness has entered.

When Jeremy is taken to Elkhart pond by a little boy and Jill for a snowmobile race the next morning, he has an accident, flies high through the air, and is then buried under the snow: "I was drowning in snow that yielded to my arms, closed over my head. I made no effort to stroke my way back to the surface. I gave up the ghost. But some idiot took me by the heels and pulled me back into the blinding light" (40). Through his parody of the symbolical death-and-rebirth motif, Kroetsch not only lets Jeremy get drowned *and* buried under snow in one scene, but further reinforces the *doppelgänger* motif by having him reenact Roger Dorck's fatal accident with the difference that Jeremy comes back to consciousness. As the novel is structured around repetitions, he soon undergoes another symbolical rebirth by almost drowning: in her apartment, another (un)dressing-room, Jill pushes him under water in the bathtub twice, trying to tease him into sexual action afterwards, which he escapes.

Jeremy's consciousness has a lot of work figuring out what identity belongs to him. The dissertation he keeps failing to produce is an appropriate expression of that, encapsulated in a list of aborted thesis titles. The first three reveal both his own as well as the author's thematic concern with *motifs* of identity and metamorphosis and with "the necessity of [. . .] self-creation in language" (Turner, "Endings" 60): "Going Down With Orpheus" – "The Artist as Clown and Pornographer" – "The Columbus Quest: The Dream, the Journey, the Surprise" (GI 62). Of these themes, the Columbus quest will not cease to occupy Jeremy, the reader or author, as the book has an elaborate Columbus intertext. "We are all direct descendants of Columbus," Tzvetan Todorov asserts in his paradigmatic view of the intrusion of Old into New World, "it is with him that our genealogy begins, insofar as the word *beginning* has a meaning" (*Conquest* 5). For Jeremy, this genealogical recurrence is both paradigmatic and problematic beginning, since he is still somewhat trapped in old-fashioned, fictionalized notions of naming[252] as well as of self and other. His yet-to-be-achieved ability to conceive of

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[251] The next day, Sadness goes to see a priest in order to confess guilt for having done nothing – and in that subversive scene, he laments his inability to have an erection while lying down. The priest can reply only within the standard repertoire of rhetorical questions. (GI 34-36)

[252] See, for example, the opening of Jeremy's thesis: "Christopher Columbus, not knowing that he had not come to the Indies, named the inhabitants of that new world -" (GI 21); comparable to Columbus and his lack of critical self-reflexivity, Jeremy sticks to his cultural 'baggage' for a long time, particularly in his troublesome fixation on becoming Grey Owl. – Cf. Madham, the narrator, who links "Jeremy's attempts to explain his own irrational need to seek out the wilderness" with "the accident of his name: that one portion of identity which is at once so totally invented and so totally real" (GI 51).

Otherness as such – and not as a projection of his own inherited ideals – will be crucial for a possible success of his quest.

The stages of transformation – or the series of metamorphoses – that Jeremy undergoes are a genealogy of identities. He has arrived west with a false concept of alterity, brings with him "a particular version of the Frontier myth" (Thieme, "Snow Business" 203) based on the figure of Grey Owl, whom he calls "my borderman. My pathfinder" (GI 100-101). "Inherent in Belaney's transformation of self is the notion of the journey west as a journey to new beginnings" (Thieme, "Snow Business" 203) – but Jeremy's own dream of a new beginning by becoming Grey Owl is bound to be oppressive since the model itself is a false and fictionalized one; Archie Belaney alias Grey Owl is "another inventor of history, time traveller, impostor" (A. and C. Davidson, "Crossing" 172). *Gone Indian* alludes to this with Jeremy looking at a poster which, to his surprise, announces that he will select the festival's reigning queen the same night: "Who the hell is this Jeremy Sadness? Who is this imposter on the poster? Ha" (GI 64).

Jeremy must first learn to see the artificiality of his identification with Grey Owl. With the carnivalesque Winter Festival already in swing, he sits among many Indians in the First Presbyterian Church – and none of them knows Grey Owl, which causes him to argue, "I was a native and they were intruding" (65). With his Indian outfit and braids, he makes the children wonder what he is; "Jeremy and Grey Owl are the truest Indians of them all" (Turner, "Endings" 65). He is as much confused about his own identity as other people are about him. When he puts on snowshoes for the first time ever, he wins a race, in its course taking off his buckskin jacket like a "cocoon," becoming one with landscape and animals and outrunning himself by going beyond the finish line. He is again mistaken for an Indian, even circled and beaten by a gang of violent men, which makes him remember that as a kid, in Little Italy in Manhattan, he was forced by other cowboy-players to take the part of the Indian, although by then he "didn't want to be an Indian at all" (GI 94). Now, after the race, having lost shoes and jacket, he is equipped by the Cree Indian Daniel Beaver and his Blackfoot wife with a fringed leather jacket and a pair of "new old moccasins" – and Daniel and Jeremy proclaim at the same time: "It fits" (97-99). Not only is another successful passage of ordeals signified by this ritual fitting-on of apparel; as the book's most essential – or authentic – Indian figures, Daniel and his wife welcome Jeremy into their own Indian community. "'Grey Owl would be proud'" is what Beaver tells him, adding: "'He was something like you'" (100). Transformation has brought Jeremy to a state where his

fictitious idol is compared to him – and not vice versa; as Jeremy is not modeling himself on an imitation anymore, his Indian identity is in the process of becoming real.

By socializing with these Natives, Jeremy begins to glimpse the necessity to rid himself of oppressive roles and to accept the concept of Otherness. He understands what Todorov, paraphrasing Bakthin, calls "the fundamental principle: it is impossible to conceive of any being outside of the relations that link it to the other" (*Mikhail Bakhtin* 95). Consequently, as Todorov continues, "we can never see ourselves as a whole," and it is "only someone else's gaze [that] can give me the feeling that I form a totality" (95). Immersing himself into the world of Notikeewin means for Jeremy distancing himself gradually from Grey Owl, abandoning "someone else's dream and a dream to adopt someone else's identity" (Snyder 6). This process of exploring his own frontier out west liberates Jeremy into having a shamanistic vision: he first dreams himself a buffalo, then that he is given a new name, "'Has-Two-Chances'": "It was as if the calling of the name itself awakened him.[. . .] But he found himself in a dark so dark he might have been in a womb. Dreaming the world to come" (GI 101-106). His vision revolves around naming as an act of creation and around the common image of the *regressus ad uterus* that signifies rebirth – another major aspect of initiation rites. And in his dream, Jeremy sees himself in the skin of an animal, without any clothing.

Phil continues his journey across North America in special and telling outfit for some time. He even takes to layering different types of clothing in order to fulfill certain roles. Briefly working as a hood-carrier in Brooklyn, he is required to change his usual apparel: "I dressed the part, of course. I had bought a set of black overalls, so as to cover my expensive-looking wardrobe [before] I went home, slipped off my 'disguise'" (ASA 166). Applying for jobs that need "a young man of good appearance," Phil is repeatedly turned down because he has too much style and English accent (167). A mix of resignation and new spirit sets in: "That week I began to sell my wardrobe. Suit after suit, overcoat after overcoat, went to the 'Jew', as I expressed it to myself." He plunges into a detailed lament, sorry to part with exclusive pieces from a London tailor. He finds it hard to let go of this aspect of the past, but must shed some of his Old World skin to survive in the New World: "I had exhausted my funds; now I was exhausting those of my possessions on which I could realize. Besides, there was something repulsive in the thought that others were going to wear what I had come to regard as nearly part of myself" (170). Searching for occupation in the Amercian East, Phil still confuses

disguise with guise, takes the stylized self-presentation for the norm and the more modest appearance for a digression from his notion of identity. The large dressing-room of this New World, however, forces him, the immigrant, to immerse himself – which eventually includes the process of discarding and exchanging clothes as identity attributes. Some degree of acculteration will be inevitable for Phil, but he feels threatened by the idea that his appearance, considered by himself to be unique, might be repeated, or performed, by somebody else.

In New York as well as when travelling in New England, Phil performs in his new profession as a book-agent. Employed by Mr. Tinker, he sells a "phenomenal collection of Travellogues" (180) to the poor, before entering Mr. Wilbur's company, where he sells a luxurious world history to the rich. Wilbur instructs him to "look as English as you can and to treat your prospective customers with all the arrogance of a superior education.[. . .] The more English you seem, the less will those people dare to refuse you an order" (221-22). On the road towards an important potential customer, steel magnate Kirsty, Phil rejoices in his recovered sense of style: "Here I was travelling with all the appurtenances of wealth. If a few months ago my appearance and my clothes had stood in the way of success, suddenly they had become my greatest asset. Even my brogue, which had cost me more than one position, I was now advised to accentuate rather than to get rid of" (226).

Grove does not make his narrator critically comment on this, but it seems likely that he tried to slip in a self-ironic pass at himself by letting his persona Phil first revive a European sense of identity and performance based on aristocratic airs, and then start to look behind the company's crooked façade. After this relapse, he is "due for an awakening" (244). Finding himself instrumental in Wilbur's confidence games and criminal scheme, Phil quits and changes in his approach to himself. His own façade suddenly becomes the object of a gradual cleansing or renewal. Briefly returned to New York, "in Purgatory" (256), Phil accidentally meets his friend Ray and replies, when quizzed about looking prosperous, "Look, [. . .] but am not" (260), although he has earned some money on the way. This is the first time that Phil acknowledges a dichotomy between outer and inner being; the notion of prosperity, is now extending beyond pecuniary values to spiritual ones. Phil is ready to shed the rest of his European garment-self, with two exceptions: "I disposed of the rest of my wardrobe, having picked out one single, brown, English riding suite with breeches – soft-leather lined –

and a raincoat to keep. All I knew myself about my intentions was that I was going to 'go out west'" (ASA 262).

Leaving the one remaining suitcase and the rest of his books with Ray, except for the New Testament and *The Odyssey*, Phil sets out "in search of Abraham Lincoln" (262). A year has passed since he first entered New York, the infernal city. Now that he is purged of some of his old habits, arrival and departure converge at this place and end the second book titled "The Relapse." Departing as a tramp, he leaves behind the most elaborate New World dressing-room he could possibly encounter and is free to continue his "*cross-sectioning the life of a nation*" (257; Grove's emphasis; cf. 360) away from the degenerate American East. As the text's major ceasure, this marks the real beginning of his journey and represents an equivalent to Sadness's leaving the airport at Edmonton.

Jeremy's metamorphosis has progressed by befriending the Beavers and dreaming his shamanistic flight. By now, his appearance is less of a disguise and more of an appropriate reflection of his personality. This notion of identity is further explored during the subversive carnivelesque scenes that cast the Notikeewin community into a playful chaos. This chaos inquires whether we can ever know who or what we are, and further incorporates Jeremy into this prairie society. According to Bakhtin's notion of the carnivalesque, "everyone is an active participant, everyone communes" and "[a]ll distance between people is suspended [for the sake of] *free and familiar contact*" (PD 122-23). This shows, for example, during the Annual Winter Festival, over which Jeremy is presiding as judge and supposed to "choose the most beautiful woman" (GI 109). Everyone is making suggestions and Judge Sadness, the winter king in lieu of Roger Dorck, is unable to name any figure as Beauty Queen from the three contestants that are absolutely identical. Instead, he sets "the silver crown on the head of Miss Jill Sunderman" (122), a member of the organizing committee and daughter of Bea, the woman with whom Jeremy will disappear in the end. Crowning Jill Sunderman, who is not a contestant, is a carnivalesque "ritual [in which] all aspects of the actual ceremony [. . .] become ambivalent and acquire a veneer of joyful relativity" (Bakhtin, PD 124).

The winter games not only mark the "temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and from the established order," but celebrate this feast as "linked to moments of crisis, of breaking points in the cycle of nature or in the life of society and man" (Bakhtin, *Rabelais* 10; 9). Such a crisis occurs when a blizzard seizes the town after the

contest. Sadness, in search of a bed, is escorted by two unidentifiable figures, "the devil's tragic doormen" (GI 126), and enters a funeral home that belongs to J.J. Backstrom.[253] Digger offers him rest in the coffin originally designed for Roger Dorck, and trying to escape the "sound [that] was never quite human," Jeremy jumps into it, with his moccasins on. In this parody of orphic descent, he dreams his own death, envisions several flattering gravestone inscriptions, and wakes up with "a hard-on" lying flat (134). With his fantasies of a future academic career and his sudden fall out of the coffin, "buried by flowers," the carnivalesque rite culminates: the "true feast of time, the feast of becoming, change, and renewal" (Bakhtin, *Rabelais* 10). Jeremy, with a circle of blood around his mouth which may well signal another passed ordeal, has been cured of his former malaise. In the house of death, carnival has given him rebirth.

The rites of carnival are essential to Jeremy's emancipation from restrictive role models, to both his exchanging and gradual stripping off of disguises, and his related discovery of formerly unknown aspects of his self. Phil, by way of contrast, is neither *going Indian*, nor subjected to any carnivalistic experience. In his process of Americanization, he goes on an initiatic river journey that will symbolically afford him a rebirth. In this westward movement, he is strongly guided by the notion of the Romantic traveller: in Italy, as a youth, he had read Goethe, Browning, Byron, Shelley, and "tried to feel and to think like them" (ASA 162). Now, in America, that old emotion seizes him again; "long[ing] to be on the hills and plains, clad in rags," he becomes "a wanderer in the hills [and] in the valleys," moving "like the travelling journeyman of old" (247; 277; 361). Phil conjures up the memory of Byron again (cf. 19), whom Roger Cardinal calls the "greatest pioneer of Romantic travel [and] the epitome of the exiled, ever restless creative spirit" (142). The Byronic hero, as lonely, melancholic, sophisticated wanderer and predecessor of Nietzsche's Superhuman, appealed to Grove. In Byron's paradigmatic travelogue, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* (1812), his persona Harold not only asks "What am I?" (Canto III: 6) – which is echoed in all of Grove's writings by the refrain, "I must be I" (ASA 41) – but also discusses Jean-Jacques Rousseau, whose Romantic *Les Rêveries du promeneur solitaire* (1782) had centered the individual subjectivity as an agency absorbing its external environment (cf. Cardinal 144). By invoking both Byron and Rousseau as paradigms of travelling subjectivities, Grove

[253] Backstrom is the undertaker and first-person narrator from the first part of Kroetsch's Out West Trilogy, *The Words of My Roaring* (1966).

wraps his persona Phil in their tradition and lends him aspects of their refined sensitivity.[254]

Dressed as a tramp, clad in the aura and gloom of the Romantics, Phil celebrates himself as a solitary figure: "I am alone; I stand against the world." Withdrawing into silence, he soon encounters his own voice as being "unfamiliar like that of a stranger" (ASA 272; 275). He keeps following the waterways – and "river travel," according to Cardinal (143), can be seen "as the site of deep unconscious impulse." Hence, after going through a spiritual high, losing the "last vestiges of fat" and feeling fit for anything, he discards his shoes, "together with gaiters, stockings, and coat. I began to notice the wear and tear on my clothes, and it worried me" (ASA 281; 283). This act of taking off and securing part of his apparel prefigures a discarding of his outer shell and foreshadows a series of minor injuries.

The next sequence in his journey is based on Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn*[255] and first shows Phil lying in the water when he wakes up, feeling feverish. Again, dress is in the centre of his attention: "I took my water-soaked clothes off and shrugged my bare body into my raincoat." He then spreads them out to dry but, when the rain sets in again, uses them as covers. Constantly hungry, he feasts on a ham he found in the river and falls sick. He hits his knee, decides to build a raft, hits his toe while riding it, acquires more "bruises and scratches," and finally gets thrown off by a big wave. Thus shipwrecked, he walks on and suddenly notices a man who is in danger of drowning. "I dropped what I was carrying, stripped off my coat, and plunged in" (298). He rescues the man, whose face "closely resembled the face of Mark Twain in Carroll Beckwith's portrait," [fn Stich & Stobie 65 & Immel 93ff &!Gammel 1992: 137] who turns out to be a hermit who does not talk. For Phil, this encounter functions as a mirror: he finds an *alter ego* that he is almost "trying to imitate,"[hair like a woman – androgynous] goes through a typical death-rebirth sequence in the river, and emerges more conscious of his own position; he argues that "talking largely keeps you from thinking," adding: "I was no longer so sure of my superiority over those who had not received my 'education'" (287-307).

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[254] Grove, in his German years as Greve, "had taken a course on Byron during his studies at Bonn university, 1898-1900" (Divay, "Grove's Passage" 115, fn 18). Rousseau was another major influence, as many of Grove's writings indicate, especially one of his few Canadian works in German, "Rousseau as Educator" (1914). Cf. Stobie (*Frederick Philip Grove* 38f; 61; 66).

[255] It should be noted that this intertext, like *The Odyssey* that Phil carries with him, is replete with disguises and masquerades.

This insight coincides with Phil's having repeatedly entered the water in a symbolical act of cleansing, accompanied by repeatedly discarding his clothes. The many related references to rain and water penetrating his garments represent a removal or washing-out of the last traces from his old self.[256] Instructed by his experience with the hermit, who as a projection of what Phil could become can also be seen as a Jungian shadow[fn Jung SW 87-93], he understands that it was wrong to pursue a geographical quest: "I began to see that the search had been beside the point." He now wants to commence "the real search" (397f).

To advance in his quest, Phil must pass through more ordeals if he wants his initiation to be complete. During a series of unsuccessful attempts at securing a day's job and a night's camp, he stumbles into a hedge with "huge thorns tearing my clothes and lacerating my flesh with their points" (335). This is an echo of an earlier scene where a man "set his dogs on" him, with the same results of Phil's apparel and body getting painfully scratched (215). Gammel argues that this "ritual dissection [. . .] of the body is the torture of 'Purgatory' [. . .], as it prepares the healing and restoring of the body and soul, for a rebirth of self" ("'Americanization'" 141).[257]

Phil's physique is subjected to such a critical healing process both on the outside and inside, for his fever and cold develop into severe pneumonia that almost kills him. Barely able to reach a small, solitary farm, he collapses and loses consciousness in the smoke-house, only to awake in a young couple's house, where he is unselfishly nursed. An older doctor (dressed in black, like the messenger of death) restores him to health. Having received such care, unexpectedly and without having to pay anything, Phil feels elated and grateful. He believes that part of his quest has been fulfilled. He discusses immigration policies with Doctor Goodwin, who rents him a small house for little money and helps him get a job at a veneer factory. Although Phil gets a promotion, he decides to move on and search for work that is more in accordance with his talents. From the Amercian Mid-West, he heads north-east, as the quest for his American ideal has found its completion: "I saw the Lincolns all over the country, [. . .] wherever men sacrificed their own selfish ends for the general good" (361).

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[256] Immel (77) calls this "ein Abwaschen der letzten Spuren von Zivilisation."

[257] Gammel further argues "that the narrative takes the form of '*sparagmos* or tearing to pieces,' according to Northrop Frye, 'the archetypal theme of irony and satire' (*Anatomy* 192))" ("'Americanization'" 141).

The second hospital scene in *Gone Indian* corresponds to Phil's ritual rebirth, but it takes a special turn in yet another carnivalesque dimension. For the bleeding Jeremy, who according to editor Madham "must have looked more than his usual messy self" when entering the hospital assisted by Digger, feels compelled to go and check for his shadow, Roger Dorck.[258] Thus, "Jeremy [. . .] lent his precious self to that old gravedigger. The poor man put on the hosptial gown intended for Jeremy." With Digger-as-Sadness cared for by the nurse, Jeremy is temporarily freed of his own identity; in striking contrast to his initial urge to imitate another figure's (Grey Owl's) identity, Sadness himself is now the original for somebody else to copy. "The metamorphosis," Madham comments in a mocking tone, "was complete. Jeremy, no longer himself, tiptoed through the door" (GI 139). As Jeremy is not in the traditional site of healing, in bed, though, he needs to achieve regeneration through another passage, signified by the many doors he goes through.

He enters Roger Dorck's room and tries to talk to the comatose man. Getting no response, Jeremy pleads, "I want you to die." Then he decides: "I just brought you the big news. You're dead." Still, Jeremy's shadow does not respond, seems dead and not dead at the same time, but suddenly has a way of communicating with Jeremy:

> And then I noticed a suitcase.[. . .]I swear to God it was my suitcase. [. . .] My survival kit in this humdrum world.[. . .] The long journey waiting. Or maybe it was his. I was tempted to snap it open and find out. Did it contain your precious commentaries on my unwritten dissertation, Proffo? Or did it contain –
>
> I looked up.
>
> And then I nearly shit myself.
>
> Roger Dorck was sitting up in bed. (141-42)

Jeremy, standing in front of the bed, is speechless and motionless. The temptation to snatch the unidentified suitcase is abandoned. "'Where are we?' Roger Dorck whistled out of his inhuman throat." "[A]s if he had met his own soul on the high road to hell" (143), Jeremy rushes out of the hospital. Shocked as he is, this final encounter with the figure of Roger Dorck, awakened from his coma, has united him with his own shadow; the all-embracing personal pronoun "we" in Dorck's question underlines that both of them are aspects of one entity, and that Jeremy is passing a painful ordeal towards achieving a new sense of self.

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[258] At an earlier stage of the narrative, Madham comments on Jeremy's second visit to the empty office of Roger Dorck: "I suspect he had recognized his own shadow" (GI 125).

Moving back in an eastern direction, Phil is "becoming a hobo."He joins up with another *alter ego*, the naturalized Russian named Ivan who is fluent in German, Russian or English and whose "black suit [is] rather neat for that of a tramp" (ASA 378-82). Even as a hobo – who is generally defined by a neglected appearance and associated with uncleanliness – Phil takes care in preserving a minimum of style. When he and Ivan are 'riding the rods' on the train, he terms this "Purgatory at the very least" and notices how Ivan's clothes have been "stuffed with welts of sand and fine gravel" (391), traces of a hellish train ride that can be removed and serve only to strengthen the hero on his way towards self-realization. In a hobo camp in South-Dakota, Phil glimpses another impersonation of what he might become, a "man who looked more like a Bohemian of the Quartier Latin in Paris than a labourer – both in features and clothes[, with an accent] of authority [and the vocabulary] of an educated man" (400). Although Ivan explains that this figure is rich and shows up for travelling with the crowd, without having to work, there seems to be no nostalgia in Phil. In a moral impulse towards self-improvement, he consciously stresses that Ivan has become his real *alter ego*: "the personification of all that is fine and noble in bodily labour [. . .]. From him was reflected into myself [. . .] an exhilaration, a quiet satisfaction with weariness honestly come by" (409).[259] The attraction of the Bohemian figure keeps looming in the background.

Through successive stages, Phil and his partner reach the large Mackenzie Farm. He rises from farm-hand to "store-boss" and to "driving-boss." The occasional jobs for the old Mrs. Mackenzie as "coachman" provide more chances for Phil to alternate his appearance: "I was wearing a uniform when I took her out; her son was just as well pleased with me in overalls" (438). Both the uniform and the overalls are functional, bare of any notion of disguise, and an indicationg that Phil has arrived in a new status without impeding traces from his (European) past. Now, in contrast to his earlier experience as waiter, he acceptsthat his work-wear signifies a servile position. Furthermore, he becomes the young owner's favourite interlocutor. Mackenzie, who lives in a "White House," is described as an "incipient king" and thus amounts to Grove's clever portrait of Canada's by-then Prime Minister Mackenzie King (435-440;

[259] Grove attributed to this figure a thought he often rephrased in his works and that apparently he was enamored of: "He did remind me of [Tolstoy's] Levin himself – the man who stands squarely upon the soil and who, from the soil, from his soil, reaches out with tentative mind into the great mysteries" (ASA 409).

cf. Keith, "Grove's Search" 62). In a reversal of power roles, it is the employed coachman who lectures the ruling 'King' about the ideal farm, and prompts a promise from Mackenzie to improve the working conditions. As an inversion of the initial train scene when Phil was lectured by Bennett, this reversal underlines the progress the hero has made; having gained self-confidence and sufficient money, Phil is again ready to leave, "reconciled to America [and] convinced that the American ideal was right" (445).

Before his ultimate disappearance, the moment Jeremy arrives at recognizing his own shadow becomes the moment of his frightful departure out into the snow. He wants to tell Bea Sunderman that her lover Dorck has awakened. "In starting out I almost left myself behind." Difficult as this initiation into his new existence might be, Jeremy quickly makes his "own path" through the blizzard and feels "stripped down to the animal endurance that enabled a buffalo to survive" (GI 144). Similar to Phil's notion of having shed off layer after layer of a former identity, he has stripped down to the core. [shamanism] Added to the implied clothing metaphor, there is his "homing instinct" that even guides him on his snowmobile through a labyrinth and forest to reach "World's End." Passing through its "dark jungle of plants," he bumps into several clocks that tick, finds the bed and climbs in, "flat on my back, fully clothed" with moccasins on. "And then a hand found me." But while the female figure is undressing in the dark, Jeremy ponders his own position: "Enough clothes between my flesh and the world to see me through a raging blizzard" (146). Happy to be lying down, he describes Bea in terms of natural images as "the smell of earth" or the "green moss" or the "muskeg waters of the north" (147) – a description, or naming into being, that amounts to "a destillation of the very soul of [Canada]" (Florby, *Margin Speaks* 65).

Starting to move in bed, approaching Bea, Jeremy conjures up images of the *regressus ad uterum* symbolism in speaking of "the place of difficult entrance. To the real gate to the dreamed cave. The dream cave's lost mouth [. . .] the castle buried in thorns" (GI 147). This corresponds to Mircea Eliade's examination of initiation rituals, of which the return-to-the-womb is a major variation that often involves an "initiatory passage through a *vagina dentata*, or the dangerous descent into a cave or crevice assimilated to the mouth or the uterus of Mother Earth" (Eliade, *Myth and Reality*

81).[260] Bea, the Mother Earth figure in *Gone Indian*, helps Sadness to succeed in his passage, and he, stripped naked, goes through what Eliade would call "a mystical rebirth, [thus gaining] access to a new mode of existence (involving sexual maturity, participation in the sacred and culture; in short, becoming 'open' to Spirit)" (81). Even if Jeremy thinks he will "commence [his] dissertation," he discards the project by naming the title for "Dissertation Number Twelve: 'The Quest Unquestioned'" (GI 149). Having arrived at that conclusion while still in bed, he has completed his own transformation, a conquest for a new sense of self. His procreative powers are fully restored. He has gone Indian, and is now free to disappear completely into "the oldest New World" (147) that for so long has been eluding his self.

III. Arrivals in New Contexts: Relocating or 'Othering' Identity

At the end of *A Search for America* and *Gone Indian*, both protagonists have succeeded in their quests for self. Phil Branden and Jeremy Sadness arrive in new contexts. In the progress of their transformative journeys, which are reflected by their changing sense of clothing, they have been textured in different ways, launched into opposite directions. Only Phil has fully completed "the mythological adventure [. . .] of the formula represented in the rites of passage: *separation - initiation - return* [that Joseph Campbell calls] the nuclear unit of the monomyth" (Campbell 30). Jeremy has parodied this formula, but has succeeded because he "arrives in a carnival: he is both released and realized by that; he is completed by that, even by the loss of identity and the shift into a new identity by accident" (Kroetsch, LV 37). Hence, the New World as dressing-room has afforded them dissimilar notions of both literally and metaphorically vested identities, mostly because of what they were willing and able to try on.

Although Grove's hero (who is one with fire, 'Branden') strips off layer after layer of his Old World habits, dress and performance always remain important features of his sense of being. Phil, "like the legendary Odysseus, zigzags across the country" (Gammel, "'Americanization'" 138) and engages in a multitude of professions (waiter, bookseller, tramp, hobo, factory-hand, farm-hand, tree-pruner) that have to be

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[260] Eliade is mentioned as intertext, and most likely his seminal study, *Myth and Reality* (1963), was alluded to: Kroetsch makes his frame-narrator Madham discuss the phenomenon of "arctic hysteria" and cites the names of the "Russian authorities [. . .] Krivoshapkin and Vitashevsky" before adding "that a Mr. Eliade disputes their conclusions" (GI 123).

performed in appropriate outfits. In the final phase of his initiation, he emerges as a ritual subject with more than one new soical role. He arrives in Winnipeg in order "to become 'repatriated' in Canada," where he inhabits the multiple roles of "not only a teacher, but the doctor, lawyer, and business-agent of all the immigrants in my various districts"; as a kind of missionary or egalitarian reformer, he wants to assist immigrants "in realizing their promised land" (457-58). He has completed a circle by returning to the place where his North American search began – and is still vested as heavily with the air of importance and superiority as he was upon arrival at Montreal. We are not given any information as to what kind of dress Phil is sporting now in his new roles, but it is obvious that at least linguistically he keeps being wrapped in style. His affinity for disguise has not been erased; when Phil, the older narrator, looks back on the last stretch of the journey before his repatriation, he comments: "Three months ago I had been a hobo; now I adopted the disguise of one. I have since gone out like that again, a good many times; I have always enjoyed such holidays" (447). The equation of holidays as a time of regeneration with the notion of performative masquerade is sufficient proof that Grove's hero, in spite of the book's elaborate rhetorics of initiation, growth, and maturity, has never been cleansed of his compulsion for self-creation.

Jerermy, on the other hand, leaves the American East for the Canadian Northwest to vanish. In the course of his journey, he lets go of old constraints and customs, in an ironic act of encountering, embracing and transgressing a Canadian version of the frontier. Unlike his literary predecessor Phil, Jerermy enters the New World dressing-room in order to adapt and assimilate to that new environment. Starting out "DISGUISED AS MYSELF" (GI 11) prefigures this metamorphosis, at the end of which his apparel as external signifier for identity is in perfect congruence with that internal setup; Jeremy is not disguised as an Indian but has become one: Guise and man are the same. That this concept resists the Western notion of a stable and fixed identity is acknowledged, in a half mocking, half serious tone, by Jerermy's supervisor, Madham, who calls this "the consequence of the northern prairies to human definition: the diffusion of personality into a complex of possibilities rather than a concluded self" (152). It is this sense of diffusion that marks the book's open end (which Madham interprets as lethal accident): Jeremy and Bea, out with their snowmobile and on a bridge across a deep abyss, disappear into liberating nothingness: "They are lovers. They do not even scream as they fall" (158).

Jeremy has transgressed his identity so much that he literally goes beyond the frame of his own – and thus of Madham's – narration. He disappears with a woman, his partner and sexual other. All his transformative encounters, starting with the airport cubicle, have brought him into contact with a series of others, and the figure of the Other reflects, in Bakhtin's words, a "'transgredient'" quality; to be understood "in complementary sense to 'ingredients', ['transgredient' is supposed] to designate elements of consciousness that are external to it but nonetheless absolutely necessary for its completion, for its achievement of totalization" (Todorov, *Mikhail Bakhtin* 95). Jerermy has been inspired by that transvestite who 'had been a buffalo'; he has been immersed in the Notikeewin carnival that assigned him the role of Winter King, made friends with the Beavers, who are authentic Indians and dress him in Daniel's garments, and briefly exchanged his identity with Digger. As a result, Jeremy abandons the restrictive notion of creating himself (and consequently never claims his suitcase back); instead, he has learned "to allow the layers of identity to become diffuse and open" (Snyder 13). He is named, appropriately so, "Has-Two-Chances" (106).

Phil, however, utilizes the figure of the Other to different ends. For him, meeting an Other represents a projection of the self he either had in the past or could have in the future. The 'transgredient' quality that so much characterizes Jeremy's experience is not allowed for by Phil, who cultivates his solitary status by "keeping a deliberate distance from [. . .] the new country" (Gammel, "'Americanization'" 131) and, in that process, from its inhabitants. The fact that the silent hermit comes closest to being Phil's Other is revealing, for "the narrator represents the hermit as a collage of overlapping literary and popular icons [from both old and new world, and these] collages defy the very idea of a finished picture, as well as the concept of a perfected, static self" (137). Phil journeys towards self-creation without ascribing to himself a fixed identity, always giuded by role-models (the dandy, the Romantic traveller, the hobo, the immigrant-helper and teacher). His elaborate wardrobe keeps inviting an affirmative gaze of his others at the same time as it helps him to elude their gaze, and never does he strip naked when not alone. While Jeremy Sadness, in going Indian, becomes his own Other, Phil Branden only dresses in versions of Otherness that amount to the fashionable images he fancies of himself; essentially, he remains a façade, a palimpsestic artifice.

Phil also remains incomplete: Woman as (his) Other is absent in his narrative. The few female figures like the waitress Ella or old Mrs. Mackenzie are part of the setting. In her capacity as a mate, friend, potentially equal and / or contesting human being, Phil

does not officially encounter a single woman. This is also an aspect of his image-making that renders him, as W.H. New (Afterword 468) put it, "the pathetic victim of his own performance." Largely, this performance rests on what Grove, in his "Author's Note to the Fourth Edition (1939)," explicitly describes as the book's teleological agenda: "what was the present when it was written had already become its *telos*" (ASA 460). Given Phil's questionable, elusive sense of self at the end, the notion of repatriation and homecoming might be read as an implicit confession to *not* having achieved the journey's aim;[261] as Cardinal points out with reference to the Romantics, it was "quite possible that the frustrated wanderer might journey home and salvage something of his hopes through a cultivation of the special senses of home-coming" (151). In Phil's case, this would be the cultivation of himself as a more intellectual being (or spiritual eunuch) of rather little flesh and blood, relocated in the centre of a community.

Gone Indian does not end with a relocation of identity. The quester keeps moving, migrates away from everything that determined his pre-metamorphosis self. In that process, Jeremy not only has to negotiate his understanding, and final discarding, of Grey Owl as a model for identification; he has to redefine and come to terms with his relationship with his major Other, his surrogate father and supervisor Madham (or: "Mad Adam"[262]). As manipulative editor of Jeremy's account on tapes, Madham keeps hinting at his own western heritage – "I was myself born out there" (GI 13) – and can claim to have triggered Jeremy's quest: "I sent him out there...." (155). Furthermore, the repeated allusions to the mysterious disappearance of Robert Sunderman, culminating in the detailed knowledge of his alleged drowning (155), render it likely that no other than Madham himself is Sunderman behind the disguise of a faked name. Sunderman, Bea's husband with "the perfect physique for hockey" (131), ventured East in his pursuit of "a counter-quest to become an academic intellectual"; the result, R. Mark Madham, with "a squash player's perfect figure" (60), is "as much a product of transformation as Grey Owl" (Snyder 5), equally self-fictionalized and fixed in his role-position. Madham

261 Gammel ("'Americanization'" 138) maintains that the concept of teleology "is playfully subverted in a narrative that shows the traveller's ultimate *telos* to be utterly fictional." It should also be noted that Branden's homecoming shows him to be very distinct from the famous *telos*-guided traveller, Odysseus.

262 See Kroetsch's archival notes: "Madham . . . has become a ghost, been trying to deny his past; an attempt to reclaim it in his book. . . . 'Mad Adam'" (MsC27.12.6). He refers to the popular American notion of identifying the process of civilizing the frontier and wilderness with the Biblical figure of Adam – a self-stylizing equation, pretending to innocence, that blurs the massive abuses and erasures of the non-white Others in North American history.

asserts, however, "I have been Indian enough. I prefer to forget the experience, and yet I do recollect the sense of being – how shall I say? – *trapped* in the blank indifference of space and timelessness" (GI 124). Madham, the controlling force behind Jeremy's former academic life, has experienced what his surrogate son is going through in the course of his journey. "Madham can, at least vicariously, go home again"; more importantly, "Jeremy fulfills his unacknowledged mission too well" (Davidson 138) and not only emancipates himself from the supervising figure but, in an ironic twist of conquest, escapes with Bea, the wife of Sunderman-turned-Madham.

The figures of the young student Jeremy Sadness and of professor Madham are delicately paired as self and other; while Madham functions as a projection of all that Sadness rejects in terms of a future self, Sadness mirrors for Madham the lost youth and the reenactment of dying into a new life.[263] Sadness, by straying from his designated *telos*, steps out of Madham's shadow and into his own life. On the other hand, Grove's Phil Branden only varies in his relation to that version of self that he departed from. As a "subjectivity that is forever *en procès*" (Gammel, "'Americanization'" 143), Phil is his own favourite Other. He is both writing and written subject of *A Search for America*; what the intrusive narrator Madham is to his questing and self-liberating 'object' Sadness, the older memorizing narrator Phil is to the younger and travelling version of himself. But Phil, unlike Madham, has no records to draw from, "the notebook seems to have been lost" (ASA 280). It is one of the book's major ironies that Grove plays off the notions of authenticity and fictionality, thus creating a delicately woven textuality labelled 'Phil Branden' that is supposed to point back at its author. Kroetsch's novel, by involving the authentic source of Jeremy's recorded tapes and their less reliable transcriptions by Madham, further plays with this notion of replicated textuality and projects the textured self beyond the book's frontier. Within these contexts, the New World as dressing-room functions in a rather restrictive role in Grove's book, where much of the Old World fashion is tried on and dominates its wearer, whereas in Kroetsch's novel, the function is clearly towards discovery and fitting-on of the unknown. In that sense, *A Search for America* has found its Other in *Gone Indian*.

[263] Arnold E. Davidson (136) maintains that Kroetsch employs "the hoary opposition of youth versus age, a structuring device that dates back from at least Greek New Comedy."

Chapter 4.3

Confessional Eccentricities:
In Search of Myself and *Alibi* as Textual Masquerades

> Who can better describe me than myself? Unless by chance someone knows me better than I do myself.
>
> Erasmus, *The Praise of Folly*

> Western man has become a confessing animal. Whence a metamorphosis in literature: we have passed from a pleasure to be recounted and heard, centering on the heroic or marvelous narration of "trials" of bravery or sainthood, to a literature ordered according to the infinite task of extracting from the depths of oneself, in between the words, a truth which the very form of the confession holds out like a shimmering mirage.
>
> Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. I*

> I have been dead to the world and unable to read anything but my own text. All day long I write; at night I read what I have written.
>
> Frederick Philip Grove, Letter to Richard Crouch, 3 September 1938

> Fictional characters allow us to test ourselves; I am tempted to say: to text ourselves.
>
> Robert Kroetsch, Public Reading, Calgary, AB, 1 October 1994

In a technique of essayistic circling around its topic, in loops and from alternating perspectives, this chapter suggests a parallel reading of two books that appear worlds apart. The first is Frederick Philip Grove's *In Search of Myself* from 1946, the author's by then much-awaited official autobiography that received the Governor General's Award for "creative non-fiction" in 1947 but has ever since been viewed with scepticism as to its authenticity. The second is Robert Kroetsch's novel *Alibi* (1983) which, according to Gunilla Florby, "realized and embodied some major issues in the Canadian postmodern aesthetic of the [1980s]" ("Self-Reflexions" 197). Both books address different audiences, although in similarly challenging forms: Grove's 'autobiography' requires from his readers a willingness to engage in searches for further clues beyond the boundaries of his complete works while bearing in mind that all his utterances, even in the private letters, are part of a certain role he lived;[264] Kroetsch's novel urges readers to participate actively in the process of writing thematized in the book, an enterprise that can be facilitated by an acquaintance with postmodern or

[264] See also Hjartason ("Design and Truth" 78).

poststructuralist theories about the relationship between language, text, and identity and with Bakthin's notion of the carnivalesque in literature.

A closer look at what potential genres begin to suggest themselves underneath the official labels of autobiography and novel will let the differences between both books diminish. *Alibi* appears in the shape of a fictional journal – and a journal can be seen as a kind of sub-genre that, as William Gass points out, is at best a matrix for a potential autobiography; being autobiographical in character diminishes with the increasing degree of revisions effected on the respective journal (Gass 49). That applies to the authenticity of an alleged or real autobiography as well. In the case of Grove's *In Search of Myself*, an authentic journal as base for a textual transformation into autobiography is not known to exist, though some of his material never intended for publication might be viewed in that function;[265] rather, Grove had a peculiar notion of how to proceed. In a letter to his close friend Richard Crouch, the Chief Librarian of London, Ontario from 3 September 1938, he writes that he has "suddenly been seized with the inspiration of working up and consolidating the sequel of *A Search for America*" (Pacey, *Letters* 327).[266] While the semi-fictional nature of that first search-book (see also Chapters 4.2 and 2.1) already renders the genre of its sequel questionable, Grove provides more contradictory information, this time in a letter to his friend and mentor Lorne Pierce from 30 November 1939: "I have once more taken up that autobiography of mine, trying to soften down such passages as my wife objects to" (372).[267] By admitting openly to a revision process which, we are led to infer, is guided by a female notion of decorum, the writer not only increases the addressee's (and future reader's) interest in the very objectionable passages, but also endangers the credibility of his autobiographical project.

Within the boundaries of fiction, *Alibi* is concerned with the concept of revising and transcribing a journal. In fact, the reader witnesses this writing-in-operation of the

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[265] Grove's 'intermittent diary', "Thoughts and Reflections," shows that he was writing with the public in mind, explaining aspects of his artistic 'failures' and listing his readings. See Hjartason, ed. (*A Stranger* 301-42). Cf. Gass (49): "However, if I already have my eye on history [. . .] I may begin to plant redemptive items, rearrange pages, slant stories, plot small revenges, revise, lie, and look good."

[266] In another letter to Crouch, on 24 October 1938, Grove writes: "I am tremendously busy with a continuation of *A Search for America*" (Pacey, *Letters* 330). Gaby Divay comments on the relation between both books: "Experience has shown that ironically the events presented in fictional disguise in *A Search for America* (1927) are far closer to the truth than in the supposedly straightforward autobiography *In Search of Myself* (1946)" ("Grove's Passage" 132).

[267] Grove adds one of his typically self-aggrandizing remarks: "Friends of mine who have read the typescript call it a 'knock-out' of a book and talk of the Nobel Prize (!!!). I laugh" (Pacey, *Letters* 372; cf. 399f).

journal that belongs to the protagonist, William William Dorfendorf (mostly referred to as Dorf), but on which his part-time companion Karen Strike has her hands. "You may revise what you have already written in your journal," Gass reasons, "but if you revise a passage prior to its entry, you are already beginning to fabricate" (49). Such ruminations are certainly of relevance for Dorf's approach to his journal as a self-reflexive playground, but also for the author Grove's handling of his life-story within *In Search of Myself*. As a complement to *A Search for America*, it details a fictionalized aristocratic upbringing in Europe *before* and an impoverished author's gradual acceptance of his vocation as a writer *after* the initially unintentional emigration to North America with its allegedly twenty years of tramping across the continent. Beyond the notion of (complementary) revision, the *picaresque* elements in Grove's text(s) thus provide another connection with *Alibi*. Kroetsch's hero, in his capacity as agent for the mysterious oil-millionaire Jack Deemer, journeys the world in search of exotic collections that Deemer himself will arrange and reassemble in his private warehouse at Calgary. With the latest commission, "Find me a spa, Dorf" (A 7), the protagonist embarks on a series of adventures that take him from the Canadian Rockies to various locations in the Old World and back to the New.

On top of these affinities in terms of themes and structures, the decisive unifying factor between both texts is the confessional mode that the writing subjects engage in. Like many literary predecessors before them, *In Search of Myself* and *Alibi* partake of a larger discourse that Michel Foucault outlines in *The History of Sexuality*: "Since the Middle Ages at least, Western societies have established the confession as one of the main rituals we rely on for the production of truth" (*History* 58). But if both books try to come to terms with the conditions for producing and representing that 'truth' about the confessing subject's identity, they simultaneously experiment with obscuring or problematizing that very process. These often opposing tendencies originate in the many confessional eccentricities of each writing subject, eccentricities[268] that are geared towards producing specific 'truths' in the eyes of the reader by letting the text emerge as a new site of masquerade. This chapter investigates the procedures of these confessional eccentricities to see whether they will reveal "the truth in masquerade," to borrow a line

[268] Eccentricity is understood in the contemporary sense of "being odd or capricious in behaviour or appearance" as well as in the original sense of "being 'out of centre,' *ek kentos*." See the *Concise Oxford Dictionary*, 9th edition, s.v. 'eccentricity'.

from Byron's *Don Juan*,[269] or will, as Gass formulates in light of St. Augustine's and Rousseau's autobiographies, "hide deceit behind confession" (Gass 46).

What is the impetus for confessional writing? In the "Prologue" to *In Search of Myself*, Grove situates himself in transit, in a forsaken marsh landscape, on a "dismal November day" that conjures up images of mythological time and creative chaos (ISM 1). He presents two alter egos – one, an old man in "mud-bespattered black overalls," through an encounter along the road, and one through a reminiscence inspired the night before, when a friend had brought "the biography of a Frenchman, still living" (7; 3). It is the memory of this 'former friend and mentor', the fact that his bibliography alone was "filling eighteen pages" and his translations "appeared in no less than sixteen countries" (4), which makes Grove confess to feeling incompetent, small and out of things. Notions of a past gone by, of the Frenchman's having been so voluminously textualized, and of his own intellectual potential not realized, prompt an immediate reaction: "That night I sat down to begin, with an avowedly autobiographic purpose, the story of MY LIFE AS A WRITER IN CANADA [sic]" (11).[270] Thus, the prologue ends with the author's endeavour to trace his own self by explaining why he has failed in his artistic ambitions, and this announcement directs his audience towards viewing the four main parts that will follow as confessional autobiography – a genre of long literary tradition, appearing in the form of either real or fictitious avowals or self-accusations and apparently revealing intimate and hidden details of the subject's life.

The initial announcement is tricky. The influential Frenchman has long been identified by Douglas Spettigue (*FPG* 213) as the French writer André Gide, whom Felix Paul Greve had translated and at least once met. While working on "My Life," as Spettigue as well as critics like Hjartason ("Design and Truth") and Divay ("Heritage") infer, Grove must have discovered a non-flattering portrait of his earlier incarnation that Gide had sketched after their meeting in Paris in 1904 and later published as "*Conversation avec un Allemand*" in his fifteen-volume *Œuvres complètes* during the 1930s.[271] In that meticulous record, "a psychological curiosity [presenting] the self he

[269] Quoted in Sharon Ragaz (33); the original quotation is from Canto XI, 290 in *Lord Byron. Complete Poetical Works*, eds. Jerome J. McGann and Barry Weller, 7 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1980-93), V. Ragaz discusses the influence of Scott's hero Jonathan Oldbuck on Byron's use and conception of "the truth in masquerade."

[270] The manuscript was called “My Life as a Writer in Canada” up until publication.

[271] Spettigue (*FPG* 213) points out how closely the publication of Gide's *Complete Works* (the last volume of which came out in 1939) and of Grove's essay "In Search of Myself" in 1940 (which then

had been more than 30 years before" (Spettigue, "Search" 14), Greve rambles frankly about his prison term and confesses to a compulsion to use pseudonyms and to lie (cf. Chapter 2.1). Hence, while addressing Gide like his confessor, Greve concedes that the confession to be heard needs to be treated with special care: "J'éprouve le même besoin de mentir et la même satisfaction à mentir qu'un autre à montrer la vérité…" (Gide 138). He then specifies his notion of lying as deliberate role-play, a way of exerting his will-power through art, and an affinity for elegant clothing (138-141). His confessions to Gide summarise Greve's concept of self-creation (based, for instance, on his translation of and identification with Oscar Wilde[272]); they do not produce 'truth' but are a mirage of performative 'lies' (that is, masks) behind which any kind of authenticity or credibility can only be guessed at or must, at best, be searched for.

It is this palimpsestic technique of self-referencing Grove, in subtle ways and for the alert reader, confesses in the Prologue. That acknowledgement perverts the Socratic *dictum* (or Delphic Oracle) of *Nosce te ipsum*, for it is not so much the author, as many critics have already pointed out, who is searching himself for hidden truths, but rather the reader who must seek to reconstruct alternative jigsaw-puzzles out of the incongruous palimpsest that is FPG. Hence, *In Search of Myself*, as official autobiography, announces that it is a mere variation of Greve / Grove's life-long project in masquerade. Correlatively, in "Autobiography as De-facement," Paul de Man suggests "that the autobiographical project may itself produce and determine the life and that whatever the writer does is in fact governed by the technical demands of self-portraiture" (920). It is in this sense that the autobiographer Grove establishes his personal view of confession in the Prologue and thus subtly guides the reception of the entire book:[273] He locates the truth about the empirical figure of the author somewhere else.

As a novel, *Alibi* does not seem faced with the problem of establishing a (shaky) autobiographical 'I'. In comparison to Grove's book, Kroetsch's receives its impetus for confession from 'somewhere else', as the literal translation of the title infers, although

became the "Prologue" of his autobiography) coincide; this is also the same period in which Grove was writing *In Search of Myself*.

272 Wilde's "The Truth of Masks: A Note on Illusion", one of the essays in his *Intentions* (1891; cf. Chapters 2.1 and 3.1), discusses Shakespeare's use of costume and stresses its importance as "one of the essential factors of the means which a true illusionist has at his disposal" (233).

273 Hjartason argues that "Grove's account of his life is shaped by the stance he adopts in the Prologue" ("Design and Truth" 75). Correlatively, Spettigue maintains that "the core of the account of his background in the autobiography is to be found in the lies told to Gide in 1904" (*FPG* 214).

the nature of that impetus will only gradually reveal itself in the course of the reader's engagement with the text. Without losing any time on the preliminaries but announcing eccentricitry as a guiding spirit right away, that text delves into its mode: "Most men, I suppose, are secretly pleased to learn their wives have taken lovers; I am able now to confess I was" (A 7). Already in the second part of the novel's opening sentence, the narrator-protagonist stresses his abilitity and willingness to confess, a position that will be reiterated many times. With this clear signal of avowals to follow, he goes on:

> My discovery came as a great relief. At the time, of course, I put up quite a show of rage and indignation. I went out and fired a shot or two at the poor fool who had been so generous as to come to my aid and, as a consequence, I spent a few years under something of a cloud. [Then] I lucked into a job with a millionaire Calgary oilman whose pastime it was to collect anything that was lose. He needed an agent who was a completely free man. I was left alone to pursue assignments, to travel, to dicker, to bribe if necessary; I need deal with no one except in financial terms. How much? was the question. In sum, I was a happy man. And I might have remained such, had Deemer not sent me that unfortunate message. (7)

On its very first page, *Alibi* presents a confessional *tour de force*. This passage is charged with the complexity and the contradictions that make up the human condition. Dorf concedes to being dependent on the powerful collector Deemer, whom he has never met in person, while referring to himself as "a completely free man." Furthermore, the protagonist concedes to a past of violence and obscurity. While echoes of the murder-mystery or the detective / crime story surface here,[274] these popular genres point back to a process Mike Hepworth and Bryan S. Turner describe as the "concern with the public consequences and social dimensions of a private or secluded activitiy [that] extends to a concern for published or written confessions" (7). *Alibi* entertains such a public concern in ironic fashion, citing the clichés as part of its parodic approach to the conventions of writing.

It is not the agent Dorf, questing after sexual fulfillment all the time, who has the first impulse towards confessional writing. Rather, that process is initiated by an ambitious young woman with whom Dorf has "a continuing, tentative relationship" (A 8), Karen Strike. That woman of the telling name has given him the journal as a birthday present, and the notion of writing is a kind of rebirth or recreation, as Karen acknowledges with envy: "You invent yourself, each time you sit down to make an

[274] These (sub-)genres abound with the topos of confession. For an ironic example, see Agatha Christie's *Murder at the Vicarage*, in which no less than seven different persons confess to the murder in question.

entry" (61). For Dorf himself, however, his entries seem a way of trying to figure out who and what he is. His ontological quest parallels his search for that perfect spa which Deemer has commissioned. Since Dorf and Karen, as another one of Deemer's employees, will travel in more or less parallel lines to Europe and back in an odd game of collaborative rivalry, she will exert a crucial influence on both quests. Yet it all begins with her suggestion that they go to the Upper Hot Springs near Banff, where she wants to do research for her documentary on spas, and where he, while waiting for her in the hot outdoors pool, surprisingly has intercourse with Deemer's lover Julie Magnusson. Thus prompted into more desire, Dorf is automatically prompted into eccentric writing; he will entrust his manifold meditations and sexual encounters to his journal. The book confronts the reader with the question whether Dorf will remain as much an agent of his confessions as he is of Deemer's commissions.

If the question of agency is part of Kroetsch's fictional play with the postmodern views of a dethroned author,[275] it assumes a different dimension in Grove's alleged autobiography. As Georges Gusdorf suggests, "autobiography is the final chance to win back what has been lost" (39). But is Grove, the writer of his autobiography, the only agent who tries to win back whatever he has lost? As Spettigue and many critics in his wake have successively managed to show, Grove's acount of his European years (Part 1 and 2 of *In Search of Myself*) is more fabricated than reliable, and in his numerous manipulations of the facts of his life, Grove relied heavily on the models of other authors and alleged aquaintances. That use of other writings and writers as co-agents of the text is inaugurated at the beginning of Part I, "Childhood". Goethe's paradigmatic *Aus meinem Leben. Dichtung und Wahrheit* (1811-33) begins with the topos of a favourable constellation of the planets at the time of birth. Grove loosely evocates that topos and changes the Goethian delay at birth into his own premature arrival.[276] A little later, he follows closely Goethe's comment on the nature of personal memory as opposed to events narrated by others,[277] and posits: "I find it hard to sift out what I

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[275] Kroetsch presents the mysteriously absent Deemer as a mock-version of the author.

[276] Grove's 'autobiography' varies Goethe's opening by speaking of a "determining destiny" that chose his parents for him, before outlining that "the first few hours of my life on this planet seemed to mark me for a life of adventures rather than for a life of discipline. I was born prematurely, in a Russian manor-house, while my parents were trying to reach their Swedish home before that event [. . .]. I insisted on arriving too soon" (ISM 15).

[277] "Wenn man sich erinnern will, was uns in der frühsten Zeit der Jugend begegnet ist," Goethe reasons, "so kommt man oft in den Fall dasjenige, was wir von andern gehört, mit dem zu verwechseln, was wir wirklich aus eigner anschauender Erfahrung besitzen." (Goethe 10-11). [translate]

actually saw and felt from what I merely heard in years to come" (ISM 16).[278] While the passages in Goethe and Grove respectively encapsulate what H. Porter Abbott calls the "ontological dilemma inherent in a textual act of self-recovery" (603), they problematize the nature of autobiography that Paul de Man defines, in Gerald Peters's words, "as a representation of what can never be more than an absence" (Peters 87). Grove is absent as singular agent of his text and must rely on the assistance of other writers (here Goethe, earlier Gide, and later Byron, Wilde, Homer, Rousseau and many more). Through citing (both directly and indirectly) and listing them as a constant ground for his palimpsestic (self-)reflection, these authors become "a network of signifiers in which the narrator's name will receive its identity" (Gammel, "Victims" 56).[279]

FPG's process of personal palimpsest thus constitutes a text of high ambiguity. Regarding the author's affinity for the clothing motif (cf. Potvin), it is not suprising that he would inscribe a symbolical reference for that ambiguity in the form of a special garment. This garment is worn during a train ride at the age of only one month, though Grove pretends to memorize it nonetheless: "I myself, on the lap of Annette, the young nurse, was dressed in a long, embroidered, belaced, and beribboned dress, such as was used, at the time, and in Europe, indiscriminately for boys and girls" (ISM 17). In and on this intricate dress, the entire ambivalence and eccentricity of the book are reflected. As a hybrid surface of signifiers for both the male and female sex, it does not allow for an unequivocal gender classification of its wearer but appears like an early form of eccentric narration on its body; it signals a potential androgyny and, beyond that, a surface of excess through its combination of textures and designs. Preventing a clear-cut definition of who the human being inside the dress is, the dress works simultaneously as a regular guise and as a deceptive disguise.

The detailed description of the textures and designs of clothing is consistently linked with narration as a fabrication of textual façades. The ambiguous 'baby dress,' as an integral element of the clothing motif which runs through *In Search of Myself* and Grove's complete works like a read thread, is a good example. It can be seen as combining his parental influences – and of how Grove grandiloquently fabricates

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[278] A few lines later, Grove reminisces on his nurse's habit of telling him fairy-tales: "It dominated my life so completely that to this day I cannot distinguish my actual memories from the reflected ones" (ISM 16).

[279] Gammel points out that the author-figure enlists forty famous names alone on page 92! She also speaks of Grove's "passion for cataloguing artists' names" ("Victims" 67; fn 10). Cf. Stich ("Memory of Masters" 158; 163), who speaks of Grove's "overdependence on great authors and their books" and of him as an "epigone" in relation to these "masters."

parental characters of a dimension larger than in their lives. While the father is always described as clad in elegant English fashion, but simultaneously loathed and parodied by his son (63), the mother represents lavishness and lust in fabrics. In being fascinated by the other sex, the way the young Grove of the 'autobiography' approaches his mother Bertha echoes the way Oedipus approached Jocasta; Bertha, who led a much more sober life devoid of textile extravaganza, is a queen of good taste, a centre of attention. In Grove's fictional recreation of a well-designed past, she has her gowns made "in some great dress-making establishment of world-wide reputation"; whenever they were travelling, she "receded into a brilliant world of uniforms and bestarred evening clothes" (97; 22). The power and lure of such appearances – of the acts of either projecting visual grandeur or effecting deception – were conscious to Grove. Hence, the triad of the 'androgynous' baby dress, the father's sober elegance, and the mother's intoxicating fashion is a part of FPG's palimpsestic technique of hybrid self-references, underlining that the purported life-story that has begun to unfold is a textual masquerade of multiple self-fictionalizations.[280] Within the multi-textured fabric that is *In Search of Myself*, attempted / alleged autobiography and novelistic fiction are skillfully woven into generic indeterminacy.

In contrast to Grove's elaborate displays, *Alibi* hardly concentrates on what its figures wear. That may be part of the book's general focus on the body (of the text) and nakedness (narrative striptease); or, rather, on what is below the signifiers. While literal disguise seems absent in *Alibi*, language, its potential for confusion, and its limited capacity for proper signification are under close scrutiny. Kroetsch's linguistic examination is embedded in the poststructuralist notion of language in which Ferdinand de Saussure's famous concept of the unit between signifier and signified does not hold anymore; rather, language as a primary ground for a constitution and an understanding of identity cannot be trusted because it is, to use Jacques Derrida's poignant phrase, "*sous rature*" (*Of Grammatology*). While *Alibi* as a fictional journal reveals itself to be under a special and literal form of erasure at the end, Kroetsch inscribes, in an early passage, the notion of language's deceptive potential. Driven by desire and in anxious expectation of lovemaking with Karen, Dorf wants to have a shower before the act but suddenly burns his penis – the "words HOT and COLD [. . .] were on the wrong tabs" (A 21). From a feminist critique, Dorf is affected in his capacity as a male writer: with

[280] One could also add that, according to a typical pattern of gender attibution, Grove's mother embodies the feminine in poetic sensibilities and his father the masculine in vitality.

his penis (the symbol of male authority in Lacan's extension of Freudian theory) suddenly scalded, he is incapable of inscribing the female body.

More importantly, Kroetsch makes fun of his questing protagonist and illustrates, with playful irony, Foucault's assertion that the "body is the inscribed surface of events (traced by language and dissolved by ideas), the locus of a dissociated Self (adopting the illusion of a substantial unity), and a volume in perpetual disintegration" ("Nietzsche" 148). Karen's mocking remark, "You're useless to me now" (A 22), expresses this notion of bodily disintegration by tracing it with / in language. At the same time, the "inscribed surface of events" functions on several levels, since this scene underlines the implicit analogy between the physical body and the body of the text, and the often-cited analogy between the sexual act and the writing act. And while the clothed body in Grove's book signifies a surface of excess, the exposed body seems to reflect a surface of instability and of shifting signifiers in Kroetsch's novel. On one level, this applies to the genre of *Alibi* as a fictional confessional journal. For instance, the headline to chapter three, "IN WHICH DORF IMAGINES THAT HE SHOULD HAVE WRITTEN A NOVEL INSTEAD [sic]" (16), is a critical meta-textual reference inside Dorf's transcribed journal that appears increasingly self-reflexive and deliberately parodic. Dorf begins this chapter by insisting on factual confession: "If I were a writer of fiction I'd no doubt have begun my entries with the telegram itself, that moment when I arrived back home from Sicily and opened my mailbox and found, among the usual ads for houses and firewood and pizza joints, the CNCP envelope and its week-old telegram" (16). He slips in information about his previous commissions and lays claim to delivering the truth, then lists what he would have omitted: "I'd have concealed the fact that in three years I hadn't made love to anything – man, dog, beast, or woman – not to anything but my right fist, and that, infrequently" (16). However eccentric that hyperbolical list of potential objects for the writing subject's physical love may be, it underlines that his return to sexual activity has sparked his confessional impulse.

Dorf not only *ponders* the genre of his writing. The protagonist works on that surface of events intensively in a highly structured process of layering textual levels.[281] For his journal is not a mere first draft; most of what we read turns out to be a transcription of the original notes, as is stressed in the final section, "Dorfendorf's

[281] Robert Lecker points out how Dorf's "story is ordered according to the number of weeks in a year" and is thus "overstructured" with its 52 chapters (*Robert Kroetsch* 116). Generally, Lecker is concerned with "a theory of desire as a motivating narrative force" (106).

Journal," the supposedly only untranscribed portion of the book. In these final passages, Dorf is taking a 'vacation' after having found a suitable spa for his boss Deemer and retreats to a cabin at the shores of Kootenay Lake. In his state of being ("by nature a hermit," 232), he effects the major changes in his confessional account. "I transcribe the notes from my journal into a proper manuscript," he details his approach to his text. "I tear out the transcribed page from the journal.[. . .] I make a correction, where necessary. I type all and everything onto legal size rag paper, not dropping so much as a letter" (229-31). The protagonist displays an obsession with details and accuracy, suggesting the work of a reliable confessant, but also letting slip an occasional remark about the revision process. Furthermore, in too eccentric a fashion, he lays multiple claims to the truth which he often relativizes.[282]

What potentially might have been 'authentic' meditations and confessions are now polished and revised surfaces that 'dress up' what lies underneath. With a number of meta-textual and self-reflexive references, the book draws the reader's attention to that process of transformation. For instance, Dorf admits to his practice while trying to secure complicity with the reader: "I must let this entry stand as I originally wrote it, in the interest of making clear my own integrity; I have emended and summarized elsewhere only to establish a narrative account whose clarity matches my insight" (100). His own manipulations of the text are designed to render the journal more readable in a move towards fictionalization. "The original notes [. . .] are only the negatives which I now develop" (232). Dorf, the journal-keeper, fabricates – both before and after making an entry.

While this further undermines the disourse of truth *Alibi* announced by its confessional mode, Dorf is also aware of this and problematizes it. He switches between personal pronouns in commenting on his latest entry: "I cross out *I am* and write in *He is* . . . He . . . I . . . What does it matter? I am, he is, at last, this morning, trying to catch up" (51). Here is a writing subject trying to catch up with his proper signifying positions; the passage subscribes to the Derridean sense of the failure of language to capture something of a self's essence. As Kroetsch himself comments, the "minute you start writing, you have given up some of your hope of establishing a single identity. . .

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[282] See, for instance: "Yesterday was my birthday, I was forty-six; I decided, yes, I'm going to keep a journal, I'm going to love two women, I'm going to tell the truth." And, in another passage, Dorf comments on the need to 'shape' some information while talking to Karen about Julie: "I realized I would have to tell a lie. I had to make up part of the story. After my resolve that I would, finally, on my birthday, begin to tell the whole truth and nothing but" (39; 25).

Even if you're writing, frantically, to establish a secure self; you know it's leaving you, it's an excretion in a sense, isn't it?" (Maze xiii). Dorf, the writing subject of the journal, personifies the problematics of self-assessment and representation in language, and in doing so further textualizes himself through revisions. The 'truth' about him thus keeps eluding elsewhere.

The notion of 'truth' is of particular importance and complexity in Grove's writings. Besides his personal concept of 'lying' as a form of role-play and self-assertion, Grove repeatedly stresses his own sense of 'emotional truth'. He does so, for example, in his "Author's Note to the Fourth Edition (1939)" of *A Search for America*, that twin-text or ground-layer for the official autobiography which he was already composing in the late 1930s. In that note, he claims "that every event in the story was lived through," adding that "imaginative literature [. . .] is concerned with truth" not so much in the factual but in the emotional sense (ASA 459). In a comparative view of André Gide's autobiography, Hjartason discusses the lack of historical accuracy in *In Search of Myself* as enabling the book to offer "the autobiographer's vision of himself" ("Design and Truth" 76). Essential to that vision is that Grove designs the particular confessional account of himself in accordance with his needs – and that means, on the one hand, indirect and programmatic references to the way things used to be (i.e., to the 'truth') and, on the other hand, a conscious reshaping of that past.

Grove's mechanism has nowhere else been extrapolated so nicely as in his mysterious essay that was never intended for publication, "Rebels All: Of the Interpretation of Individual Life."[283] In that piece, which is much closer to the *Nosce te ipsum*-tradition than *In Search of Myself* and reads like a dialogue of the writer with himself, he reasons: "Truth is that which at any given stage of knowledge we cannot successfully contradict." With that admission not enough, he further claims: "Of my life I have forgotten more than I can remember; in my reading I have, very likely, adopted many ideas; but where I found them, I cannot tell" ("Rebels All" 74; 70). Crucial aspects of the author's approach to truth and self-shaping all come together here: faith in the power of irrefutable pretenses, a seemingly unreliable memory, and manifold but

283 Dating Grove's "Rebels All" remains a difficult enterprise. Hjartason (*A Stranger* 67) comments on Henry Makow's dating "'from about 1919'" that all related evidence so far "is conjectural." The over-all tone of the essay betrays, in my view, a writing subject of more than the forty years of age Grove would have had in 1919 – although the text repeatedly *tries* to create the impression of its author not having achieved much in Canada yet – and this against the backdrop of an obscure and eventful past, as in his claim, "I have written books and published a few [. . .] and lived to disown their authorship." See "Rebels All" (Hjartason, *A Stranger* 69).

untraceable (literary) influences. In its essence, this manifesto of 'unpresentable' truth reads like the blueprint for a corresponding passage in his official autobiography that shows how well aware the author was of his own absence behind his autobiography-as-façade. He expresses it through an analogy in the guise of a simile: "like the face of Europe, my memory is a palimpsest on which writing has overlaid writing" (ISM 147). Providing crucial insight into his technique of self-writing, Grove equates his experience with European physiognomy to an awareness of its historical as well as of his own transformation; his memory, the palimpsestic stock of personal history that selectively layers his memoir, is equated with a repeatedly transformed, that is, manipulated series of faces.

Correlatively, Paul de Man's "Autobiography as De-Facement" defines an author's inevitable masquerade: "Prosopopeia [. . .] is the trope of autobiography, [which] deals with the giving and taking away of faces." The trope, he specifies, means "to confer a mask or a face (*prosopon*)" (926). This is what *In Search of Myself* presents to the reader: Grove's supposed resumé of his life is exposed as a palimpsest of intermittent lapses, ellipses, elisions, illusions; the equation of memory and the series of faces that are employed by / for it provides the central and only half-veiled confession to using a succesion of masks *through* and *as* an act of writing. This palimpsestic technique of self-representations turns the text into an autobiography as masquerade.

This masquerade can only be effective, or work best, when it is somehow noticed but not consciously detected or analyzed by the reader. "Like rhetoric," Lloyd Davis notes in his examination of the English Renaissance, "disguise comprises a motivated display that seeks to elicit definite responses" (11). On the reader's part, Grove's 'autobiographical' writings suggest that response should at least be two-fold: for one thing, the reader should see more in Grove than the failure the confessing author so insistently likes to portray himself as;[284] for another thing, in acknowledging Grove's success and extraordinary role in Canadian writing, the reader is also supposed to look for clues in his texts in order to question and trace the figure of FPG back to his secret identity. "Rebels All" illustrates what FPG might have had in mind by using a rhetoric that questions the process of representation it engages in; in the context of discussing his having become "a hermit," he outlines his strategy: "Still I meet from time to time a

[284] Critics have noted how Grove blames his environment and not so much himself for having failed in his artistic ambitions in Canada. In that context, Hjartason reasons that "Grove's intention in the autobiography is actually much closer to that of an apologist than to a confessional writer" ("Design and Truth" 79).

man or a woman who looks beyond my mask and who divines behind the exterior of the rustic a wider outlook, a deeper insight, a hidden power" ("Rebels All" 68). Grove admits, in unusual openness, to relying on a mask – but, oddly enough, his rhetoric of self-delusion wants to locate *behind* the mask what the public figure of FPG constantly projects *before* it.

While the use of a literal mask (as a means of deception) is absent in *Alibi*, the performative aspect of language works towards a similar effect. But in a process that keeps locating the production (and thus representation) of truth elsewhere, Dorf's intensive revisions are not the only crucial element. He may create the impression of being the only agent of 'his' text, but the journal – in the process of its own unravelling – reveals incongruities and at least two agencies at work. For instance, the chapter headings, as alert readers can discover, speak of the protagonist in the third person. In the final and unedited section of the book, it is Dorf himself who names the figure that functions as counter-agency when he comments on creating his "manual of health": "Let Karen put in some headings, some chapter titles to trap the unwary eye and lure the customer; she with her gift for compromise" (A 231). Thus, Karen, who by giving the journal to Dorf as a gift initiated the whole writing process, has been acting as its manipulative editor, bringing the 'official' writing subject off-centre.[285]

The role of Karen wavers between retriever of truth and its opposite. As a documentary maker, she pretends to capture reality 'truthfully'; when Dorf suggests that she should "Fake the real," Karen's cameraman Randy replies that "the real would suffice" (52). Later, however, we learn through Dorf's friend Billy that "Karen must fake the end of her documentary" (231). She, too, arranges reality for the sake of her own sense of representation.[286] Hence, instead of having a corrective function with regard to Dorf's confessions that tend to fictionalize, Karen must be expected to add an interpretative dimension. Many of her inserted chapter headings testify to that, as, for example, "IN WHICH DORF CLAIMS TO UNDERSTAND AN OCTOPUS" (150). But in spite of her intrusions into his writing, her deliberate rearrangements of and comments on his utterings, she fulfills the important function of an addressee of the journal.

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[285] Karen's active role in manipulating Dorf's journal is expressed by her own heading to chapter 38: "The Archaeology of Hope: And These the Shards From a Journal that William William Dorfendorf Kept but Did Not Keep" (A 168). Earlier, Dorf comments that "the idea of a journal, planted in my mind by Karen Strike's generosity, had taken seed and grown" (134).

[286] In her feminist approach to *Alibi*, Susan Rudy Dorscht (*Women* 87) claims that Karen does not fake things but "seeks to tell the truth and so does not *tell* anything" (author's emphasis).

For Dorf understands that the gift of the journal has been made with ulterior motives in mind. In trying to "make a film about lost and healing places," Dorf reasons, she "would follow me as I went from place to place" (26). And so she does, always close to the journal-in-operation: in the Banff Springs Hotel, on a boat in the Aegean (154), on the train to Thessaloniki, with her head on his shoulder (156). Karen accompanies the process of writing; occasionally, she reads during Dorf's absence (61), already working over his story. Dorf, thinking of her as "a public snoop" with a camera, maintaining that she "has her roles confused" (96), is sure to keep and raise Karen's interest; he details his love-affair with Julie Magnusson as part of a triangle with the androgynous dwarf figure, the doctor Manny de Medeiros, in Portugal. Karen may hide a sense of jealousy behind the tone of mockery, as in the chapter heading "NEGATIVE #3: IN WHICH THE TRAPPER STEPS INTO THE TRAP" (116), but she always returns after her absences to meet his desire and fulfill her own. Her function as lover is coupled with that of the *confidante* – and that seems bound to the search for truth: "'You can't resist telling the truth'," she explains her use of his journal. "'That's why I need you for my documentary'" (61). With her presence as initiator, reader, and editor of Dorf's journal, Karen assumes the role of a censuring confessor in relation to the narcissistic confessant. Within their complex relationship of mutual sexual fulfillment, teasing, distrust, and fabrications, Dorf and Karen produce a textual hybrid of many surfaces of events. As keeper and editor, respectively, of (an) *Alibi* as journal-under-erasure, both inhabit positions of instability and transformation. Hence, by simultaneously substituting and adding to the language they deal with, they illustrate the Derridean *supplément*.[287] Ultimately, this supplement keeps them from capturing and representing an essence, original, or truth.

This notion of the supplement is supported by the book's guiding theme of collecting. In his capacity as agent for the mysterious arch-collector and *alter deus* Jack Deemer,[288] Dorf not only organizes the oddest collections[289] all over the world, but tries

[287]The term "supplément" is of central importance in the works of Jacques Derrida and denotes several relations; it points to both the relationship between speech and writing as indeterminate and to his contention that the latter took the place ("suppléer") of the former; all this further complicates language's being made up of multiply dispersed and absent elements of meaning (see 'dissemination' and 'trace'). See Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, (1967); *Die Schrift und die Differenz* (1967); "Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences" (1967). Cf. *Penguin Dictionary* (222-225).

[288] Jack Deemer is endowed with the aura of creator but is always absent. Repeatedly, *Alibi* alludes to this figure as a mock-version of the author – the figure of *alter deus* – who has, by theorists like Roland Barthes, long been proclaimed dead, for the sake of "the birth of the reader" ("Death of the Author" 148). It is Deemer who also gives birth to the agent Dorf by sending him on various missions.

to figure out more about his boss, this emblem of evanescence: "I had to tell myself the story [about this] nobody [who] came from such obscurity that no one knew him and went to such a state of success that no one knew him" (25). Dorf, pushed into but also altering *Alibi*'s plot, functions as a reader of a complex textuality that he produces himself by collecting information and speculation in his journal. "The collection itself only confirms the discontinuity of this scattered world; it's my talk that puts it together. I rave the world into coherence for Deemer" (195). As Linda Hutcheon asserts, "collecting becomes for Dorf a metaphor for writing" (*Canadian Postmodern* 177). By writing, reading, rewriting and rereading, Dorf seeks to make sense out of the world that is chaos – and hence, out of the text that (he) is. But this process is constantly obstructed by Karen's intrusive function.

An agent for Deemer from the beginning, Karen manages at the end to substitute his presumably dead lover Julie Magnusson. She announces that the ever-absent Jack Deemer is going to show up at the perfect spa Dorf has found for him at Deadman Spring. More than that, she prepares the much-awaited appearance of Deemer by adjusting all her cameras and the lighting inside the cave, in front of a large audience, though she misses the right moment and over-illuminates the scene with a flash of light that makes Dorf discern "the larger walking skeleton that could only be Deemer himself" (A 224) before everything turns pitch dark with the fuses burned. What happens, in the womb-like, primal darkness of the cave, is a communal carnival in which all participants rejoice in naming each other "into new names" (227) and in free, sensual contact.

In spite of being physically present at Deadman Spring, Deemer remains invisible in the dark cave, a figure still as an absence in the text and a mystery to the meaning-seeking Dorf. All of Dorf's efforts to transcribe and rewrite his journal cannot turn Deemer into tangible fact and construable scripture. On the contrary, the more Dorf tries, the less he can assemble an accurate picture of the collector. The only thing left for the agent to do, by way of compensation, is to keep on tending his journal as a layered narrative of desire.[290] His physically collected sexual encounters have been transformed

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[289] One of Dorf's glosses on Deemer reads: "That legendary man who had collected Borneo and Tibet and Lake Titicaca, tablets in languages that couldn't be read, a fragment of the moon, and Bronze Age spearheads, into his four warehouses. A herd of stuffed elephants, it was claimed, though that was not my purchase. The skin impressions of a dinosaur. Samples of sand from each of the world's deserts" (A 223).

[290] Robert Lecker speaks of "three distinct narrative lines": first, "Dorf's reconstructed and edited journal;" second, "the individual chapter 'headings'" inserted by Karen; third, "'Dorfendorf's Journal'"

(or recollected) into his journal and thus been reenacted on a second level. By transcribing the entries into his "manual of health" (231), he performs his desire on a textually doubled third level. We, as readers and audience of the spectacle, get a fourth performance through Karen's editing of the manuscript, a new rewriting that undermines the male signifier again.[291] Consequently, this shifting, manipulating, and layering of significations – behind which any notion of truth or original story is irretrievable – renders the text a subject of excessive masquerade.

Disguise is not employed by any figure *in* the text; it is only – and massively – put on *by* the play of the text itself, layering versions of writing that prompt layered versions of reading too. In *Of Grammatology*, Derrida deals with the processes of language's continuous covering-over of itself, for example in the concept of erasure of trace as "the disappearance of origin" (61); likewise, he meditates on the disguising effect of language: "Writing, sensible matter and artificial exteriority: a 'clothing.' [. . .] For Saussure it is even a garment of perversion and debauchery, a dress of corruption and disguise, a festival mask [. . .] (35)." *Alibi* celebrates this physicality of language. The novel's figures do not employ disguise literally but are dressed and masked by the function of the text itself. Their identity, usually supposed to be properly fixed by linguistic representation, cannot be outlined in the course of a novel that is constantly *sous rature*. Truth, origin, essence dwell 'somewhere else', as the title of *Alibi* infers.

While the language employed by *In Search of Myself* contributes to its autobiography as masquerade, the author's concept of social life as a theater provides the basis for that performance. Within that theatrical space, Grove also toys – in a post-structuralist sense – with himself as a subject in danger of being erased, embedded, for instance, in the repetitive pattern of failure versus success the Prologue establishes.[292] Gammel points out, *In Search of Myself* "'creates' an identity which has a very modern ring to it – an identity that refuses to be 'fixed' or static but which is forever *en procès*" ("Victims" 66). Part of that process is to model the writing subject's identity on facets of a series of other writers. Another part is to show the figure of Grove in performance of certain roles, a

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(*Robert Kroetsch* 115). This destabilizing structure and the problematized "doom in language" (A 130) result in *Alibi's* (typically postmodern) instability.

[291] Cf. the early scene at Banff, in which Dorf confuses HOT and COLD in the bathtub, an event that already indicates the possible erasure of the male signifier, problematizes language, the aim of desire, and Dorf's reliability as narrator and writer.

[292] That pattern is reiterated in many of FPG's writings, e.g., in his "Apologia Pro Vita Et Opere Suo," reprinted in Hjartason (*A Stranger* 191-97).

personal activity that mirrors, in a self-reflexive way, what the book does as a whole to the reader.

According to his autobiography, Grove liked to parody his father in his youth (ISM 63); in a manner he terms "precocious," he was "very anxious to grow a moustache" at age thirteen (68); a little later, he already "looked considerably older than [he] was [and had] the bearing of a man, not of a boy" (108). These early trainings can be seen as a preparation for future roles, the lover of a certain Mrs. Broegler (134-145) or, more importantly, a tourist guide in Rome. "With my travels in Europe I could readily fill a book if that writing appealed to me," FPG comments on his alleged five 'returns' home between 1894 and 1910.[293] The 'autobiography' stresses that he travelled to Europe either for free "on a cattle boat" or, if his always scarce funds allowed it, as "a third-class passenger"; generally, he had brought with him "two complete outfits: a lounge-suit and a full dress-suit, with all the appropriate linen, neckties, shoes, and so on" (ISM 197). Weight is put on this to preface his performance as a charming beau in Rome. "I had made up my mind to gamble on my appearance," which means a decision to lodge in the exclusive "Hotel du Rome, or whatever its name was". After changing from his "lounge suit into evening clothes" (198), he descended into the lobby and steered towards a lady he had met twice before. Versed as she was in "the arts of the dressing-table [which] made her appear at least ten years younger than she was," she expresses her sympathies for him and takes him "under her wing" (199). While the poor traveller Grove has thus secured the necessary financial support for his extravagant demands of luxurious lodging, his female other has secured her youthful male company.

Their arrangement reflects how within the social discourse of a mutually accepted and partly secret enhancement of appearances, disguised poverty and disguised age can form a happy and satisfying *entente*. Grove fills his role as *cavaliere* with conviction and success, and since he admittedly "was playing it high," he recounts how the hotel management started to question him about his standing, upon which he "slipped in a few remarks regarding my antecedents at Rome" (201) and was treated with more respect. The result of his renewed imposture was that Grove the confidence man and "self-confessed liar" (Spettigue, *FPG* 214) became a guide not only for Rome,

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[293] To recall some biographical data here (see also Chapter 2.1), the German writer Greve had disappeared from Europe in 1909 and surfaced in Canada in 1912 as Grove, most likely having spent the interim in America but not once having travelled back to Europe. Greve had, however, spent some time in Southern Europe around the turn of the century, probably in Rome too, and definitely in Gardone-Riviera in 1902.

but took tourists to Southern Italy and Sicily. This eccentric positioning into the role of guide is reiterated throughout the book. Grove images himself as one who should have led the Canadians onto a higher cultural plane. Always, in that context, he is dressed in elegant clothing that underlines his sense of superiority.

Kroetsch's protagonist Dorf, by way of contrast, never does enhance his appearance to disguise a state of poverty or a special intention; his eccentricity rather urges him to explore what is behind engineered presences. Clothing never functions as a means of manipulating his effect on his environment, but is used to signify a general extension of personality. While being in Banff, for instance, he asks Karen to bring back some of his clothes from his Calgary apartment, and comments on the grey shirt she suggests including, "It absorbs champagne well" (31). This pragmatic view at first conceals the allusion that Dorf, as wearer of this shirt, can handle (i.e. absorb) a lot of alcohol. Similarly, in the next scene in a laundromat, Dorf encounters a woman named Estuary, with her left hand "like the claw of a bird" (33), who is dressed in a fur coat and folding a collection of panties that display all sorts of colours and designs. This sensuous textile spectrum inspires Dorf's imagination; he takes off his own shirt to launder it in order to be able to talk to her.

Although *Alibi* occasionally enlists some of its figures's garments, it is rather their being absent, their being discarded or separate from their wearers, that is of interest. This focus runs counter to the protagonist's preoccupations in Grove's text, where dress on the body and the related conduct are always central. *In Search of Myself* showcases a few telling scenes when Grove's outward appearance does not match the vision he has of himself as an abundantly talented man of a rich inner life. In these cases, he manages to transcend the message of his 'poor' clothing by letting his inner qualities shine through. One example is his interview with the Deputy Minister of Education, who after a two-hour talk turns Grove, "clad in overalls, a farm-hand temporarily unemployed" into "the prospective principal of a high school" (ISM 249). Another example is related to FPG's inclination to provoke detection of his 'true' state of being underneath the rustic appearance, particularly in the presence of those women that he, because of their city-oriented temperament, emotion and intellect, calls "misfits" on the prairie. "When I met with them, they almost invariably guessed at first sight that my conformity with the common run of harvest-hands was neither more nor less than a disguise" (225).

What Grove refers to as his disguise among the harvest-hands is the most interesting, eccentric, and explicit account of masquerade in his entire autobiography.

This account is vaguely placed "during one of the years shortly after the turn of the century" (205) – but must, if it has any basis in reality, have taken place during what is still the most obscure period in FPG's biography, the years between his faked suicide in Europe in September 1909 and his entry into Canada in December 1912.[294] In his shady but significant report that follows shortly upon the description of his returns to Europe, Grove relates how he had worked on farms in Kansas with a special "pardner" [sic] and "newly-adopted friend" – a man, so conjures Grove, who "must have seen through my disguise at an early stage" (207). Here, Grove confesses again to the act of manipulating his appearance; he deems himself in a position in which his real stature seems hidden from all but one figure. But he does not specify his own masquerade.

Instead, he describes his friend in detail: "a Pole of ordinarily disreputable appearance. Like myself, who, perhaps, looked no less disreputable, he spoke half a dozen European languages and was, unsuspected by the Americans among whom we moved, capable of shaving and even of dressing like a dandy [and of assuming] the irreproachable manners of a man of society" (206). On one occasion, the friend "even dropped his perfect American speech and changed to French; [adopting what] might have passed for aristocratic society manners, handling his pitch-fork with the nonchalance of a fob, parodying that nonchalance by its very exaggeration" (207). The technique applied by Grove – born, in reality, on the Polish border in Radomno – is a transfer of his own traits, like a face or a mask, onto the figure of the Pole, thus using the other as a mirror simultaneously to distort and to play with his own identity: This mirror image combines similar characteristics (a shared European site of origin, multi-lingual capacity, an affinity for elegant clothing and Dandyism, an ability for physical work) and differentiating ones (the Pole's aristocratic background is authentic; Grove's only assumed). To inscribe the Pole as his *alter ego* is one of the author's most direct autobiographical revelations, giving us valuable glimpses into Grove's projection of his former self as well as of an imagined noble origin. Grove's Pole thus functions exactly as de Man's figure of *prosopopeia*, that autobiographical strategy of putting on a face or mask – with the crucial difference that this time it is the writing subject that attributes

[294] Divay has collected evidence for FPG's whereabouts during the period in question and lists Pittsburgh, Sparta (Kentucky), Cincinnati, and a Bonanza farm in the Dakotas as his stations ("Grove's Passage" 127-31).

his own facets to another character in the text. And that is indeed an eccentric way of confessing to one's past.[295]

This mutual mirroring of identities, or private masquerade among two friends, is embedded in a social microcosm: The immigrants form a motley crew on a farm in North America. In this context of Grove's farming episode, Kroetsch argues that "European culture has been reduced to a parody of itself"; Grove and his friend undergo "the final carnivalization of what they and their values represent in this new world" (GS 87). But this is *In Search of Myself*'s only scene of carnivalesque dimension in the sense of a playful and temporary liberation from self and the socio-cultural hierarchies that constitute it. After all, the one Grove, the figure in the book and product of authorial projection, and the other Grove, who is at the same time its creator and shadow, are not capable of a carnivalization. Their carnival of the self, the carnival of the autogenerative composite called FPG, is a perverted and degenerate one,[296] where the mask is not put on and played out temporarily, but has long become an essential attribute of his identity-in-the-making.

Apart from this one exception, Grove's world is essentially non-carnivalistic, although he should have understood its dynamics from his alleged frequent visits to Venice, Cologne and other famous sites of carnival in Europe.[297] In contrast to that, *Alibi* abounds with a carnivalesque spirit in locations that are not necessarily cut out for that. One crucial scene occurs at Deadman Spring. The central episode, however, takes place about two-thirds into the plot, in and around the mud bath at Laspi in Portugal. Deeply afflicted with the appalling insight that "desire feeds on desire" (A 128), the protagonist has been sent to Laspi by Manny de Medeiros, the androgynous dwarf-doctor who treats him with hydrotherapy, to search for "a healer in Greece" – "the

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[295] In *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, Goethe concedes to using his writing as a poetical confession in order to achieve absolution. Seeking to transcend his unease (mostly feelings of guilt) by dispersing personal character traits onto his personage, he primarily ascribes negative attributes, which is a contrast to Grove's technique of projecting positive connotations onto his *alter ego*. The central passage in *Dichtung und Wahrheit* reads: "[Also suchte ich] abermals *Hülfe bei der Dichtkunst*. Ich setzte die hergebrachte *poetische Beichte* wieder fort, um durch diese *selbstquälerische Büßung* einer *innern Absolution* würdig zu werden. Die beiden Marien in "Götz von Berlichingen" und "Clavigo", und die beiden schlechten Figuren, die ihre Liebhaber spielen, möchten wohl Resultate solcher *reuigen Betrachtungen* gewesen sein" (521-22; my emphasis).

[296] What is violated, among other things, is the rule of reversal that governs the state-sanctioned carnival, namely, that all masquerade is limited in time and the participant has to revert to the state of being he or she inhabited before the feast.

[297] "Mostly I went to Italy," Grove writes in the context of his alleged returns to Europe; his claim of having visited Rome frequently does have a factual basis, but whether he "footed it from Cologne to Venice" (ISM 197) must be severely doubted. He did know, however, the carnival centres Paris, Naples and, as a former student at Bonn University, Cologne.

smelly woman" (137). At Laspi, with no language to communicate properly, Dorf is drawn into a world in which normal order and rules seem suspended. He participates in a typical feast by sharing gestures, sounds, card-playing, food, drink, laughter and the mud with both men and women. If "the carnivalesque becomes a resource of actions, images and roles which may be invoked both to model and legitimate desire" (Stallybrass and White 18),[298] then Dorf has found the place for (temporary) healing.

With Laspi, Kroetsch provides a half-parodic, half-serious inscription of a regenerative resource for Dorf. This site will offer the protagonist the transgression of his desire through the crossing of boundaries. In a series of scenes that illustrate what Bakhtin would call the "ambivalent nature of carnival images; unit[ing] poles of change and crisis: birth and death" (PD 126), Dorf approaches (his own) other as place of fulfillment. He engages in excessive feasting with mostly old and worn-out-looking men. He witnesses "the sick and the suffering, the injured and the hurt [women return as] brand-new women, newly created, newly hatched from the cosmic egg or whatever" (A 162).[299] He then abandons his position of curious spectator at the edge of the mud: he watches an old fat man first draw circles on his face, and then "an opening on his head. A cunt" (166).[300] His desire to follow this symbolic invitation lures Dorf into the mud-womb, where he is accepted by an ambivalent mock-crowning with a dunce cap of mud on his head.[301] As crowned fool, he draws a mask on his face. "A simple mask. Circles around my eyes. Circles around my ears. A happy smile around my mouth" (167).

It is with this mask, which "is connected with the joy of change and reincarnation, [and] related to transition [and] metamorphoses" (*Rabelais* 39-40), that Dorf is liberated into simple being: "I realized, for the first time in my life, my mud self. I was in touch with the world.[. . .] the world was my body" (A 167). For a brief moment, Dorf *is* essence, establishing a primal, elementary unity. In "the game-space of the mud-bath," as Richard Lane (24) argues in Derridean terms, the mud "acts as a

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298 In *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression*, their intriguing study of hierarchies as they are represented in literature from the 17th to 20th century, Stallybrass and White draw heavily from Bakhtin's work and display the mechanisms and motivations of transgressions from an interdisciplinary approach.

299 What initially sounds like the story of the apocalypse, recalling the entry into purgatory, turns into a tale of genesis; the reference to Dante's *Divinia Comedia* is one of numerous intertextual traces laid by Kroetsch.

300 This is an act of degradation by elevating the lower bodily stratum (cunt) on top of the high (head), that is primarily concerned with cycles of reproduction. Cf. Bakhtin (*Rabelais* 19-21).

301 In Bakhtinian terms, they perform an ambivalent "*mock crowning [. . .] of the carnival king*.[. . .] And he who is crowned is the anti-pode of a real king, a slave or a jester" (PD 124).

supplement or ornament, becomes [. . .] the 'essence' (under erasure) of being." Hence, the notion of the mask at Laspi – in the hermetically suspended world of this particular carnival that takes place inside of sheltering gates – is totally opposed to its traditional use (or that in Grove's text). While it usually serves to hide, question or alter the identity of its wearer, the mask here transports and enables a 'true' but temporary essence to the surface.

The difference in conceptions of identity through the use of the mask could not be more profound than it is between *Alibi* and *In Search of Myself*. Dorf becomes part of the carnival society, of the men and women who with all their malaises and misshapings form a "grotesque body" that can be seen "as something universal, representing all the people" (Bakhtin, *Rabelais* 19). He mixes in, undergoes transformation. Grove's character, however, is aloof and detached, spending a good time of his life in a cultural wilderness that not only fosters his loneliness, but serves as a good excuse for shunning contact with other human beings. And when he does appear in public, as during his lecture tours in 1928 / 29 under severe spine trouble but to his ego's great satisfaction, then only after having "developed a definite technique in handling myself" (ISM 394). This phrase is as ambiguous and ironic as is the two-edged confession, "I believe I have hidden myself fairly well" (383). Referring to his relationship with the critics, Grove's comment is not uttered without pride about the efficacy of his masquerade both in his life and in his writings.

In the society at Laspi, Dorf successively discards all cultural artefacts that might hide facets of his being both from his environment and from his self. Since this society forms a grotesque body,[302] it is "a boundary phenomenon of hybridization or inmixing, in which self and other become enmeshed in an inclusive, heterogenous, dangerously unstable zone" (Stallybrass and White 193). Grove never allows for such a suspension of individual identity and simultaneous subjection to the larger identity of a communal body; Dorf, happily nameless,[303] embraces it, thereby approaching a pre-lingual state of being through a series of climactic epiphanic experiences in the game-space at Laspi.

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302 See Dorf's comment: "And they were every shape but the right one, those bodies. The shanks too shin, the bellies gone slack. The hands gnarled, the feet splayed; shoulders broken down over sunken chests" (A 165).

303 "No one knew so much as my name" (A 170) is repeated several times, emphasizing his feeling free from the constraints of language.

In a further transgression of the rules, Dorf enters the mud bath when the women are in. This playground of inmixing of subjects holds two surprises for Dorf. He suddenly realizes that the old man who had initiated him into the community has "smallish female breasts" and is "the smelly woman" (178) he searched for. This scene presents a double inmixing; a male, Dorf, mixes with the females, and in the hermaphrodite's androgynous nature, both male and female signifiers are mixed in / on one and the same body.[304] Dorf has found, the primal ground or body of a language that exists before the split of signifiers.[305] This new and unexpected discovery paves the way for his second surprise: after an initial wave of protest, the grotesque body of bathing women touches, strokes, caresses him: "I can only say I had the greatest orgasm of my life.[. . .] no words, no names" (179f). Naked in the primary element of the mud, and temporarily released from desire, Dorf is perfectly happy and in unison with the universe.

In his reading of *Alibi*, Richard Lane posits that the "carnivalesque is a play concept that constantly undergoes self-transformation to escape the confines of [. . .] definition" (24). In such a context, Stallybrass and White suggest that "a convincing map of the transformation of carnival involves tracing migrations, concealment, metamorphoses, fragmentations, internalization and neurotic sublimations" (180). Given the fact that all of these aspects (except for the playful dimension) shape and are reflected by *In Search of Myself*, it is possible to think of FPG's entire writings as a kind of carnivalesque site in which he keeps on acting his masquerade for the sake of a perpetual, escapist self-metamorphosis. Why not think of his *œuvre* and his public *personae* as a kind of grotesque textual body of Otherness, albeit one from which there is no release and that keeps on growing more inhumanly grotesque (or incestuous) with each new textual facet (yet another identity-as-difference) that is being inmixed?

If this sketch of FPG's perverted carnival of the self implies a dramatic dimension, this also points at the way in which his 'autobiography' addresses and engages the reader. He begins with an avowal in the Prologue, imitates the pattern of Goethe's *Dichtung und Wahrheit* (while never losing the title's programmatic implication out of sight) by subscribing to its sense of poetical confession, and

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304 Echoing the ancestral body (see Plato's *Symposion*), this recalls a happy symbiosis of male and female elements.

305 Cf. Dorf's later comment which nicely illustrates (his) language's inability to capture that figure's essence: "She, he, that man or woman in the mud, that hermaphroditic creature.[. . .] She was and she was not language and idea, dream and reality, good and evil, Satan and God" (A 183f).

consistently counteracts his previous claims by being overtly vague or letting on that he is in hiding. Moreover, Grove can compose the pathetic: "In this record, I know, I am dying to myself" (ISM 387). Such a statement fits into the "death / resurrection or failure / creation pattern" that Gammel outlines ("Victims" 50),[306] and it also underlines the author's affinity for drama. Confession becomes a mere matter of effect. "The scene of the carnival, where there is no stage, no 'theater'," Julia Kristeva writes, is "both stage and life, game and dream, discourse and spectacle.[. . .] drama becomes located in language" (*Desire* 79). FPG's dream of a new identity and its discourse is the spectacle of his bookishness. It keeps his (re)readers, his (re)searchers, busy.

Grove knew how to rouse interest in his public audience, how to make the Westerners feel part of his work-on-display.[307] Discussing how he felt with his protagonists and how they 'lived with him', he unveils the source of his inspiration: "And wherever I looked, in this whole region of the Canadian West, there were figures moving about which were the creations of my brain, at the same time that they were the mirrorings of actual conditions" (ISM 262). Is Grove reading a book he has already written? The scene of drama (its carnivalesque discourse), Kristeva reasons, and here she quotes Stéphane Mallarmé, "'might be the reading of a book, its writing in operation'" (*Desire* 79). But dispersing so much of himself into his diverse books and their personae (he lists Abe Spalding, Len Sterner, Niels Lindstedt, Felix Powell, the Clarks and John Elliot (ISM 262f)), what else can there be if not the impression that some form of writing unfolds in the process of reading, that another text demands of the reader to be carefully scriptured from underneath? "I have been dead to the world and unable to read anything but my own text," Grove writes to his friend Richard Crouch on 3 September 1938 while working on *In Search of Myself*. "All day long I write; at night I read what I have written" (Pacey, *Letters* 327). For FPG, the rewritings of self are a way of reaching out of the darkness and into the light of day. In a perversion of the Christian transsubstantiation, turning himself into text is reiteration, ritual, prayer.

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[306] Cf. Kroetsch's playful handling of the theme of dying writer: Dorf pretends to have been almost killed under an avalanche, due to Julie's scheeming, and performs the role of victim by exclaiming: "dead as I was [. . .] I, the hunter, had become the hunted, the collector's agent made part of a collection.[. . .] We live and die by such distinctions, such abrupt and unexpected changes of role" (A 68).

[307] One of the most impressive examples is his talk "Nationhood," given during his lecture-tours, in which he states: "What kept me in Canada, and more especially in the Canadian West, was the fact that I found here more clearly than elsewhere the germs of such a new or distinctive shade in the generally tragic reaction of human souls to the fundamental conditions of man's life on earth. I did not find these germs in the great cities with their churches and schools and universities. There, life is too strenuous, too prone to conformity with the rest of the continent. I found them among the plain, rough people of the prairies" (INTBS 154-55).

In the more down-to-earth, bodily and bawdy *Alibi*, the carnivalesque drama as a form of writing-in-operation can transform the reader from a mere specatator into an active participant. Dorf already enacts what we as readers are bound to do: trying to make sense of the world. Doing that as part of the "play-activity 'carnival'" (R. Lane 23) can be fun and afford us a better understanding of ourselves. Play, as Wolfgang Iser argues in "The Play of the Text," "is apparently built into our anthropological makeup and may indeed help us to grasp what we are" (329). Hence, we can become agents in the text-as-process, eventually reenacting Dorf's quest for collections and origins in our hunt for meaning. "If we take the result of the textual game to be meaning," as Iser reasons, and if "the generation of the 'supplement' [as a multiplicity or difference of meanings] through play allows for different reenactments by different readers in the act of reception" (328-29), then all readers questing for meaning are lured into tracing the text for clues. When Dorf keeps collecting for Deemer and wonders, "Maybe he was trying to put the world back together again [. . .]. According to his own design, of course" (A 37), Dorf's position is that of every reader who is trying to puzzle out the story himself or herself. Dorf's writing of the journal becomes the playground on which the reader can rewrite the story in the process of interpretation.

Crucial importance in this setup of *Alibi* as a game-space for the reader is given to Dorf's confessional eccentricity. As "a special category of the carnival sense of the world," eccentricity "permits – in concretely sensuous form – the latent sides of human nature to reveal and express themselves" (Bakthin, PD 123). Dorf, engaging in that eccentric discourse, comes across as a credible confessant in a transparent, self-reflexive narration, in spite – or because – of his playfully ironic style which should caution the reader to the text's reliability. But the confessional tone in his journal grants the reader a high degree of privacy, a sense of privilege but also of complicity that fosters an identification with the protagonist.[308] "The more the reader is drawn into the proceedings by playing the games of the text, the more he or she is also played *by* the text" (Iser, "Play" 335). This effect culminates towards the end, when the edited portion of the novel slides over into the presumably unedited and 'original' part titled "Dorfendorf's Journal." In a final reading-writing scenario, Dorf speaks, with the meta-textual, self-fictionalizing irony typical of him, of "completing [the journal's]

[308] While male readers may find good reasons to identify with the desire-driven, neo-romantic and lonesome protagonist, female readers find ample reason to identify with Karen's subversive approach to Dorf's occasionally chauvinist/sexist turns. Generally, though, both characters combine features of the other sex in their personality.

transformation into clear type" while he is "checking the text against the text" (A 234). By now, we as readers have caught up with the inscribed agent of the text and know that the "clear type" we have encountered on all the previous pages should not be associated with authentic or truthful representation.

Dorf confronts his transcribed with his pre-transcribed text in mutually subversive reading and writing operations. That is sheer carnivalesque parody and further layering of non-mimetic performance in language.[309] It is also an expression of exuberant confessional eccentricity and points to a double carnivalization (which already operated in Kroetsch's *Gone Indian* (cf. LV 37)) that happens both to the characters and to the text.

With different theoretical and biographical backgrounds, and towards different ends, *In Search of Myself* and *Alibi* make use of the confessional mode. In relation to the much-fictionalized European past, it would not be amiss to argue that with *In Search of Myself*, Grove tried the experiment of writing the autobiographical confession of the man he had wanted to be. In relation to the 'true' self that he hides behind his confessional stance, he is absent in his discourse of effacement; correlatively, Margaret Stobie can argue that "the book as a whole is disappointingly empty" (*Frederick Philip Grove* 176). The figure that Grove claims to have detached himself from, "the ghost of a man who had died three decades ago" (ISM 391),[310] however, is exactly the figure that inhabits the book with powerful eccentricity. This claim is an eccentric act, for Grove had long realized that in his particular case, no separation was possible, since that very 'ghost' had been created in the past to live up to the future.

The inevitable consequence for Grove was to keep up that façade he had erected by pursuing his autobiography as masquerade. Telling 'the truth' in masquerade (that is, in indirect fashion and by way of lies) about his European past in particular, the author presents himself off-centre in relation to the verifiable aspects of his highly performative identity. Analogous to that, the alleged autobiographical dimension becomes a mirage; *In Search of Myself* is eccentric in relation to the genre it purports to

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[309]Cf. R. Lane (25): "The postmodernist focus upon language as writing (in the Derridean sense), destroys any notion of stability, which is a fallacy."

[310] Grove here discusses the publication of *A Search of America* in 1927; since *In Search of Myself* was mostly written in 1939 (but not published before 1946), another twelve years can be added to the thirty years that had allegedly passed since ASA had been conceived. With Grove's tramping time in North America between 1909 and 1912, however, the difference of thirty years that ISM speaks of appears accurate.

be. Autobiography is undermined not only by the constant pseudo-confessional attacks on the registers of truthful narration, but also by intermittent insertions of novelistic discourse modelled, for instance, on the *picaresque*. *In Search of Myself*'s conscious dwelling on, and transgressing of, the margins of its genre, for the sake of recurring self-fictionalization, thus both reflect and constitute the writing subject's eccentricity. What the book, Grove's complete works, and the author himself as a linguistically-based self-creation, represent is a textual masquerade. FPG's countless ambiguous references to the activity of searching, to the pursuit of reliable knowledge, have repeatedly alluded to his life-long *prosopopeia*, that project of constantly putting on the face(s) of the other(s). What applies to us as curious observers of that performance applies to its instigator with equal force: "It is when we think we penetrate the text's disguises that we are usually most deluded and most ignorant, for what we see is nothing but our unknown selves" (Ellmann 10).

Kroetsch's *Alibi*, markedly a quest novel, employs the confession as a way of engaging the reader in a game. The book acts out a play of the text in Iser's sense, establishing complicity between the confessing subject and the reader from the start. Driven by desire – for meaning, self-seeking, origins, and desire itself – protagonist William William Dorfendorf lets us all participate in his adventurous journey while we read his journal as writing-in-operation. As "a performance for an assumed audience," Iser characterizes this textual game that applies to *Alibi*, "it is actually a staged play enacted for the reader, who is given a role enabling him or her to act out the scenario presented" (Iser, "Play" 336). This anthropological dimension offers much more than sheer entertainment to the reader who is willing to enter this carnivalesque space. By enacting what Bakhtin calls the "carnival category of *eccentricity*, the violation of the usual and the generally accepted, life drawn out of its usual rut" (PD 126), the book allows the reader: to become confessor to Dorf's libidinous confessions; to witness, rewrite or even reenact his sexual encounters; to become naked symbolically, entering the carnival laughter and the mud at Laspi; and to go beyond Dorf's and Karen's versions of the story and compose one of his or her own.

Exemplifying some of the major theories of its time, *Alibi* accords with Hutcheon's assertion that "in postmodern theory and practice it is language as *discourse* that is foregrounded" (*A Poetics* 168). Such a foregrounding is done by the characters in the book as well as by those reading it; in their ontological quests, they all collect collections of meaning and, thus, of language which becomes narrative, story, text. "It's

a plotted world we live in" (A 97), Dorf contends, whereas Iser maintains that play not only "produces, [but] at the same time allows the process of production to be observed" ("Play" 336). Readers who consciously observe that production might be inspired by Dorf's eccentric and excessive confessions to elicit their own inner 'truths'. These readers, as inmixed subjects of the grotesque bodily spectacle that is *Alibi*, might be enticed into confiding (some of) their secrets and desires to that self-reflexive text-in-process. Depending on the degree of readerly participation, the book that is labelled a novel, a fictional journal, may open up passages in which the participants can engage in their own autobiographical writing.

Both texts employ the confessional mode in distinct ways, prompting their readers to search for the agency and sources behind these avowals or to insert some confessions themselves. In that context, one could suggest that the relation of the rather absent author Grove to his character of the same name in *In Search of Myself* parallels the relation of the mysterious *alter deus* figure Deemer to his protagonist Dorf in *Alibi*. Beyond that, both texts come to terms with the conditions and limits of their respective genre, eventually transcending them. While the directing of language towards a textual masquerade is a rather desired effect in Grove's case, for psycho-biographical reasons, it is problematized in Kroetsch's fictional book by an editor figure manipulating – or putting 'off-centre' – the protagonist's purportedly authentic confessions. The production of truth is, in either case, endangered, deferred, made impossible. What *In Search of Myself* deliberately takes refuge in is portrayed by *Alibi* as an inevitability.

Chapter 5.1

(Cross)Dressing, Performance, and Iconicity: *The Puppeteer*'s Shift from Disguise to Guise

> There is only one life available, at best, to each of us. Wear it for real.
>
> Robert Kroetsch, *The Puppeteer*

> In the moment of travesty and self-extension, the loneliness of the subjectivity was overcome and a magical dialectic established with the rest of creation.
>
> Mikhail Bakthin, *Rabelais and His World*

> Indeed, the source of personal and political agency comes not from within the individual, but in and through the complex cultural exchanges among bodies in which identity itself is ever-shifting, indeed, where identity itself is constructed, disintegrated, and recirculated only within the context of a dynamic field of cultural relations.
>
> Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*

> Iconicity, then, means the revelation of a real more real than ordinary reality.
>
> Paul Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning*

Nine years after the publication of *Alibi*, Kroetsch issued its sequel, *The Puppeteer* (1992), in which his postmodern approach to telling the story and involving the reader in that act takes yet another turn. As the author asserts, both novels are "thought of [. . .] as a diptych: the notion from art of two facing pictures" (Spinks, "Puppets" 14). They engage in complex interaction, mirror and relativize each other in a game "of language writing against itself" (21). Most of the characters from *Alibi* reappear, some in different roles, and they embark on another confusing, bizarre journey along a similar chain of settings, this time from Vancouver to Deadman Spring and back, via a spa and Renaissance garden in Italy to the Greek island of Siphnos. While this movement parodies a search for origins, it is motivated by the guiding quest for icons. In contrast to its predecessor, *The Puppeteer* employs literal disguise to the extreme and becomes a *tour de force* in (cross)dressing and performative identity.

As part of that dynamics, the textual body of this novel exerts what Brian Edwards calls the "art of narrative striptease [which] depends alike on provocation and partial recognition, deferral and incompletion, on the agreement that there is always more to come" ("Artifice" 219). Such Barthesian erotics of text co-operate with the Derridean shift of language towards surface where depth and meaning (or truth) have

disappeared amidst "a nonrepresentational, arbitrary, differential system of signifiers and signifieds" (Creelman 67). Not origin or essence, but language as discourse is foregrounded by the novel's "patchwork use of heavily-coded genres or sub-genres" (Vauthier, "Resisting" 174) and its focus on the performative effects of garments: "Literalized as events *in* the text, as signifiers of character and relationships, dressing, undressing and cross dressing are also symbolically suggestive *of* the text, of the processes themselves of textuality and reading" (Edwards, "Artifice" 223-24). This kind of *methectic* play, as opposed to a mimetic artifice, provides a matrix for performative reading[311] and draws attention to the text's façade and the characters's images of appearance.

A blurred view on the book's two dominating garments is presented by the opening. Past midnight, out on the porch of the house that Maggie Wilder, a new and central character, has rented, the "pizza man" stands in the Vancouver rain. He appears in a "tall black hat" and in "a shapeless blue sack of a garment that might pass for a cassock" (P 1). While the man delivering pizza is wearing a monk's habit, Maggie, the writer who stands on the other side of the door, is "wearing a wedding dress" (P 2). Two specific roles are paired in a threshold situation which is bound to create tension: the monk, whose "robe is an outward sign of his achievement of merit" and indicates "a separation from the 'world of desire'" (Barnes and Eicher 5), and the bride as emblem of regeneration and source of family. What they signal to each other through the door frame causes confusion but also interest. On the basis of its physical appearance, Eicher and Roach-Higgins (17) argue, "we can expect dress to precede verbal communication in establishing an individual's gendered identity as well as expectations for other types of behavior (social roles) based on this identity."[312] No real communication takes place upon their first and very brief meeting, but both the figures of monk and bride will enact and betray the assumptions and conventions signified by their respective clothings. These, in turn, will engage several characters in a communicative tug of attraction and repulsion, and will effect different (re)actions in those who wear as well as look at them in the course of the novel.

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[311] Cf. Wolfgang Iser ("Play" 330), who examines the structural level of a postmodern text in terms of the "countermovement as the basic feature of play." This feature, he adds, "converts the text from a mimetic to a performative act."

[312] Cf. the author's comment that "it is a remarkable example of cultural coding, the wedding dress. Just amazing. You have this garment that you only wear once, and how much it is associated with gender. And the way culture buys into it so much... Financially, we spend fortunes on these dresses" (Maze xxv).

The characters's dresses reflect Kroetsch's being "much more interested right now in what we call surface" (Maze xxii). Maggie orders a second delivery and this time asks the pizza man in for a coffee. Having received his "discards" in a monastery on Mount Athos in Greece, he explains, he needs his disguise to hide from the police. Since he is charged with murder of the dwarf doctor Manny de Medeiros, his identity is revealed as that of *Alibi*'s agent and narrator, Dorf. As employee of Midnight Pizza, though, he performs the role of eccentric monk and is identified as such by customers who call in to have their food brought expressly by "Papa Vasilis. Papa B" (P 7). Also, by driving through Vancouver at daylight, he exposes himself to and recognizes that "particular cop" (24) who always eyes him with suspicion. What Papa B wears is thus a guise, a conspicuous expression of a role which makes Maggie wonder if "that is part of your disguise, letting us think we see right through you?" (14). As a special ontological *coup* of the novel, Papa B will first become her lover (acting like the opposite of a monk given to spiritual and celebate life) but in the end converge with the image he presents.

Maggie's wedding dress, bought second hand, is also highly coded as a universal signifier. Married to, though currently separated from, an icon-specialist named Henry Ketch, she is neither a bride, nor presently trying to pass as one. Whereas the delicately embroidered garment she wears at home projects a deceptive self-reference for all potential onlookers, she has just "discovered that when she put on her old wedding dress she could hear the story she intended to tell" (P 2). Aware that the dress "had brought disaster to its first wearer" (4), she nonetheless hopes to make use of its special powers and insists on writing its autobiography. The enabling dress "which becomes a speaking subject" (Vauthier, "Resisting" 180) gradually unravels its complicated history of production and of genealogical influence. Originally, it was designed for Julie Magnuson, the symbol of female sexuality and allegedly dead wife of arch-collector Jack Deemer, who takes over the narrative position and therefore wants the dress back. He describes its uncanny eloquence: "Seen close up, it was a veritable mirage of colours and forms, a story of desire, of betrayal, of ragged lust, of barbarous fulfilment. The nimble fingers of Josie Pavich had scribbled on that cloth each tattle of gossip that came to her ignorant ears" (251). Urged by Josie not to keep it any longer, Maggie refuses to part with this particular garb.

In its traditional context, as Kroetsch asserts, the wedding dress promises "the unveiling after, the notion that there's going to be some revelation, for the bride and for the groom or whatever" (Maze xxvi). *The Puppeteer* playfully deconstructs this set of

expectations by ascribing transformative and (at least partly) uncontrollable powers to the dress; it affects its wearers, seems to reflect and simultaneously create the book's various realities. Deemer, reminiscing his wedding day, narrates that "we fell upon the dress, Julie and I. [. . .] In the tumult of the dress [. . .] we were the lovers in animal form that [Josie] had so carefully pictured, the man with the body of a fish, the horse-headed man, the woman with octopus arms" (P 136-37). The wedding gown's changing depictions of figures, sceneries and intricate embroidery all centre around a miniature representation of the dress on the dress – a *mise-en-abîme*, the "fraction that replicates the whole" (Arnason 127). An emblem of self-reflexive signification, the *mise-en-abîme* is the book's dominating structural device and operates as central narratological element.

With its capacities for telling and enabling to tell a story, the wedding dress assumes metamorphic powers, and functions, in its appeal, like an icon. This mirrors the appeal that Papa B is afforded by the text. As a character going by an incomplete name, the book's early description insinuates, he is flat, lacking dimension. Moreover, "his unruly reddish-grey beard" and "long and ascetic" face make him look "like nothing so much as a Greek Orthodox priest" (P 1; 9). Hence, he is portrayed as an anachronistic version of traditional icons. Byzantine icons, in particular, depict in their centre a male head with a beard (usually a saint figure), surrounded by a golden frame; these paintings lack perspective and depth, are regarded as a representation of patriarchal order (or phallocentrism) and are objects of worship.[313] Since *The Puppeteer*'s chaotic plot subjects Deemer's agent to a tragic and heroic death at the end, by letting him fall down a cliff twice, he is turned into a real icon: "Papa B is seen as something of a saint by the monks and priests of Mount Athos" (264). Kroetsch's employment of the notion of iconicity accords well with Paul Ricoeur's, who sees its major function in "the rewriting of reality" (Ricoeur 42). From a man driven by desire and suspected of being a killer, Dorf has changed into Papa B who, like a modern-day good Samaritan, "would deliver food to the hungry and throw in consolation to boot" (P 22), to become a saint. Kroetsch

[313] Kurt Weitzmann, in his essay on the origins and meanings of icons, stresses the two-dimensional character of Byzantine icons (especially from the 10th century) as a means of avoiding the impression of corporeality. To support that approach, icon-artists used special and almost transparent materials such as *cloisonné*, an enamel paint "das [. . .] besser als jedes andere Medium die Wiedergabe entmaterialisierter Körper erlaubte" (Weitzmann 7). Cf. Kroetsch's comment on his former wife's books on iconicity: ". . . you see, the icons didn't use that kind of Renaissance notion of depth perception – they just play with . . . they're flat. If somebody's bigger. . . If it's a Saint, they make him bigger. There's no attempt at the point of view that we're having" (Maze xxvii).

combines an ironic conception of the icon with a more traditionalist one, which is supported by conferring upon Dorf "a Greek patronym masking its regal (not to say ecclesiastic) connotations (Vasilis / Basileus) behind the initial of a nickname" (Vauthier, "Resisting" 178). Papa B, the ambivalent signifier, plays with delivering and refusing transcendence.

That the textual surface of *The Puppeteer* is characterized primarily by unstable signification is further underlined by the function of pizza. As a surface of multiple, floating, and (almost) empty signifiers which can easily and always be recombined and exchanged, the pizza of Kroetsch's novel becomes a "comic double of the Greek icon."[314] The pizza Papa B delivers replicates his iconic flatness in a comic union. The degree of his quasi-sacral identification finds expression in a sensuous and generative list:

> He spoke pizza as if it was a language. Crab meat and the rainbow colours of ripening fruit fell together on his tongue. Kiwi. Mango. He wanted mozzarella, wondered at quail's eggs. Garlic butter and a trace of goat. He remembered the taste of lark from a night in Sicily, the skin of a fish from a beach in Thailand where the sunset closed like a lover's mouth onto an opened mussel shell. He offered lichen twisted into the dried and shredded slices of a reindeer's heart, with jalapeno peppers. (124)

In light of the loss of religious believes and related master-narratives, pizza can be seen as *the* modern universal symbol of iconicity.[315] In this passage which mimicks an epiphany, the composition of the pizza recollects some of the composer's past experiences and functions as a transposition of his fractured reality through recombination. The textual unit that results is, to borrow a term by W.K. Wimsatt, a "verbal icon" (217).[316] What is most central to this concept, though, as Malva E. Filer outlines in her study of Julio Cortázar's late fiction, is that this iconic "transcription of the world through literary discourse [. . .] is not reduplication, but metamorphosis" (261).

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[314] Kroetsch in class at the University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, on 8 April 1993. The author further outlined that he considers Cervantes's figures of Don Quixote and Sancho Pansa as the model for the comic double. Also, he maintained: "My use of the double is more Jungian."

[315] Kroetsch argues: "it looks like an icon to me" (Spinks, "Puppets" 16).

[316] See Wimsatt's chapter on "Verbal Style," where he points out the fact that "the verbal symbol in calling attention to itself must also call attention to the difference between itself and the reality which it resembles and symbolizes." He reasons that "iconicity enforces [such] a disparity" (*The Verbal Icon* 217).

Kroetsch's text – and it is legitimate to draw this analogy, not only because he has acknowledged Cortázar's influence (see LV 157-58) – makes use of iconicity in ways similar to his South American colleague. *The Puppeteer* can also be regarded as "geared towards the production of iconicity" (Filer 261). As Papa B's verbal evocation of the pizza illustrates, the object itself is not only potential subject to continuous transformation, but makes dissolve the usual categories of space and time; different levels of past and present and various locations are fused into the singular image of the round, edible icon. This is part of the novel's larger narrative structure that makes collapse spatio-temporal categories, as in the opening: "The kitchen was a cave of light hung with four calendars that didn't agree on the month or the year, as if George [the absent owner of the house] simply abandoned one point in time and moved to another" (P 3). In the surreal space of the kitchen-cave, time collapses into non-linearity and leaves the narrative strangely suspended in a realm of its own that is reminiscent of Magic Realism. The "watery silence of the old house" (3) equally contributes to this effect; in Kroetsch's fiction – and, according to Filer (262), in Cortázar's – "this interaction of time and space within the writing promotes an incessant transformation of all reality."[317]

In *The Dialogic Imagination*, Bakhtin assigns "the name chronotope (literally, 'time space') to the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships" in literature. He begins his discussion with the earliest example, the Greek Romance, its "usual obstacles and adventures of lovers" and its focus "on fate, omens, the power of Eros, human passions," before he outlines: "The elements derived from various other genres assumed a new character and special functions in this completely new chronotope – 'an alien world in adventure-time' – and ceased to be what they had been in other genres." As a reflex of personal experience and artistic imagination, the Greek Romance constitutes new genres and a new reality. While its actions "are a pure digression from the normal course of life," its "Greek adventure-time lacks any natural, everyday cyclicity" and "provides an opening for sheer chance, which has its own specific logic" (DI 84-92). *The Puppeteer* – as reflected by its generic indeterminacy, its changing character constellations, constant denial of plot logics, and production of

[317] Cf. another passage: "Day and night, winter and spring tumbled against each other" (P 53).

iconicity – contains and plays with elements of such Greek Romances and their specific adventure-time.[318]

In the middle passage of Kroetsch's book (85-165), there is a series of theatrical performances and metamorphic stages that set up a compact of chronotopes in Bakhtin's sense. Dorf, in hiding from Deemer, the police, and his temperamental employer / lover Inez Catonio, has broken into Maggie's house and now dwells in the attic.[319] In that 'alien world in adventure-time,' still in the guise of Papa B, this miniature version of patriarchy undergoes a transformation from man to animal, from late to early phylogenetic human being, and never moves beyond the threshold of the attic area.[320] Looking "like a werewolf," with a "face [that] was a mess of hair that opened to let words out," he becomes "a monster" and "beast-man" (157-159). Kroetsch's concept of metamorphosis bears affinity with Deleuze and Guattari's reading of *Die Verwandlung* and other works by Kafka. Arguing that "the becoming animal is an immobile voyage that stays in one place" but does not exclude the becoming human again, they stress processes of multiple becoming and opt for alternative notions of subjectivity that are freed from traditional psychoanalytical interpretations (*Kafka* 35-38).

Dorf's metamorphic slippages into a series (or composite) of identities are paralleled, and enhanced, by his building and playing shadow puppets. In that process, he "become[s] his own Karaghiosi" (156), a new version of the Greek puppeteer which derived from "its Turkish progenitor, Karagoz" (*Kara* meaning 'black,' and *Ghioz* 'eyes') and had its first appearance in Greece in 1799 (Myrsiades 145; Harbas 4). Now almost extinct, the traditional Karaghiozis shadow puppet theatre is known for the "predominance of male characters and heroes" (Myrsiades 145) and seen as "a method for teaching History and Religion to the uneducated Greek people" (Harbas 3). Its affinity with the carnivalesque, particularly with the notion of eccentricity (cf. Chapter 4.3 and Bakhtin, PD 125), renders the "Karaghiozis figure [tied] to a whole set of psychological attributes that enhance his sexual appeal"; he "is associated with animal

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318 Bakhtin subsumes: "Abductions, escape, pursuit, search and captivity all play an immense role in the Greek romance" (DI 99). All this is encoded in *The Puppeteer*'s parodic approach.

319 Narrator Deemer comments: "The attic had become a grotesque mausoleum, a funeral home for a fool's dead dream." He also insists that Maggie tries to keep "Papa B upstairs as her prisoner, a slave shackled to his crew of puppets" (P 154; 161). Cf. Bakhtin: "*Captivity* and *prison* presume *guarding* and *isolating* the hero in a *definite spot in space*, impeding his subsequent spatial movement towards his goal, that is, his subsequent pursuits and searches and so forth" (DI 99).

320 In class at the University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, on 8 April 1993, Kroetsch pointed out how the book is "full of edges, borders, thresholds." Papa B, in particular, is characterized by that, as Maggie's thought, "He is always in a doorway" (P 239), underlines.

cunning [and c]onsidered divinely touched in [his] madness and immune to social criticism" (Myrsiades 156). With one arm being longer than the other, he can perform special stunts; he "protects the weak, naïve, hard to convince," is ugly, hairless, clever and lazy, but also a "philosopher of feelings" (Harbas 4-5). Kroetsch subsumes: Karaghiozis is "a trickster-tricked figure and I'm always a sucker for that" (Spinks, "Puppets" 16).

Many of these characteristics are transferred to Papa B and his puppet show in the attic. On the *berdes*, the screen, he plays events of the past, stages and impersonates figures of the book, foreshadows the future, acquires absolute skill and mastery. Retelling murder scenes from *Alibi*, he shows "the drowned man [Manny to be] alive as the smile on your face," and makes Jack Deemer, who has "a calendar for a head, a pair of spectacles where one might have expected his private parts, [. . .] bury Fish[, his rival for the love of Julie,] alive" (P 153; 135). In this 'chronotopic' attic which becomes, with all the botanic specimen Maggie's cousin George has left behind, a grotesque garden and "forest" (156), Papa B's puppet plays take place on and around her desk. He has not only appropriated the site where her writing is supposed to happen, but substitutes for that with his performances that translate his desire as well as his philosophy of life and prompt his audience into responding.

Knowing that "the Greeks figured out how to let the puppets say what couldn't be said" (106), Papa B makes the puppet master himself appear on the screen – and Maggie shouts: "Karaghiosi, you are always pretending to be someone you aren't. I know that much about you. You're pretending to be Papa B" (116-17). Like the identities of puppet and puppeteer, of time and space, those of fiction and reality also become blurred: "Papa B spoke in Maggie's voice. [. . .] 'Please do join us, Inez.' Maggie was shocked and yet excited too, by the name she was given" (117). And she, "crossing the line into the space of the performance" (Williams, "Cyberwriting" 63), becomes Inez, in her function as Papa B's lover, on her side of the desk. From the other side of the screen, Karaghiosi offers her pizza, reveling in a long list of ingredients. Then the "attic was pitch dark. The floating hands attached themselves to bodies. The floating words attached themselves to tongues" (118). Night after night, this scenario is varied; a new monk-like puppet appears on the screen, with a voice that "was almost but not quite that of Papa B," while another puppet is "asking [Maggie] simply to play herself" (P 121-22). In their "rhapsodies of desire," Maggie takes off her clothes before putting on the

wedding gown each night, "must undress in order to undress" (124-26) while acting the bride to her puppet master, whom she repeatedly names into being.

"In his archetypal fluidity," Myrsiades (157) writes, "Karaghiozis is described [. . .] as he who is everything and everywhere." Kroetsch, the novel-puppeteer, revels in such a floating of signifiers and bodies.[321] By staging this in an attic as a possibly archetypal setting, he teasingly alludes to a Jungian reading for the characters's unconscious being brought to light through performance.[322] More seriously, though, the author uses this attic as the genre-marking chronotope in which "persons are forever having things happen *to* them" and which "is composed of a series of short segments that correspond to separate adventures" (Bakhtin, DI 95). Through this 'adventure-time,' the individual stories which are projected on and extended before as well as behind the screen constitute a series of miniature-genres within the larger hyper-generic operation that is *The Puppeteer*. Hence, the attic performances have the function of rewriting reality through carnivalesque subversion, while representing a narrative microcosm which reflects the exterior (or framing) novelistic macrocosm. They make the boundaries of spatio-temporal categories, between play and reality, spectator and actor, dissolve. In addition to that, they provide the setting for Papa B's heroic emergence as puppeteer, at the same time as they prepare the stage for Deemer as rivaling Karaghiosi.

Maggie must leave the house and enter another adventure-time to help her husband. Via a stop-over at Rome – where she meets up with her friends Josie and Ida, and witnesses the public reappearance of the presumably dead Manny de Medeiros and Julie Magnuson in a Renaissance cardinal's garden – she travels, with her wedding dress, to Siphnos, where Henry is scheming to steal a collection of rare Greek icons. Papa B, learning that these icons are from Mount Athos, is desperate to thwart that plan, reconnects with Deemer – who still wishes him dead – and by mentioning that on one icon God is portrayed as a female manages to talk his former employer into commissioning that particular collection.[323] With the characters's transfer from the New

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[321] The narrator comments on Maggie and Papa B-as-Karaghiosi's nightly encounters: "They were exchanged for each other, and again" (P 126).

[322] See also the earlier evocation of the kitchen-cave. Kroetsch comments that in his interest for surface effects in *The Puppeteer*, he consciously resisted Jung's notion of psychological depth and of prime sites for archetypal thought. He reasons that "the problem is to go back to the cave and the attic instead of to the interpretations. I guess that's what I mean by surface in a certain way. I mean not that you aren't going to start reading Jung or Jungian again – you can't avoid that" (Maze xxiii).

[323] Deemer is so fascinated by the prospect of owning this unique set of icons, which deconstructs the whole idea of patriarchy and of Christian civilization, that he comments: "I was beginning to conceive it as the commanding centre of my collection of collections, the completion of my enterprise" (P 204).

to the Old World, from the pseudo-psychological space of the attic to the source of Western civilization, the plot thickens: Papa B has won his ticket to Greece, albeit under pretence; Deemer has another agent, Karen Strike, come along to negotiate with Henry, while he wants to supervise all actions, secure the icons and the wedding dress he has been after; Manny and Julie come to the island to get even with Deemer.

In a typical Kroetschian novel, however, events must run rounter to the conventions. Papa B, while secretly following the seven mules with the stolen icons, is discovered by Julie. They immediately submit to their animal natures, engage in sexual action amidst the mules with the dangling icons wrapped in blankets, while being photographed by Karen. Together with Maggie and the muleteers, all of them lead the mules along a small path to a chapel, out of which a bride steps in the early morning light. In this crucial scene, identities are created and exchanged. Dorf, alias Papa B, who from the beginning had "believed in his own disguise, even if it didn't for an instant fool another human being," now shows an impulse to lead the bride to the ceremony and thus "bec[omes] the monk he had so long pretended to be" (P 22; 250). Dorf's robe induces shape-shifting; he achieves congruence with the obsolete male concept represented by his old-fashioned outfit. His disguise, through role-performance, has shifted into a guise, thereby substituting an old by a new, iconic identity.[324]

Kroetsch, in pondering the question whether there could be an emptiness behind Dorf's disguise, reasons that "there is some reality which you then can see by putting on a disguise. But what is it that you are disguising?" (Maze xxiv). It is possible that the reality made visible by disguise is the absence of an essential identity, replaced through performance. This would accord with Judith Butler's assertion that "gender proves to be performative – that is, constituting the identity it is purported to be" (25). And this would accord, in particular, with the change Jack Deemer undergoes at the end of the novel. Waiting in the chapel to purchase the stolen icons, he had put on the wedding dress "simply as a disguise.[. . .] And then something precious happened. Wearing the dress, I was no longer simply myself" (P 251). Although the wedding dress "exerts its magic [not only] on Deemer [but also] on the onlookers who see him as a bride," as Vauthier ("Resisting" 182) suggests, Manny de Medeiros and Julie seize the moment to pursue their treacherous aim. The shot Manny fires towards Deemer, upon Julie's shout, ends up hitting Papa B, who was "standing arm in arm" with the collector. With his left

[324] See also the narrator's comment, speaking Maggie Wilder's mind: "He is, she thought, a monk after all. Being a fake monk is as close as he can get to what he is" (P 242).

foot completely crushed, the monk figure falls off a steep cliff – most likely pushed by Deemer, who in his powerful disguise can be sure of the local policemen's "profound respect for brides" (P 253; 257).

Deemer, not unlike Dorf, performs a role. But his cross-dressing constitutes the novel's most transgressive form of a disguise which also becomes a guise. Kroetsch's comment, "It's funny we allow women to cross-dress in a certain way. But it's so taboo for men" (Maze xxix), underlines how much Deemer violates cultural coding by putting on a garment specifically designed to be worn once and by women only. Playing "with the idea of moving between genders" (Kroetsch in Spinks, "Puppets" 17), his male cross-dressing, like Viola's in Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, has the effect of "putting in question the notion of fixed sexual difference" (Howard 430).[325] That act moves inward in psycho-biological ways, for Deemer not only is feminised externally as a bride, but through his "tendency to retain water" (P 265) alludes to menstruation.[326] He has interiorized female aspects into his gendered being. What is effected is androgyny, the physical transgression of sexual difference and of a fixed gender identity.

Although *The Puppeteer* repeatedly alludes to myths – Julie, for instance, is linked with Artemis / Diana, the goddess of war – it does not correspond to Mercea Eliade's position that, with reference to divinities in myths, "androgyny has become a general formula signifying *autonomy, strength, wholeness*" (175).[327] That Kroetsch does "not believe in androgyny as an ideal"[328] is reflected by the ambivalent and theatrical De Medeiros, an androgynous hydrotherapist and doctor who, instead of preserving life, kills Dorf before escaping to Deadman Spring with Julie and Fish to engage in their love triangle. Deemer, however, bears traces of the mythological figure of Tiresias who, after having struck one of two coupling snakes, underwent a sex-change and remained a woman for seven (some sources speak of eight) years before he was turned back into a man again. Famous for his intimate knowledge of both sexes, Tiresias was blinded by Juno in punishment for his truthful answer – namely, that women have more sexual

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325 Howard (439) points out the crucial distinction that on the Renaissance stage, "female crossdressing often strengthens notions of difference by stressing what the disguised woman *cannot* do." In contrast to that, Deemer – and Maggie, by putting on male sports clothing – rather explore what they *can* do.

326 Upon suggesting to Kroetsch that Deemer shows signs of menstruation and thereby foregrounds the notion of androgyny, he replied: "That's right, he's getting there" (Maze xxv).

327 Eliade comments further that "to say of a divinity that it is androgyne is as much to say that it is the ultimate being, the ultimate reality" (175).

328 The novelist in class at the University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, on 8 April 1993.

pleasure than men – but afterwards endowed with prophetic powers by Jupiter.[329] Deemer, in an ironic echo of the Tiresias figure, repeatedly shows his fascination with Julie's pure sexuality[330] and admits to speaking "volumes" of the "true lies" that "artists tell" (P 259). Moreover, he is basically blind, especially at the most opportune moments, but insists on an inner seeing and offers his "recollections of events" (264) to Maggie in their joint venture of writing the book. Most interestingly, as "an intrusion upon an outside world [like that] of women," Tiresias's sex-change is "the prelude to what comes later" (Forbes Irving 169; 165), which corresponds to Deemer's sliding from transvestism into transsexuality as a prerequisite for telling the story titled *The Puppeteer*.

Complementing Deemer's appearance, Maggie cross-dresses in a sweat suit and sneakers, sports gear which "was developed [. . .] as a male clothing system" (Maze xxvii). "Women in trousers becomes a code," Diana Brydon argues, "for women who wish to appropriate male power, not for women who wish to be men" (186). Maggie retains her femaleness at the side of the hermaphroditic Deemer but is granted specific agency and inhabits the powerful positions of writer and wife who keeps her husband Henry in safe distance in a Greek prison. With Deemer, she forms an artistic union in which is encoded a parodic take on contemporary notions of gender constructions. This is mirrored by Kroetsch's subversive approach to the genealogy of power by having a male figure become object of desire:

> Well, I suppose there's even a kind of return to the matriarchal world. I like to believe it's older than the patriarchal. The dress could give birth again to . . . It revalidates the dress in a certain way, I suppose, having him put it on. It is the feminine about to give birth to – potentially able to give birth to – the male, I mean it makes much more sense. (Maze xxvi)

The Puppeteer – a novel of incoherent plot snippets, confusing narratological stances without a centre of authority, puppet-like characters and character-like puppets – ends with reflections on contemporary culture. With his attack on patriarchy, Kroetsch contrasts the death of Papa B, who represents an obsolete role model and lacks a sense

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[329] The best-known description can be found in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Book III, where Tiresias's fate is introduced before he relates the story of Narcissus and Echo (82-87). In Eliot's *The Waste Land* (1922), Tiresias plays a crucial role as narrator/character and (one of) the leading personae of the author.

[330] Julie's link with Artemis provides another possible connection with the story of Tiresias. As Forbes Irving (164-65) relates, "the offended Artemis" was known to use coupling snakes as a "magical sign."

of historical progression, and the transformation of Deemer.[331] As a representative of performatively gendered beings that abandon traditional gender roles, Deemer – like his new companion Maggie – engages in process, creativity, change and appropriation. Cross-dressing and androgyny, Kroetsch says, "surprise us, don't they, with possibility. . . .?" (Maze xxix). Guided by the wedding gown as inducement to shape-shifting and to narrative replication, they rewrite the world of *Alibi* while starting a new adventure-time in their own modern Greek romance on Siphnos. Since "it is precisely the chronotope that defines genre and generic distinctions" (Bakhtin, DI 85) and effects new textual appearances, the book we read becomes something other than the intended autobiography of the wedding dress: Under blind Deemer's narratological regime and in the executing hands of Maggie, who "each morning work for an hour or two on – dare we say? – a saint's life" (P 264), *The Puppeteer* slides towards the genre of biography. But based as it is on Papa B's having assumed an iconic identity, which transcends, through being worshipped by the monks of Mount Athos, the final form of his death, this generic format transcends the boundaries of biography – or any genre at that. What remains in a book that focuses on surface and ennobles disguise from being a mere deception into a visibly enabling act, a catalyst for the plot, for individual change and extension of identity, is the notion of writing as iconicity. By signalling its nature as multi-layered, intra- and intertextual artifice, *The Puppeteer* puns on Kroetsch's notion of culture as godgame and promotes an endlessly self-replicating transformation of reality.

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[331] See Deemer's comment which can be linked to Papa B's iconic identity: "There is something static about icons that appeals to me. Progress is an illusion that icons refuse" (P 198).

Chapter 5.2

Fractal Structures in *The Hornbooks of Rita K*: Traces of Autobiography and Poetological Transformations of Gender and Genre

> The law of chaos is the law of ideas, of improvisations and seasons of belief.
>
> Wallace Stevens, "Extracts from Addresses to the Academy of Fine Ideas"

> Autobiography would seem to occupy the opposite end of the spectrum from ghost-writing. Not the writing of someone standing in for someone else, but writing in your own *stead*, i mean listening to and writing the movements of your story, their strange patterns, their forward-and-back that form the *place* you recognize yourself in – you / i – a place occupied not by one but many selves, a place full of ghosts, those visitants from previous and other ways of being. As such this writing probes the house of the self, haunting its narrow construction, breaking down its oh-so-edified walls. . . .
> For a woman writing autobiography, history itself becomes a ghost, one that is always disappearing only to reappear on the page ahead. Collective and personal. . . . And so we keep reinventing ourselves, without models (or so we think). Our histories ghostly. And ghosts, who are hungry for recognition as we know, return, return. . . .
>
> Daphne Marlatt, *Ghost Works*

> But poetry that thinks is in truth / the topology of Being. // This topology tells Being the / whereabouts of its actual / presence.
>
> Martin Heidegger, "The Thinker as Poet"

> Every work modifies the sum of possible works, each new example alters the species.
>
> Tzvetan Todorov, *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*

With *The Hornbooks of Rita K* (2001), Kroetsch presents his most dazzling textual enterprise to date. A tentative sum of his view on and practice of writing, it constitutes his ultimate intra- and intertextual labyrinth for any reader and employs such complex backgrounds as Dante's *La divina commedia* and the lives of Japanese poet-beggar Ryokan and his nun-companion Teishin.[332] If this complexity reflects the author's

[332] In contrast to the marked intertextual relations with the Japanese poet-nun couple, *La Divina commedia* is one of the less obvious traces in *The Hornbooks of Rita K*. In a personal conversation on 1 December 1996, Kroetsch told me that Dante serves as a structural model for his ongoing 'autopoetobiographical' dialogue with himself; in *Labyrinths of Voice*, he says "I'm terribly fascinated by it" (LV 184). A computer file the author had given me in July 1996 contained a new section of his text (published as "from 'The Poetics of Rita Kleinhart'," *Prairie Fire* 17:2 (Summer 1996): 28-31), which was preceded by a structural survey and by the line, "begin the volume with one or more prologues." What then follows is a subdivision into three parts, each with a list of thirty-three hornbooks in non-numerical sequences. The total of ninety-nine hornbooks in three parts with (at least) one prologue matches exactly the *Divina commedia*'s thirty-three cantos in each of the three canticles (or journeys into the Inferno, Purgatorio, and Paradiso) plus one additional canto – resulting in the 'magic' number one hundred. In *The Hornbooks of Rita K*, the structural comparison has become more complicated: There is a

"growing interest in chaos theory" (Maze ix), the book's genesis also testifies to that orientation. Fractals, contemporary chaos theory posits, are complex objects that appear self-similar; that is, their component parts, which can be reiterated infinitely, resemble the whole. Kroetsch's latest book seems conceived in a similar fashion: From its first fragmentary appearance in 1993,[333] through its major intermediate shape as a chapter called "The Poetics of Rita Kleinhart" in *A Likely Story: The Writing Life* (1995), to its publication as "a completed text" (HRK 107) titled *The Hornbooks of Rita K*, some of the fractal portions which were successively built towards the 'whole' compilation were scattered in journals, chapbook format, and public readings across Canada and in places like Spain, Scotland,[334] Germany and Australia. The change in title of this "ongoing poem / drama" (RSH 1)[335] in various components redirects the reader's focus from looking at a poetics (as a normative and / or inductive description of a writer's approach to literature) to the traditional (that is: officially obsolete) hornbook as an instructive beginner's book containing the alphabet, the Lord's Prayer, Roman numerals, etc – a shift which highlights the role of language, or discourse, as seemingly geared towards epistemology in multiple form and which renders a definition of the text's generic nature(s) improbable.

The book has undergone several extensions[336] and transformations in terms of form and content, space, personage and – as a trace of a concept suggesting narrative structure – plot. In the acknowledgments of *A Likely Story*, a collection of essays ("fugitive pieces") which are not concerned "with the personal life" of the writer,

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total of one hundred-and-twelve hornbooks, out of which ninety-nine are numerically identified in proper fashion with a '#-sign,' whereas the rest has either a letter (in a sequence with proper alphabetical order) or a short title to precede the respective hornbook. On top of that, there are two "Archivist's Notes."

[333] "The Poetics of Rita Kleinhart," *West Coast Line* 27:1 (Spring 1993): 34-39.

[334] The inside of the cover of *The Red Shale Hornbooks* (Winnipeg: Pachyderm Press, 2000) reads: "Published in an edition of 99 numbered and signed copies for distribution in Scotland only" (RSH n.p.). The text is one out of a little series titled "A Whisky Trail Chapbook," with the four other authors being David Arnason, Karen Clavelle, Dennis Cooley and Dawne McCance.

[335] This label is given in 2000, in a brief author's note that locates this chapbook at the end of the sequence. In 1998, Kroetsch speaks of "my incomplete and apparently unfinishable non-poem poem" ("What Else" 19); earlier, he calls it "a poem" both in private conversation and in public readings, as on 15 November 1996, on the occasion of the 20th Anniversary of the Canadian Studies Centre at Trier University, Germany.

[336] With the exception of the sixth and last section in the book, "The Red Shale Hornbooks" (which is identical with the chapbook of the same title), all other portions appear in altered form respectively, with new hornbooks added to the original sequences; moreover, two sections are now preceded by an"Archivist's Note" (HRK 7; 81).

Kroetsch cautions: "This is (not) an autobiography" (ALS 217)[337] – a (dis)claimer that has disappeared in the new book, in which the term is consistently put to trial while 'archivist' Raymond glosses over and seeks to order the remaining hornbooks of his alleged lover, the mysteriously vanished poet Rita Kleinhart. "I am attempting to write an autobiography in which I do not appear" (HRK 29), she comments in hornbook #7, whereas he describes her approach as that of a "collective biography [which] could not be located in a system of beliefs or a narrative of origins. It could only be located, literally and momentarily, in back doors" (10). Symptomatically blurring the lines of their individual thoughts, this passage undermines the tradition of a self (re)affirming identity through writing and, by equating the literal house and the edifice of poetry, points to alternative, non-metaphysical ways of both accessing and dispersing knowledge. Using back doors, which "would connect with the notion of the maze" (Maze xlvi), as an "escape from transcendence" (HRK 10), *The Hornbooks of Rita K* draws its characters and readers into a genealogical labyrinth which is operated by the laws of chaos just as much as by the multiple influences – such as Bakthin's principle of 'dialogized heteroglossia'[338] and Barthes's notion of 'textual tissues'[339] – that Kroetsch has assimilated.

N. Katherine Hayles argues that "chaos may either lead to order, as it does with self-organizing systems, or in yin / yang fashion it may have deep structures of order encoded within it" ("Complex" 3). With regard to the assemblage of the text and the reading process as such a delicately intertwined chaotic system in operation, *The Hornbooks of Rita K* opens up in a (dis)orienting manner before it begins to make gradually accessible its many deep structures: "The Marginalia Hornbooks" – short and connotated, from a scientific point of view, as negligible but endowed with the potential to effect large-scale results – contains *in nuce* what the text to follow may offer. These first six hornbooks are about seeing as a metaphor for understanding; about the creative

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337 Before its publication, he has also spoken of *A Likely Story* as "anti-autobiography that [. . .] could conceivably have some poetry in it, but it's difficult to insert poetry into an autobiographical form" (Spinks, "Puppets" 22).

338 Examining 'dialogized heteroglossia' in the context of the novel, Bakhtin attributes to it parodic and subversive powers and the aim to unmask official languages. Investigating language in its "moment of appropriation," he argues that "contextual overtones (generic, tendentious, individualistic) are inevitable in the word" (DI 272-93).

339 In *The Pleasure of the Text* (1975), Barthes writes: "*Text* means *Tissue*; but whereas hitherto we have always taken this tissue as a product, a ready-made veil, behind which lies, more or less hidden, meaning (truth), we are now emphasizing, in the tissue, the generative idea that the text is made, is worked out in a perpetual interweaving [through which] the subject unmakes himself, like a spider dissolving in the constructive secretions of its web" (64).

(poetic) act as a paradox, emptying out, collecting, and transformative exchange; about life as a search guided by (spiritual) models; and about the reader who is addressed by writing as a dramatic form of love which always remains imperfect (or chaotic) and thus keeps necessitating ever new (dialogic) scriptures.

After this prologue which consists exclusively of Rita's pieces, Raymond – already in her house in rural Alberta – positions himself 'professionally' in his first "Archivist's Note." His ironic evocation of Melville's I-narrator Ishmael[340] – a prototypal survivor of the perilous seas (of interpretation) – is followed by understating the dimension of the glosses he has effected on her "dense poems" in his capacity as not only "half lover of the plain truth," but also "half technician to her sometimes obscured intention" (HRK 7). Whereas Raymond's rhetoric is bound to make the reader suspicious as to his reliability, it can speak of a deeper significance. "To the Greeks," Heidegger maintains in "Building, Dwelling, Thinking," "*techne* means [. . .] to make something appear, within what is present" (159). While Rita has disappeared (in her own approach to *techne* as way to new poetics) at the Frankfurt Museum of Modern Art in 1992, Raymond, who believes that they were sometime lovers, seeks to make her reappear through his act of writing back to her remaining poems and notes. Having entered her poetic edifice as an archivist, he functions like a fractal that resembles a larger structure. "The word archive (from the Greek *arkheion*)," Dawne McCance paraphrases and quotes from Derrida's *Archive Fever*, "shelters in its etymology 'a house, a domicile, an address, the residence of [. . .] the *archons*,' [who] are those authorized to interpret, to exercise control over memory" (168). Raymond inhabits a position of agency, can begin an exegesis of his understanding of himself and the world through reading the hornbooks of his absent object of desire.

Designed to function as fractals, the book's characters are suffused with multiple connections, perform roles that overlap and sometimes conflict with each other in the service of reflecting the larger narratological structures at work. Raymond, who as a messenger delivers "confidential documents from place to place" (HRK 25), is associated with Hermes – one of Kroetsch's favourite mythical figures and poetical *alter egos* – who has access to the underworld. This capacity links the archivist with Virgil's role of guiding a man without name (presumably Dante) through the Inferno and Purgatorio of *La Divina commedia.* If their instructive journey leads through pain

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[340] "Please allow me. Think of me as a voice without so much as a last name.[. . .] Raymond I am" (HRK 7).

towards rehabilitation and recognition of essential (Christian) values, it functions as an allegory for the reader's interpretative journey through Kroetsch's poetics towards meaning and self-knowledge. But Virgil is replaced as a guide, in the course of the *Commedia*, by Beatrice, who escorts the pilgrim to the Paradiso and the poem's resolution. Hence, another role Raymond slips in during the text's complex interaction with Dante's paradigmatic quest towards enlightenment is that of the other, the pilgrim, who is the author himself. Raymond not only mirrors from within the artifice the exegetic activities the reader brings to *The Hornbooks of Rita K*, but is granted, like the pilgrim / Dante, a vision of Beatrice as the epitome of virtue, beauty and wisdom. The final idealization of the female principle in the image of the great white heavenly rose, the *Empyreum*,[341] in the *Commedia* is countered by Rita's physical return to her house (at once a hell and heaven), the paradoxical site of Raymond's pilgrimage towards her.[342]

Punning on Dante's poetical sum of the world of his time, the archivist dedicates a poem to Rita in the moment of her reappearance. "Writing is a curse," he begins, but charts his movement to better understanding by continuing, "Writing is a blessing. / It keeps both saints and devil / Guessing" (HRK 103). His conclusive lines – followed by Rita's comment that he had better be protected from self-knowledge – reflect the nature of metafictional texts as "an investigation of the chaos of meaning's production" (Stoicheff 87). For the reader who notes the convergence of initials, this investigation is shaped by the text as a pilgrimage towards Rita Kleinhart as ideal figure and persona of the author Robert Kroetsch. Although the book, as he reasons, "announces trace right off the bat, as a concern" (Maze xxxv) and methodological tool for the interpreter,[343] the initials are too superficial a trace to allow for the simple equation that a reader like Susan Rudy tries to establish.[344] Kleinhart, as a poet who ponders generic problems,

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[341] Kroetsch argues that Dante's text "leads narratively to the vision of the great white rose which further embeds the narrative and creates a perspective on the whole" (LV 76).

[342] Rita engages in literal travels, but is not associated with the notions of pilgrimage and psychological growth that characterize Raymond's journey inside/through her physical and poetical building.

[343] Hornbook #99, which is numerically the last but placed after the first "Archivist's Note," alludes to a possible *modus operandi* of the text: "The question is always a question of trace. What remains of what does not remain?" (HRK 8).

[344] In the over-all attempt to position herself as a feminist reader and critic, Susan Rudy (formerly Rudy Dorscht) shifts the focus from the real scientific object – the text – to herself as a site of feminist discourse. This contributes to her being led into a *cul-de-sac*: "Kroetsch seems to have constructed a female version of himself in this text. Not only do they share the same initials 'R.K', but Rita Kleinhart even disappeared [. . .] on Kroetsch's 65th birthday" ("Having Written" 76). Although Rudy looks at Raymond in relation to the empirical author, she insists on a full equation of the figures of Kroetsch and

loves language games and has a profound distrust in traditional ways of representation, shares basic concerns and an Albertan upbringing with Kroetsch, but differs drastically from him in terms of her age and her dislike for travels and readings. Rather, their partial identification complements and mirrors the similarly fractured identification of Kroetsch and his narrator. As part of the chaotic structures that keep (mis)leading readers into equations and contrastive assumptions, both Rita and Raymond surface as autobiographcially coded subjects. But the domestic Hermes figure, in the process of trying to recollect and outline her poetics, changes, appropriates and invents material. A thief and recreator of her poetry, he asks "Did Rita write those exquisite lines, or did I?" (HRK 21). His rhetoric underlines the text's inner chaos, its strata of dialogic exchange and transformation as well as its concern with originality. All this is echoed: "As poets we attribute to ourselves the poems we record on paper" (43). Kroetsch comments on the disparity between conscious influence and a tradition the poet is not aware of:

> Often, I think in our own time, the notion of originality has become a kind of denial, hasn't it? . . . In a sense, if you're gonna write about a poetics, you have to acknowledge you're not the first poet ever. . . . I really think that most poets are working from models that they could not name any more, but the traces are there. (Maze xxxv)

By outlining Raymond's difficult attempt to sketch Rita's poetics, the author's remark also indicates traces which informed his conception of a narrator who stems back to a figure which says, "I'm Ramonde Atteste Fidelus, born June 31" in the 'semi-autobiographical' long poem, *Letters to Salonika* (1983; LS 161). This is part of Kroetschs life-long poem *Field Notes*, which he conceives as, "in some perverse way, an autobiographical poem, one in which I just cannot accept any of the conventions of autobiography" (LV 207-8). Motivated by a "genealogical concern" (Maze xxxiv), the author has not only unearthed Ramonde – who reappears, in slightly altered form, as Raymond – but extends the line of trace further into the past:

> In fact, I confess that in a certain way it goes back to Wallace Stevens's poem, "The Idea of Order at Key West," where he addresses a figure named pale Ramon. Whenever I was reading as a graduate student, I was taken by that – addressing pale Ramon – R-A-M-O-N. And then for me, I think, extending it into Ra*monde* – you hear the word punning on world, more. So there is very much a sense of

Kleinhart; morevoer, she attacks the author for a presumed "strategy of resistance [. . .] in which being woman means being a kind of 'she'-man" (80). For Kroetsch's view on this, see Maze (xl).

genealogy. In that poem by Stevens, there is such a puzzling sense of identity and non-identity. (Maze xxxiv-xxxv)

Pale Ramon is "like a death figure, or ghost-like" (xxxv), in a poem which makes chaos invade the scene in a "rage for order." He suffers from a sense of his own self threatened by words "of ourselves and of our origins, / In ghostlier demarcations" which are symbolized in the unspeakable sounds and movements of a nameless woman and the sea in evening twilight (Stevens 1154-55). In *Letters to Salonika*, Ramonde suffers from a similar feeling of non-identity: "I am not myself and cannot ever be again" (LS 140). In both cases, this in invoked by the figure of woman as other. Unlike Stevens's text, Kroetsch's has this female figure inscribed as an absence that transforms into "somebody else" (155) in Greece – his wife at the time, Smaro, of whom he was "partly [. . .] addressing various perceptions, various recollections – she was away and I was home" (Maze xxxiii).

Hence, "The Idea of Order at Key West" and *Letters to Salonika* function as fractals to *The Hornbooks of Rita*. The latter text provides more similarities through its autobiographical grounding: Playing around with mirroring his self in writing to somebody else – the other – Kroetsch engages in an act of narcissistic alienation, making his suffering, lonesome narrator exclaim: "I am writing these letters to myself, writing myself the poem of you" (LS 147).[345] This poetological utterance connects the *Letters* and *The Hornbooks*, as does the position the male speaker is in: Both texts are characterized by a reversal of *The Odyssey*'s paradigmatic quest pattern. Now the female figure is the agent on quest, changing out there, while the male is staying home, almost immobile, facing the threat of stasis (another version of death).[346] In their state of emotional malaise, both Ramonde and Raymond speak of the Chinese poets Li Po (701-62) and Tu Fu (712-70), famous for their friendship and their powerful poems about loneliness and separation. "Even now I weep small tears of my own at Li Po's drowning" (HRK 21), Raymond admits by conjuring the legend of the drunken poet's

[345] Cf. what Gérard Genette, in Shirley Neuman's translation, says in his "Complexe de Narcisse": "the Self is confirmed by itself, but in the species of the Other: the mirror-image is a perfect symbol of alienation." (Neuman, "Allow Self" 104). With reference to the love-letters and post-cards that the text is composed of, Kroetsch admits to their being "very narcissistic" (Maze xxii).

[346] Underlining the connections Kroetsch likes to establish between his own works, *Letters to Salonika* points to the novel he was working on at the time, *Alibi*, by placing Dorf, as his alter ego, "in a taverna in Salonika, lamenting that to love is a great fault" (LS 145). Cf. the author's much-quoted discussion of the "grammatical pair in the story-line" of prairie fiction, "house: horse. To be *on* a horse is to move: motion into distance. To be *in* a house is to be fixed: a centring unto stasis. Horse is masculine. House is feminine.[. . .] On: in. Motion: stasis. A woman ain't supposed to move" (FW 76). See also Maze (xxxiv).

mistaking the moon's reflection in the water for his lover's ass. Both figures thus evoke the tragic case of Li Po as a foil for identification.[347] Moreover, while missing their female counterparts, they are exposed to a possible loss of self in the face of that absent other-as-mirror, and employ writing – in the form of letters, post-cards, anecdotes and glosses – in a subconscious imitation of a mythopoeic approach to woman.

Such processes can foster a subject's sliding towards an expansion and a trade of gender specifics, as in the case of Raymond's complex relation to the other sex. Since he is very domestic, sensitive and a little self-accusing, he could be seen as cleverly engaging in a psychological mechanism – namely, that of wearing a specific identification which usually women do to 'be female.'[348] In her much-quoted article "Womanliness as a Masquerade," Joan Riviere describes a special case of female behaviour: "women who wish for masculinity may put on a mask of womanliness to avert anxiety and the retribution feared from men. [. . .] Womanliness therefore could be assumed and worn as a mask, both to hide the possession of masculinity and to avert the reprisals expected if she was found to possess it" (303-306).[349] As part of Kroetsch's parodic and often transgressive approach to gender roles, Raymond could be associated with adopting such a womanliness-as-masquerade, thereby crossing traditional gender borders and, to borrow a term from Butler, locating himself at both ends of the 'heterosexual matrix.'

In a radical continuation of this chaotic speculation, the reader could further imagine that Rita herself is non-existent and only invented by Raymond, who would be the originator not only of the glosses on her life and writing, but also of the poetry attributed to her (cf. HRK 21; 43). *The Hornbooks of Rita K* could then be read as a

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[347] In more than eighty poems, Li Po lets women who have been left behind talk. *Letters to Salonika* ends with Seferis's translation into Greek of Pound's English translation of a part of Li Po's "The River Merchant's Wife: A Letter," in which the merchant's young wife suggests to meet him at Cho-Fu-Sah, although it was strictly forbidden for women to go out at that time.

[348] On the psychological mechanisms that inaugurate the feeling of 'being' woman, see Butler's *Gender Trouble* (1990), especially the Preface (vii-xii) and chapter one, "Subjects of Sex/Gender/Desire" (1-34), and Joan Riviere, "Womanliness as a Masquerade" (1929). See also Jacques Lacan, "The Meaning of the Phallus" (1982), who defines 'femininity' as masquerade because, according to his gender-conception, men *have* the phallus (and thus the all-dominating signifier), whereas women – due to their lack of having – *are* the phallus; this mechanism, as Lacan would have it, accords for the women's masquerade. (see 83-85; cf. Butler 44-50).

[349] Riviere's old article has exerted great influence on recent feminist critique's attempts to reconceptualize the notions of gender and power. Trying to react against Jacques Lacan's phallogocentrism, feminist theories investigate the possibilities of a performative self. See Butler (*Gender Trouble*), who dismantles the illusionary concept of an essentialist self by taking the woman's body for the exemplifying object that narrates the story of cultural practices of simultaneous appropriation, inscription and suppression.

textual cross-gendering of self, a dialogic evocation of Raymond's internal other on the matrix of the opposite sex. Raymond is not the only figure that performs gender, but his model might work as a fractal within the text. "I like that kind of speculation," Kroetsch comments, "because . . . I am teetering on the brink all the time, I'm falling into these possibilities." He adds that it is equally possible that the seemingly absent Rita is creating Raymond, because "in a poetics, that's what's happening in a way – that the reader invents the poet, but the poet invents the reader" (Maze xxxvi).

The poet Rita Kleinhart, like the interpreter figure of Raymond, has adopted facets of the other sex to her own role and therefore could be seen as using a mask of manliness. As active agent of her artistic destiny, she disappears, "literally getting out of it all," while leaving Raymond, who "is having trouble with his performance" (xxviiii-xliii), behind. If "women writers delineate identity relationally, through the connection with significant others" (J. Watson 69), Rita upsets that convention of autobiography, in contrast to the conservative Raymond, who "wants to dramatize [. . .] male autobiographical life [but] always has to do it in terms of this identification with the other" (Maze xlii).[350] Both characters have exchanged traditional gender positions, and as male reader and female poet, who together approach and simultaneously evade a poetics, they provide textual sites of autobiographical affinitiy for the empirical author. The effect of such a strategy is sketched, in the context of another writer, by Rachel Feldhay Brenner: "The fiction which disguises the autobiographical element, displaces the autobiographical persona, separating the focalizing points of vision of the narrator and her[/ his] protagonist" (75).

Hence, one of Kroetsch's major autobiographical tactical maneuvers is to disperse his self among his textual creations, avoiding the simplifying strategy of projecting his attributes onto one figure only as a 'single' persona. In doing that, he combines the notion of gender-as-disguise with the performance of identity and the genre of (poetological) autobiography. As a particular *coup*, he slips a third variant of persona into the text: a character named Robert. In the book's middle and arguably most important section, "The Kyoto Mound," Robert appears as a friend of Rita's in Japan. 'Disguised' as himself, the author introduces chaos theory into the poetics by telling her "that a poem is a fractal" – a notion that Raymond resents in his gloss in the essential

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[350] Kroetsch further comments that Rita "is in a certain way trying to escape the limits of autobiography by writing I am other than my own autobiography" (Maze xliii).

hornbook #74,[351] which has only one line by Rita: "Poet, no thyself" (HRK 60). Her dictum discards the traditional discourse of epistemological autobiography.

In addition to that, her serious pun points back to the Kyoto Mound's motto by Ryokan (1758-1831): "[. . .] After you know my poems are not poems, / Then we can begin to discuss poetry" (51). While Rita's poetics seems to blend with Ryokan's radical stance ("Is not the poet ever a forgery of the poem?"), Raymond conjures up the relationship between the "Japanese hermit-poet [. . .] and his devoted loved one, Teishin, who [. . .] by her slavish caring gave his small life its long endurance" (59). Explicitly, the archivist seeks to establish a parallel between himself and Teishin, the pupil and nun who after the death of her platonic lover compiled *Hachisu no tsuyu* (1835; "Dew on the Lotus"), a collection of his haiku and waka poems.[352] Through this comparison, the narrator underlines the service and homage he pays Rita by tending to her house and her writing, thereby associating her with the role of Ryokan and hinting at a trade of gender roles.

In *The Hornbooks of Rita K*, character constellations and historical models cannot be easily reversed and adopted – and then remain stable. For the concentrated focus on Japanese writing as well as on Rita and Robert's being in Kyoto (literally, the "Capital City," the former centre of culture and Buddhism in Japan) in the middle of the book reinforces the search for an alternative poetics. In that context, Rita first supports Raymond's view of her as a Ryokan-equivalent by suggesting, "I have become a collection of rectangular sheets of Japanese paper, some of those sheets figured with cranes and chrysanthemums, [. . .] some with the messages of lovers (I think) almost bruised into the paper itself" (HRK 58). She alludes to three aspects: to calligraphy, in which skillfully painted signs and an optional ink painting form an artistic unit (and an artist's signature); to having absorbed into her textual concepts elements of East-Asian philosophy; to the act of compiling art, aided by the near-physical impact of (Raymond's?) messages, into a collection. Having outlined that miniature poetics, however, she communicates in the same hornbook (#79) Robert's "lunatic suspicion that

[351] It is worth noting that hornbook #74 – combining the notions of originality, influence, chaos and order, theory, meaning and rivalry – has not appeared in any of the fractured publications before *The Hornbooks* (60).

[352] Ryokan was noted as a Zen-Monk, beggar, entertainer of children, esteemed poet and calligrapher. His intensive studies of the *Man'yoshu*, the most famous Japanese poetry anthology (ca. 800), are reflected in the great similarity that many of his works share with the old models. Ryokan's poetic practice thus functions as another comment on the notion of originality in the book.

in a later life he will become a Japanese monk" (58), which pushes him into the position of Ryokan's reincarnation.[353]

With the allocations of roles and influences for the characters being that chaotic, the text transposes into practice an essential element in traditional Japanese poetics: the notion of a communal approach to writing which tends to obscure the concepts of originality and individuality. Japanese linked poetry (*renga* and its avatar-successor, *haikai*) is practiced by two or more poets who enter into poetic dialogue and take turns in composing short stanzas of usually two or three verses. "The effect," as Earl Miner (5) suggests, "is frequently to alter the meaning of the old [stanza]." Moreover, *Sasamegoto* (1473), the highly influential poetics by Shinkei, stresses the meditative nature of linking poetry. Its Zen-Buddhist ideal of intuitively grasping the talent and attitudes of the other poet(s) involved makes the individual writer renounce autonomy by becoming a mere link in the chain of poetry. Compared to the Western concept of poetics as derived from the notion of mimesis in Greek drama, "Japanese poetics (like Chinese) derives from encounter with lyric poetry" (Miner 6). It defies the Western logic of imitation-as-representation by concentrating instead on a communal practice which celebrates change-through-repetition.[354]

The community of 'writerly' characters (Rita, Robert, the reader and would-be poet, Raymond) and historical East-Asian poets (Ryokan, his partner Teishin, the Chinese artists Li Po and Tu Fu) engages in polyvocal dialogue and heteroglossia throughout *The Hornbooks of Rita K.* As a complex operation of fractal traces and mutual influences, Kroetsch's book enacts its own version of linked poetry as a counter-movement to current poetics. In that process, Raymond adds another complication to the notion of a writer's identity: "Hornbook #52 makes mention of a ghost that Rita claimed was somehow herself; [. . .] she had the sensation that the ghost, not she, was Rita Kleinhart" (45). The character who keeps insisting that the house (like the poetry)

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[353] In his poem cycle "Summer, Kansei kasshi [1804]," Ryokan relates how he has come back home from begging and meditates about his toils: "After all, I wear a monk's robe – how could I spend the years doing nothing" (qtd. in B. Watson 81).

[354] "Poetry has enjoyed a long history as extemporaneous dialogue in Japan" (Shirane 161). Miner stresses the central status of "the affective and expressive axioms" in Japanese poetics, with *Kokoro* (meaning heart, mind, or spirit) representing the first and *Kotoba* (words, languages, signs, or techniques) the second group of axioms. In this context of emotional expressions prompting further expressions, the "original poem could also lead to a poetic response centuries later, when another poet in different circumstances recalled it" (Miner 6).

he guards is haunted by a ghost is very much a ghost figure himself.[355] Instead of conceiving Rita as his other, he "starts to hear her slipping towards being a double" (Maze xxxvii). Kroetsch places his autobiographical ghosts in an edifice of poetological exchanges. In that context, Raymond's presence in the literal house is a fractal that reiterates the necessary absence of one figure for the sake of the double's recuperative way to language.[356]

The scattering of his self within his texts through the adoption of different names, opposite gender positions, and even ghost-like incarnations is a central element of Kroetsch's poetics. There is a genealogical line (e.g. of Pale Ramon – Ramonde – Raymond) which shows his masquerading of autobiographical traces through his *œuvre* to *The Hornbooks of Rita K.* The effect of de-personalizing and de-authorizing the author also occurs in the works of a writer whom Kroetsch has not read but who has developed the same strategy at the core of her poetics: Else Lasker-Schüler (1869-1945). Of Jewish background, she wrote plays, prose and poetry, spent her life in migration and "exemplified the position of the manifold Other" (O'Brien 1).[357] Both writers share the attempt to escape the limits of autobiography. Moreover, the fact that Lasker-Schüler "initially spoke through a female voice but rejected it later in favor of a distinctly male voice" (1) accords with Kroetsch's move from a dominantly male autobiographical voice (see *Field Notes* and Chapter 2.2) to the conception of Kleinhart as a female persona. Lasker-Schüler's adoption of masks is mirrored, in reverse, by Kroetsch's.[358]

Her works graph multiple configurations of the 'I' behind various masks of transformation. The two best-known of these male masks are "Tino von Bagdad" and "Jussuf von Theben," who becomes "Der Malik" in her epistolary novel, *Der Malik* (1913-17). Meike Feßmann, examining these figurations, argues that the written text

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[355] See the discussion of Pale Ramon. During an earlier meeting, as Raymond relates, Rita labeled him "a ghost aghast" (55). Kroetsch comments: "He's becoming more and more a ghost as the poem goes on.[. . .] "I'm quite taken by this whole business of the ghost... You know I think ... I'm afraid we've become more and more ghostly in our own world, in a sense" (Maze xxxv; xlvii).

[356] The tension between both characters with regard to poetic language is described by Raymond: "We went head to head as poets [. . .]. The old forms were good enough for me, and on occasion I now take one of her poems and give it the look it should have by highlighting in her disorder an iamb or two" (HRK 43). In contrast to his conservative stance, "She tells us there is another possibility in language and she is on her way to asking what it is. She adds [. . .], Some days poetry is a dialogue with nobody" (42).

[357] O'Brien further characterizes Else Lasker-Schüler as "artist, vagabond, twice-divorced single mother, and exile who lived most of her adult life in abject poverty" (1).

[358]Cf. the argument "that Lasker-Schüler's transition form a female to a male voice is a narrative strategy to empower the subject, elicit recognition, and gain access to a public forum" (O'Brien 9).

transforms the author from empirical into poetic figure (128).[359] She locates Lasker-Schüler's 'creations' (her term is *Spielfiguren*, 'player figures') in the realm between 'normal' characters and the author's *alter egos*, and deduces from that in-between state of writing an implicit poetics. She speaks of this as a counter-movement to the authorizing act (*Gegen-Entwurf zum Autorisieren*), which corresponds to Raymond's rhetorical pose, "Who is it, ever, authors the author" (HRK 59). In this context, Feßmann, like Kroetsch, considers game as the essential basis of poetological processes. The reader is not only invited, but required to search for and (re)invent the author(s) of the text in a game that demands active participation and a decoding of disguised autobiographical traces (Feßmann 128-29; 114).

Kroetsch comments that this "is so close to what I'm doing [. . .]. It sort of authorizes my own transgressions, to say there is a literary precedant" (Maze xlv). In spite of remarkable historio-biographical differences, the German and the Canadian author share an artistic desire to explore new poetological territory. Feßmann subsumes that in the case of Lasker-Schüler "the stylization of the biography beyond recognition erased the private person and placed the 'I' as a changeable figure in its position."[360] Kroetsch's Rita Kleinhart says: "We come to the end of autobiography. Our lives abandon us [and] choose other genres" (HRK 61). The author himself remarks in *Labyrinths of Voice*: "Autobiography, as I conceive it, is paradoxical: it frees us from self. Saying *I* is a wonderful release from I, isn't it?" (209). Various positions of 'I' are put to use in the playful explorations that both Lasker-Schüler and Kroetsch engage in. Hence, the affinity – or self-similarity – of her poetics with his current work could be seen as an exemplification of the fractal theory that he consciously applies in *The Hornbooks of Rita K*: the chaotic surface only conceals deeper currents which move towards some kind of order, coherence, identifiability.

"The poem is always stating its own poetics" (HRK 70), one of Raymond's glosses claims. There is a statement in the fact that at the end, Rita's ghostly presence slides over into her physical return. With Raymond, the commentating messenger who turned prisoner of her poems, the reader has been searching for the elusive poet figure in a chaotic metafictional text which has "the process of self-interrogation [. . .] built into the narrative" (Stoicheff 95) and graphs a journey towards language. This complex

[359] Feßmann writes: "Das Geschriebene, also der Text, figuralisiert den Autor, d.h. es depotenziert seine Autorität, indem es ihn von einer empirischen Person in eine poetische Figur verwandelt" (128).

[360] "Die Stilisierung der Biographie zur Unkenntlichkeit löschte die Privatperson aus und setzte das Ich als wandlungsfähige Figur an ihre Stelle" (Feßmann 16-17).

quest operates as a parody of Dante's *Divina commedia* at the same time as it evokes Japanese poetics and its exponents as a foil for the author's sophisticated game. Using no less than three *personae* (and the East-Asian artists, on a deeper level, as further mirrors) to reflect authorial facets, Kroetsch employs a metonymic chain of characters to lend dialogic perspectives to his tentatively autobiographical approach to writing.[361] His figures Raymond and Rita perform and trade gender roles, test plural identities together, while the character named Robert joins and balances off the constellation as the author's most obvious, non-disguised identity marker.[362]

If the chaotic textual appearance of *The Hornbooks of Rita K* functions as a masquerade, its spectacle stages the adoption of opposite gender positions as well as historical role-models while it fosters the emancipation of the reader as he or she plays along and gradually discovers some of the text's deeper structures. In analogy to Dante's double on his ultramundane journey from hell to heaven, Kroetsch's reader (guided by archivist Raymond) encounters "the terrors of existence" (HRK 54) shaped as authorial inscriptions of poetological transformations of gender and genre.

This enterprise testifies to a synoptical re / vision of Kroetsch's relationship with his world and literary models. By making his female persona see "Japan as a way of using everything towards originality rather than a way of working from orginality towards everything" (60), his progressive inclusion of other (and historical) cultures manifests its textual self-reflexivity. "The reflection of the work upon itself at the crucial points of its becoming," as Franco Ferrucci comments, turns into the "autobiography of the work [which] marks the separation from the model and the approach to a reality that the artist recognizes as his own" (12; 165). Whenever that happens in postmodern writing – which is the case with Kroetsch's text – the parallels with chaos theory are near at hand. For all the fractals contributing to the performance through and as a generic cross-roads, "the most likely source," as Hayles posits, is "the cultural matrix as a whole" ("Complex" 11). *The Hornbooks of Rita K* is a direct imprint of that matrix. As a collection of multiple fractals that keep mirroring dazzling arrays of

[361] See the discussions in Maze (xlix-l), where I suggest "to think of metonymy as a possible analogy to putting on various guises [. . .]. Maybe metonymy allows for performing plural identities."

[362] Kroetsch's metonymic chain not only includes his own first name, but is made up entirely of two-syllable names that each begin with 'R.' This supports his playful approach to the naming-convention and questions a rule formulated by Philippe Lejeune, who claims that autobiography exists only when author and his/her subject's name in the text are identical and explicitly marked: "Le pacte autobiographique, c'est l'affirmation dans le texte de cette identité, renvoyant en dernier ressort au *nom* de l'auteur sur la couverture" (147).

transformative epistemological endeavours and impasses, the book amounts to a poetics of (re)generative and innovative character. "What remains of what does not remain?" (HRK 8), hornbook #99 inquires – and since culture and chaos have begun to celebrate uncertainty and unpredictability as sources for new information, the investigation of Robert Kroetsch as a persona of Rita Kleinhart *et al* might be a likely story remaining to be told.

Afterword

Through their writings which reflect different concerns and influences, Frederick Philip Grove and Robert Kroetsch have peopled the Canadian West with an array of characters in disguise and hiding, escape and search, transformation and self-effacement. In playing out different functions and forms of the motif of masquerade, these figures represent a large part of 20th-century's literary interrogation of identity in the New World, an enterprise which echoes with resonances of the Renaissance and its manifold attempts to come to terms with a radically changing world while it testifies to distinctly (post)modern orientations. In the last century, Canada has gone through the challenges of negotiating immigration, American and British relations, westward expansion and urbanization as well as the dawning of a post-colonial "mentality no longer obsessed or even perplexed by the meaning of *here*" (Staines, *Beyond the Provinces* 23).

Grove's Canadian works depended on his schooling in the European traditions of realism, naturalism and turn-of-the-century's *décadence*. Through their combination with his immigrant reality which he was seeking to transcend, these influences were instrumental in voicing a specific prairie identity in a time when the Canadian West had just begun to be discovered as a setting for serious literature; conceiving this space as empty and in need of cultivation, he viewed himself as the torch-bearer of civilization. After his German forays into sartorial enterprises and a grim self-portrait in *Fanny Essler*, he would emerge as a scientific observer of Manitoban nature and New World-Odysseus sailing the perilous seas of snow and ice in *Over Prairie Trails*. Whereas the Odyssean mask was only one in a series of personae, its protean nature was an accurate reflection of his project of self-fashioning and trickster-like approach to his audience.

In the novels that followed, Grove was writing at the frontier of his own imagination. Having transferred the clothing motif from urban Germany to the North American continent, he could fabricate Clara Vogel, a *femme fatale* who in constantly enhancing her feminine appearance edges on being mere mask and spectacle of seductive womanhood; in *Settlers of the Marsh*'s prairies, she is out of place. Moreover, he tailored Phil Branden, his thinly disguised *alter ego*, who tramps the continent in his immigrant's odyssey, employs a number of disguises and role-plays, and successively discards his elegant Old World clothing as symbols of obsolete identity-markers in *A Search for America*. In his complementary 'autobiography' titled *In Search of Myself*, it

is the figure called Grove who hides behind the topical confession as textual masquerade; thereby continuing the process of palimpsestic self-writing, he indulges in another fictionalization of his image as both a failure and tragic hero.

As an immigrant in need of keeping his past obscure – but at the same time scattering traces for its gradual illumination – Grove wrote himself into the position of archetypal impostor. His various personae – or "casual metonymies" (Blodgett, "*Alias* Grove" 112) – not only function as reflections of his obsession with visual appearance, but are instrumental in the author's incestuously self-serving acts of re-creation and projection to the public. This amounted to a gesture not unlike the gestures displayed in the discourse of imperialism and conquest – namely, hiding behind the mask of civilization so as not to convey a profound lack, bad intention, or, in his case, a past of dandyish airs and imprisonment.

Kroetsch's works, in contrast to Grove's, portray a gallery of disguised and cross-dressed individuals as well as texts in masquerade. He scans various periods of Western Canadian history, argues in that context that "the quest is, implicitly or even explicitly, genealogical" and adds that Canadian writing is often situated "in the (open) field of the archaeological site [and] comes compulsively to a genealogy that refuses origin" (BN 64; 71). With the help of his archaeological method, of exploring historical disourse and notions of plurality, he sketches a miniature genealogy of identities. It reflects the 20th-century's dismantling of the metaphysics of the subject, which correlates with the Derridean critique of Logocentrism mirroring language as an unstable ground for the self.

Within that framework, disguise and masquerade expose the traditional concept of self to a process from slight to massive erasure. That is why the lineage of identities in / of Kroetsch's texts shows remarkable conceptional changes in terms of character. Hazard Lepage, last remaining studhorse man in a prairie world invaded by train and automobile, displays an almost fixed, at least semi-autonomous notion of identity. His accidentally adopted disguises as priest and Mountie do not so much change his inner self or grant him philosopical insight than rather afford him agency to continue his bizarre quest in an adaptation of *The Odyssey*. An obsolete role-model, he must be killed by his own horse named Poseidon. *Gone Indian*, on the other hand, thematizes the metamorphic journey of Canadian Everyman and incapable graduate student, Jeremy Sadness. Through carnivalistic rites, encounters with his double and assimiliation into an Indian community, Sadness learns to abandon his oppressive role model, Grey Owl

(Grove's double-impostor) and his father-surrogate, supervisor Madham, and develops an authentic identity by going Indian.

Like Grove, Kroetsch also transfers masquerade onto the level of the text, but does so in much more playful ways and not for the sake of authorial construction. *Alibi*, a novel in journal format which is written / edited by at least two different figures, is textual carnival and masquerade. It answers Grove's self-aggrandizing lamentation through a parodic confession which puts agent Dorf, the writing subject, under attack by a counteractive female, Karen Strike. Dorf resurfaces, along with most of the book's cast, in *The Puppeteer*. Disguised as a monk by the name of Papa B, he becomes a shadow-puppett master and transforms, after being killed in Greece, into an iconic version of the monk he had been performing. Moreover, his employer Deemer and sometime lover Maggie engage in cross-dressing, which turns out to be enabling in terms of story-telling and induces shape-shifting in Deemer, who by wearing a wedding dress moves towards androgyny.

Kroetsch thus plays with the conventions of clothing as universal signifier and stresses the performativity of gender that recent feminist critique underlines (see Butler); at the same time, disguise ceases to be deceptive and functions as guise. On top of that, he increasingly makes male figures like Deemer appear "feminised," in ironic ways, while showing an over-all tendency to grant the female figures more and more agency. "Of course it reflects the society as I perceive the society" (Maze xxx), the author comments. Such reflections of changes in society and gender-conceptions also charachterize his latest publication, *The Hornbooks of Rita K*. The mysteriously vanished poet Rita Kleinhart engages in the traditionally male quest pattern, while her friend / archivist Raymond stays at her house and glosses over her poems in the hope of making her reappear. Masquerading the genres of autobiography and poetics, *The Hornbooks of Rita K* stages the adoption of opposite gender positions and engenders the reader into investigating its deeper structures in an act of gradual defacement.

"How we talk, or write, is a trace not only of how we think but of how we interact," Caryl Emerson writes in her "Editor's Preface" to Bakhtin's *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (PD xxxiv). In their writings and public appearances, the two Canadian writers leave different traces with regard to their employment / emplotment of the motif of disguise. Grove's formative European years produced an immigrant for whom "the masking" became "the idiom of his contact with the world" (Healey 102). His characters, as Blodgett observes, "make *débuts*" in an "almost theatrical sense"

("*Alias* Grove" 112) and become variations in disguise of a theme named Frederick Philip Grove. This preoccupation accounts for the comparatively small range in forms and functions of masquerade in his work: deception, self-stylization, affirmation, self-seeking and the crossing / erection of social barriers. Essentially, Grove subscribes to an early modernist discourse which, while questioning the self, seeks to preserve its stability.

Kroetsch, the trickster novelist, frees his characters from overt authorial control and lets them explore their identities by themselves. In that process, disguise is central as well as instrumental; it affords agency, opens up possibilities for metamorphosis, and fosters the transgressions of gender and genre boundaries. With the notion of an essentialist or originalist identity disappearing in favour of performative identities, however, disguise gives way to guise while literal masquerade tends to become textual. If, as Davis tentatively claims with regard to the early modern world, disguise "signifies the truth of 'human nature', [. . .] realizes self-knowledge [and] socializes [– as its goal –] selfhood" (15-16), there is irony in the fact that the replacement of an inherent *essentia* by *apparentia* should coincide with the disappearance of disguise. But who knows whether there will not soon emerge, in these late modern times, a nostalgia for that moment when a simple trick could make all the difference?

Zusammenfassung

Verkleidung und Maskerade in der kanadischen Literatur: Die Werke von Frederick Philip Grove und Robert Kroetsch

Northrop Frye, der *Doyen* der kanadischen Literaturkritik, vertritt in *The Educated Imagination* die These, daß alle Literatur um das zentrale Thema des Verlustes und (Wieder)Gewinns von Identität strukturiert sei. In einem Einwanderungsland wie Kanada, das im 20. Jahrhundert einschneidende Wandlungsprozesse wie den Übergang zur postkolonialen und multikulturell definierten Gesellschaft vollzogen hat, ist die Identitätsthematik seit jeher von fundamentaler Bedeutung. Ein entscheidendes Mittel, sich dieser Thematik zu nähern, ist das Motiv von Verkleidung und Maskerade. Zurückgehend auf solch klassische Texte wie Homers *Odyssee* und Virgils *Aeneas*, und zu voller Blüte gelangt auf den Bühnen der den raschen Weltwandel zugleich gestaltenden und verarbeitenden Renaissance, kann dieses traditionelle Motiv verstanden werden als Mittel der kultur-dialogischen Auseinandersetzung mit Identität (vgl. Davis 16). Angesichts der gerade in jüngster Zeit zunehmenden Verbreitung des Motivs in der kanadischen Literatur verwundert es allerdings, daß die Kritik dies trotz des ungebrochenen Interesses an grundsätzlichen Fragen nationaler wie individueller Identität eher ignoriert hat. Die vorliegende Arbeit möchte diesem Versäumnis Rechnung tragen.

Im Zentrum dieser Untersuchung stehen dabei mit Frederick Philip Grove (1879-1948) und Robert Kroetsch (*1927) zwei für die Entwicklung der kanadischen Literatur und ihrer regionalen Ausprägung essentielle Figuren. Grove, der 1912 in die kanadische Provinz Manitoba eingewandert und bald zum ersten Vertreter eines literarischen Prärie-Realismus geworden war, streifte beim Eintritt in die Neue Welt seine Identität als deutscher Übersetzer, Poet und Romancier Felix Paul Greve ab, um sie durch eine neue zu ersetzen. Sein proteisches Rollenspiel – erst 23 Jahre nach seinem Tode entschlüsselt – hat immer wieder Einschlag gefunden in die Zeichnung seiner Charaktere, insbesondere einer Vielzahl von metonymisch angelegten *Personae*. Dagegen ist Kroetsch, dessen deutschstämmige Familie Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts nach Kanada auswanderte, in der Provinz Alberta geboren. Die Region seiner Ursprünge thematisiert er ebenso wie generelle nationale Befindlichkeiten im Laufe seiner nun

rund vier Jahrzehnte währenden schriftstellerischen Aktivitäten immer wieder durch eine vielschichtige Anwendung des Maskerade-Motivs.

Die unterschiedlichen Hintergründe der beiden Autoren hinsichtlich biographischer, kunst-theoretischer und philosophischer Orientierung spiegeln sich in einer Art doppelter Vorgehensweise bei der Untersuchung wider. Während das Werk Groves stark aus der zeitgeschichtlichen Perspektive der Lebenshaltung und existentiellen Eigenübersetzung in den Kontext des von einer Pioniermentalität geprägten kanadischen Westens betrachtet wird, greift bei der Besprechung von Kroetschs Werken ein postmodernes Instrumentarium, welches durch Rekurs auf Foucaults Prinzip der Archäologie / Genealogie vom Autor selbst modifiziert wurde. Unterstützt von weiteren stilbildenden Einflüssen wie der poststrukturalistischen Logozentrismus-Dekonstruktion Derridas, der Barthes'schen Betrachtung des Lesens und Schreibens als erotischem Akt sowie der Bakthinschen Karnevalstheorie und Vorstellung von Sprache als dialogischer "Heteroglosse" versucht die vorliegende Arbeit, die Prozesse und Zusammenhänge der Identitätskonstruktionen sowohl der Textcharaktere als auch der eigentlichen Texte durch die jeweiligen Erscheinungsformen von Maskerade kritisch zu hinterfragen.

Von diesen Überlegungen wird auch die Struktur der Arbeit in erster Linie bestimmt. Das erste Großkapitel arbeitet in zwei Teilen die theoretische Verknüpfung genealogisch aufgerollter Identitätskonzepte – vom griechischen Einheitsideal bis zur gegenwärtigen Auflösung des vom Telosschwund geprägten Subjektbegriffes (Kapitel 1.1) – mit daraus ableitbaren bzw. anknüpfbaren Formen von Verkleidung und Maskerade heraus (Kapitel 1.2). In diesem zweiten Teil der theoretischen Grundierung der Arbeit führt ein Abriß der historischen Verwendung des Verkleidungs-Motivs und dessen Anverwandlung in der Neuen Welt zur Betrachtung des für den kanadischen Kontext konstitutiven Romans von John Richardson, *Wacousta* (1832).

Im zweiten Großkapitel versucht je ein Teil die Mentalitätsgeschichte der beiden Autoren durch eine Verankerung biographischer Elemente im Kontext des Gesamtwerks und der zeitgenössischen Kritik nachzuzeichnen. Dabei liegt in beiden Fällen der Schwerpunkt auf der gesamtheitlichen Interaktion innerhalb des jeweiligen *Œuvres*, d.h., es werden auch poetische und essayistische Texte mit berücksichtigt. Dadurch wird ein Ausgleich angestrebt zur Schwerpunktbildung bei der Prosa / Fiktion in den eigentlichen Interpretationskapiteln und gleichzeitig die stilistische Vielfalt der Autoren belegt; kann Grove zu den ersten literarischen Figuren Kanadas gezählt

werden, die eine systematische Streuung der verschiedenen Genres und Überschreitung ihrer Grenzen versucht haben, so muß Kroetschs experimentell-ausdifferenziertes Gesamtwerk diesbezüglich als paradigmatisch angesehen werden.

Mit dem dritten Großkapitel beginnt die fundiertere Analyse der selektierten Primärtexte unter den obenerwähnten Gesichtspunkten. Aus der Perspektive des Brückenschlages von der Alten in die Neue Welt wird der erste deutsche Roman Groves – unter seinem echten Namen Greve 1905 in Deutschland als recht aufsehenerregender *roman-à-clef* mit dem Titel *Fanny Essler. Ein Berliner Roman* erschienen – mit seinem ersten kanadischen Roman kontrastiert, *Settlers of the Marsh* (1925). Hervorstechend bei beiden Texten ist die Verwendung des Kleider-Motivs, die in *Fanny Essler* einer Obsession des Autors mit der Protagonistin (die nach Greves damaliger Lebensgefährtin Else Endell, später als Baroneß Elsa bekannt, modelliert ist) und mit seiner Persona in Form eines Nietzscheanisch gefärbten, gefühlslosen Übermenschen gleichkommt; im kanadischen Pendant ist die *femme fatale*, die nun den sprechenden Namen Clara Vogel trägt, auf eine ihre Femininität unentwegt manipulierende Maske reduziert, die für ihren naiven, kommunikationsunfähigen Ehemann Niels Lindstedt (eine weitere Persona des Autors) eine zunehmende sexuelle Gefahr darstellt. Nur durch den kaltblütigen Mord an seiner Ehefrau vermag er sich dieser ihn verwirrenden Sexualität zu entziehen.

Das vierte Großkapitel schließlich bildet mit drei direkten Vergleichen von je einem Werk Groves und Kroetschs das Herzstück der Analysen. Es soll darin u.a. angedeutet werden, daß Kroetsch sich bei deutlichen Ähnlichkeiten mit seinem literarischen "Vorfahren" (Originalton R.K.) hinsichtlich der Verwendung des Maskeraden-Motivs ebenso deutlich von ihm unterscheidet, ja sogar dessen künstlerische Errungenschaften entscheidend weiterentwickelt und transzendiert. So bildet Homers *Odyssee* in Kapitel 4.1 den für beide maßgebenden Intertext, mit dem Groves *Over Prairie Trails* (1922) als Folie für heldische Einschreibung in den kanadischen Literaturkanon ebenso interagiert wie *The Studhorse Man* (1969) von Kroetsch, der mit dieser Adaptation einem obsoleten Männerbild in einer zunehmend technisierten Prärielandschaft eine parodistische Homage erbietet. Kapitel 4.2 imaginiert die Neue Welt als großen Umkleideraum, in dem Groves weiteres Odysseus-Abbild, Phil Branden, sich seiner veralteten Identität durch stückweises Ablegen eleganter europäischer Kleider entäußert (*A Search for America*; 1927). *Gone Indian*, Kroetschs Gegenstück, präsentiert mit Jeremy Sadness einen zum Hochschulabschluß unfähigen Dauerstudenten und kanadischen Jedermann, der von der amerikanischen

Ostküste in den kanadischen Nordwesten gelangt, wo er durch Verlust seines Koffers samt Bekleidung, durch die Begegnung mit seinem Doppelgänger und Integration in eine indianische Gemeinde seine oppressiven Rollenmodelle aufgeben kann; durch *going Indian* – gekleidet in genuin-indianischem Kostüm – bildet er eine eigene, von der eurozentrischen Vorstellung eines festgefügten Selbstbildes verschiedene Identität aus. Dagegen wird im Kapitel 4.3 die exzentrische Beichte im Falle von Groves offizieller Autobiographie *In Search of Myself* (1946) als purer Topos entlarvt, der den Text zur den Autor verhüllenden Maskerade erhebt und damit seinem Projekt palimpsestischer Ich-Einschreibung die selbstgewählten Repräsentationsformen des tragischen und auf literarischem Terrain gescheiterten Helden zuführt. Als Pendant vermag Kroetschs Roman im Tagebuchformat, *Alibi* (1983), durch zwei rivalisierende Autor- / Editorfiguren eine karnevaleske Maskerade vorzuführen. Diese karikiert Groves selbst-stilisierende Form des Lamentos durch parodistische Beichten, in deren Verlauf Dorf, das schreibende Subjekt, ständig von Karen Strike, der heimlichen Leserin / Co-Autorin, attackiert wird.

Das fünfte Großkapitel führt die zuvor angedeutete Transgressionsarbeit Kroetschs im Hinblick auf die Vorleistungen Groves fort, indem es in zwei Einzelanalysen entscheidende Neuerungen des Motivgebrauchs auf den Ebenen von Narrativik, Genre und Geschlechtertypisierung skizziert. So verkleidet sich Dorf, der wie die meisten der Charaktere aus *Alibi* nun in *The Puppeteer* (1992) wieder auftaucht, als Pizza-liefernder Mönch "Papa B" in Vancouver, wird auf dem Dachboden seiner zeitweiligen Geliebten Maggie Wilder zum meisterhaften Schattenpuppenspieler und erhält nach seinem tragi-komischen Tode auf der griechischen Insel Sifnos eine ikonische Identität in den Augen der ihn verehrenden Mönche. Darüber hinaus tauschen sein Vorgesetzer Deemer (eine Parodie auf die göttliche Autorität) und Maggie ihre Kleider. Dieses *cross-dressing* verleiht beiden die Gabe, nun die Geschichte des "Heiligen Papa B" aufzuschreiben, und Deemer – in ein Hochzeitskleid gehüllt – metamorphosiert in eine androgyne Figur. Somit spielt Autor Kroetsch mit den Konventionen von Kleidern als universell-kodierten Sprachzeichen und unterstreicht die Vorstellung performativer Geschlechtsidentität, wie sie in gegenwärtigen Feminismusdebatten verhandelt wird (s. Butler). Gleichzeitig hört die *Ver*kleidung in *The Puppeteer* auf, als identitätsverhüllende bzw. -vortäuschende Erscheinungsform zu wirken, und wird stattdessen zur ebenso funktionstüchtigen wie durchschaubaren und häufig identitätsstiftenden *Be*kleidung. Darüberhinaus erhalten die Männerfiguren nun

verstärkt feminine Züge und die Frauenfiguren zunehmend mehr Handlungsspielraum – "ein Reflex auf meine Wahrnehmung der Gesellschaft," wie der Autor in unserem 1996 geführten und im Anhang nachzuschlagenden Interview (Maze xxx) kommentiert.

Seine bis dato letzte Veröffentlichung, *The Hornbooks of Rita K* (2001), spiegelt ebenfalls geschlechterrollen- und gesellschaftsspezifische Veränderungen wider. Während die auf mysteriöse Weise verschwundene Dichterin Rita Kleinhart (man beachte die Kongruenz der Initialen) sich auf einer traditionell männlichen Reise in neue Erfahrungsbereiche in Japan befindet, sitzt ihr Archivar und Möchtegern-Liebhaber in ihrem Haus im ländlichen Alberta und glossiert ihre Gedichte in der Hoffnung, sie dadurch zurücklocken zu können. Die Genres von Autobiographie und Poetik maskierend, spielt *The Hornbooks of Rita K* geschickt die Übernahme entgegengesetzter Geschlechterpositionen aus und initiiert den Leser in eine Exploration der tieferen Textstrukturen, deren Auffächerung zur Erhellung der eigenen hermeneutischen Arbeit beitragen kann.

Eingerahmt werden diese detaillierten Analysen durch ein hinführendes Vorwort und eine kurze Zusammenfassung, die *in nuce* die hier kurz skizzierten Entwicklungen und Interpretationen enthalten. Darauf folgt die Bibliographie, die darum bemüht ist, viele der zur Thematik beitragenden Sekundärtitel aufzulisten, bevor das 58-seitige Interview den logischen Abschluß bildet.

Zusammenfassend kann festgehalten werden, daß das Motiv von Verkleidung und Maskerade in den Werken der beiden kanadischen Autoren Frederick Philip Grove und Robert Kroetsch mehrere wichtige Funktionen ausübt. In allen Fällen macht es zunächst einmal die Identitätsthematik im wahrsten Sinne des Wortes sichtbar; mit deren augenfälliger Problematisierung ist vor allem bei Grove die unentwegte Projektion einer *realiter* nicht einlösbaren, von adeliger, schottisch-schwedischer Herkunft und originell-künstlischer Überlegenheit umrissenen Masken-Identität verbunden. Die häufig variierte Kleider-Metapher in seinen Werken trägt dabei ebenso zu des Autors palimpsestischer Hybrid-Persona bei wie seine öffentlichen Auftritte als kultur-imperialistische Leitfigur und die zahlreichen autobiographischen Streuungen, die bewußt den Leser auf eine (häufig falsche) Fährte setzen. Angesichts der Dominanz der (Ver)Kleidungs-Motivik muß Grove allerdings eine mangelnde Flexibilität angelastet werden. In überspitzter Kritik könnte formuliert werden, daß letztlich alle seine Charaktere allesamt Spielfiguren seiner eigenen Projektion und Identitätsauslotungen sind, und daß diese – womöglich gerade deshalb – eher blaß,

engstirnig, stilisiert und ohne Tiefe bleiben. Die Maske, die im Werk Groves eine stets fragwürdige Essenz zu verbergen hat, läuft Gefahr, ihrer eigenen Bestimmung verlustig zu werden.

Dagegen zeigt sich ein deutlicher Zugewinn an psychologischer Tiefe, an textkonstituierenden Varianten und sozialgeschichtlicher Bezugsfähigkeit in der Art und Weise, wie Kroetsch die Motivik der Maskerade und (Ver)Kleidungen ständig neu in Szene setzt und ihr dabei wiederholt originelle Facetten abringt. Im großen, genealogisch aufgerollten Überblick erfährt das Motiv dabei entscheidende Veränderungen und zeigt eine schrittweise Auflösung der traditionellen Konzeption von Identität, die schließlich in einer an Bedeutung gewinnenden äußeren Erscheinung und Rollen-Performanz als konstitutivem Kriterium gipfelt. Während die zunehmend psycho-linguistisch motivierte Bewegung von physischer zu textueller Maskerade mit dem sichtbaren Wechsel von Verkleidung zu (Ein)Kleidung korreliert, erhebt sich das *cross-dressing* ebenfalls zur modernen Variante der Identitätsauslotung. All dies führt – wie in *The Hornbooks of Rita K* spielerisch und zugleich philosophisch vorgeführt – zu einer Dialogizität von Charakteren, Textebenen und Genrepartikeln, wie sie Davis *idealiter* einer wirklichen Verkleidung zuschreibt. Diese solle "die Wahrheit der menschlichen Natur darstellen, Selbsterkenntnis ermöglichen und als Ziel die Identität sozialisieren" (15-16). Das Medium, in dem alle diese ver- und enthüllenden Prozesse stattfinden, ist zugleich das Material, mit und in dem wir uns zunehmend selbst zu identifizieren haben – die Sprache.

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Tr(e)ading Traces in a Maze: Robert Kroetsch in Dialogues

Notes

This is an abridged version of interviews with Robert Kroetsch that were taken 20-22 July 1996, in Victoria, B.C. where the author was living at the time. Initially, more than five hours of recorded material were transcribed completely – without omissions, alterations, or any attempt at rewriting what had been said and captured on tape. Consequently, abrupt thematic transitions and grammatical inaccuracies remain an integral part of the written version. Punctuation was not of primary concern; rather, I have tried to punctuate in a way that would reflect the oral nature of the source, not necessarily sticking to the rules usually governing written discourse. *Quotations are set in italics*. This includes 'echoes' from/within the interviews themselves – things originating in dialogue in one place will consequently be italicized when quoted at a later stage. Particular emphasis on a certain word or passage – as given by the speakers – will also surface in italics. Since the interviews somehow constitute the skeleton of my approach, many passages have appeared in the major body of my thesis and thus will figure as doubles here; they have been abridged, as not everything we discussed is truly relevant for my topic. Whenever I chose to shorten a passage or cut out a few words, this is indicated by four consecutive periods: "...." – Three periods "..." indicate a natural break or a sentence/thought not finished by the respective speaker.

Reproduction of the interviews and their incorporation into my thesis have been authorized by Robert Kroetsch.

I herewith declare that my transcriptions and the abridged version of the interviews have been fully faithful to the original.

My sincere thanks and appreciation go out to Robert Kroetsch. His was a patience and open-mindedness that would endure the worst of labyrinths.

Trier, 8 November 1996 / 5 April 2002

Markus Müller

Interviews with Robert Kroetsch

We are entering the scene at a point where I have talked about disguise or masquerade as a means of transforming or questioning identity, and have related this to the notions of character, text, and plot; Robert Kroetsch replies that it is essential to get away from the notion of disguise as something static and elaborates:

RK: Well, it's how people relate to each other. I guess what people in a certain way mean by performance nowadays. It's always a sense of interrelatedness, a tableau or something like that – it's the interrelatedness that makes your questions.

MM: That actually brings me back to my own fascination with this topic.... For one thing, my general interest is in how and why we conceptualize our respective identities the way we do; then, of course, there is also my biographical background, probably shared by innumerable people: As a boy, I used to be fascinated by performing the role of cowboy or gunman during the annual carnival or "Fasching" celebration. The illusion of being a hero – even if it was for just one day or only the moment of a fake shooting or duel – was a very appealing illusion for sure. It was somewhat heightened by playing the part of a Noble Savage, most preferably Karl May's Winnetou – the paradigmatic figure of our German notion of romanticized alterity.... So, I guess that early on, and on rather subconscious and subtle levels, I experienced a temporary sense of being someone else and of suddenly having a whole new range of possibilities by disguising or masquerading myself. Could you possibly recall somewhat similar experiences of your childhood, or maybe even at later stages in your life?

RK: Well, as a child, I remember that I constructed a whole world, possibly as a hero – as did you – but it was a geographical place in my mind: I imagined the rivers, and the town; I thought of myself often as a horseman, and we used to ride stickhorses a lot as kids, so I would be galloping around on stickhorses but in my mind I was really in this special place. And also, in the garden, after they had planted potatoes, it was very easy to make little buildings in the soil. So I would actually play in the potatoe patch and try to build these little places. So it was a very elaborate sense of being somebody else somewhere else, and almost novelistic in its scope.

MM: So you would put your imaginary places into a minimal, 'real' replication in the garden? Set it up, basically, and locate yourself in there?

RK: Yeah, it's interesting that I didn't just sit somewhere and dream it; I had to connect it with my garden, or, as I say, writing. Behind our garden, there was a big poplar bluff, and I would ride through this on my stickhorses. So that's a nice point you're making, that I was connecting it; where do these imagined stories connect with the world?

MM: I want to proceed with you through something like "a history" of the notions of disguise and masquerade; I want to proceed with you through some of your works that deal with these notions one way or the other; I want you and I to engage in a game of shaping and shifting the identities of some of your 'fictional' characters or even of the texts themselves. Having mentioned these directions, I wonder whether we will have to – or want to – play a labyrinthine hide-and-seek game of author and reader and text as we go along.... Maybe we should start by looking at the self. Apparently, there are two major concepts of a self – in opposition, of course. The one, traditional concept – tied to the notion of the Cartesian subject – would think of a monadic unity, a fixed, stable, complete entity of a whole, unified self; the other, sort of contemporary or maybe (post)modern concept, thinks of it as fractured, unstable, fluid – a self in process. So – to simplify and categorize it further – we have the essentialist or originalist vs. the non-essentialist position, or we could also say, the essence vs. the appearance notion of the self. Here's what you said in *Labyrinths* (188):

> *What I want to do is get back to a very amorphous sense of self which changes today and can still change, respond, alter, be changed.*

RK: Since we're entering a labyrinth, I suppose one of the things that I have to consider is growing up as a Catholic kid, with the Catechism and so on, where they had constructed just a fixed sense of identity, and not a very attractive one – the fallen state, and the cataloguing of sins and so on – so that you lived in a kind of submissive role in relation to that elaborate system of authority.... When I say I want to *get back to a very amorphous sense of self*, I guess I would still stick to that in a more primary way; we were very amorphous, and we get set in various ways, as fixed; I was determined, I suppose, to be a good student. That, too, becomes a very fixed definition, for being a good boy or whatever one had to be – a good son, a good child.

MM: So, at some stage you must have quite consciously tried to break free, to break loose....

RK: My parents, especially my mother, encouraged me to think: You can do what you want to do in the world – I mean you can set out to do something and you can do it, and this worked against the notion of the submissive self that the Catholic church was

teaching. In a nice way, my parents were part of my liberation; they encouraged me to dream, if you will, to discover, and to create.

MM: In other words, your identity, early on, was both given a fixed frame and also the wider range for change and new possibilities to discover and to create...

RK: And I think, you know, it's that *interplay* again that we're talking about. They're not a fixed thing. There's a constant play back and forth between the two possibilities. I remember when we had our first Canadian, eh – I guess the bishop would be it? – and he asked how many of you boys are gonna be priests. And only two of us wouldn't put up our hands.

MM: And one of them was you?

RK: Yeah, I was one of them. And my cousin Dorn(?).... We wouldn't go along with this – illusion – cause nobody became a priest in the group. Because at that early age there is that sense of resisting a fixed definition.

MM: What position were the girls in the group offered? Did anybody ask if they wanted to become nuns?

RK: Actually, there was in a certain way more pressure for them to become nuns, because we were in a public school and we had two or three nuns teaching. Two or three of the girls did become nuns, because the model was so intense and so appealing. Whereas the priest was more of a remote figure, kind of a forbidden figure.... [T]here was a resistance to the authority of the priest in a certain way....

MM: This leads us to general, theoretical investigations as to how our identities are constructed.... Contemporary theory almost univocally states that identity is, to a large extent, the result of discursive practices and mechanisms that are culturally coded. Stuart Hall, who is very much interested in cultural formations and difference, says in his essay "Minimal Selves": *Identity is formed at the unstable point where the "unspeakable" stories of subjectivity meet the narratives of history, of culture'*(44).

RK: Yeah, that's a great quote, isn't it? Well, certainly, you know I think I was profoundly shaped by the Prairies, and in a small prairie community, athletics was a way of cultural coding, and gender. And I mean I liked athletics but I wasn't an outstanding player, I wasn't exceptional, not as well coordinated as some of the other guys, that's for sure. You know, often we played together, boys and girls, at school.... You know, that

question that he, Stuart Hall, poses of the 'unspeakable stories' – I think I got that notion of the unspeakable stories from my reading, as a kid. I have said this before, through my writings, I guess – that sense, after a while, of reading and not finding myself in the reading; my environment was never represented. I think that played an enormous role in how I began to question and wonder about the formation of identity.

MM: Did this kind of absence almost afford you the feeling of being non-existent, because you couldn't find yourself represented or spoken of in those texts?

RK: Yeah, it was very unnerving, in a sense, that there were never wheatfields in that kind of world, and kids who did what we did. For some reason, it also became a challenge, that I felt I had to speak out. I had to tell a story.

MM: Which made you go very much into the notions of place and geography and how a self would be located in there, and how you would find yourself in the particular place that you grew up in...

RK: Yeah, I think that looking through the geography was more immediate and powerful for me than any belief systems.

MM: I find the entire identity issue a very tricky one, very hard to define or pin down, and yet I find it inevitable to become discursively coded or inscribed.... You as an author have been leading a public life in many ways – writing, lecturing, giving talks and readings, and you've been travelling extensively all over the world – so all sorts of cultural impressions must have had some 'infiltrating' influence on your 'subjectivity', on your sense of who and what you are?

> *This Robert Kroetsch is the site of a discourse on the nature of Canadian culture and history as well as a discourse on critical inquiry, narratological method and postmodern practise. [He] is increasingly dispersed as the subject of an investigation as to our nature and identity.*
> (David Arnason, Introducing Robert Kroetsch, 29 Sep 1992, Wpg.)

RK: I hope you can edit some of this out [laughs]. -- Well, certainly there is a gap between my sense of being a private person and the person I am out in the public. I guess I feel the person out in the public has to enter into a sometimes restricted role. On the other hand, I think I sometimes entered into it rather exuberantly as being a little of an outrageous kind of person, a little bit defiant, rebellious, whatever....

MM: I want to come back to that evening when David Arnason introduced you as the after-gala-dinner speaker, cause that whole evening was a very special, memorable event for me – and yet I felt somewhat inapproapriate, at unease in that fancy place. I didn't wear a proper jacket nor a tie, and so I was simply underdressed. The judgement and disapproval was quite visible in some of the participants' eyes. That was one of the rare occasions when the power of dress really struck me as quite enormous. – In *Le petit prince*, Antoine de Saint-Exupéry has this wonderful account of a Turkish astronomer who lectures about a quite important atrological discovery – but nobody among the congress people would want to believe him, since he has shown up in his Turkish dress that to them looks rather shabby. 11 years later, wearing a perfectly elegant suit, the astronomer gives his talk again and appears perfectly credible. The crowd, baffled and astonished by his news, approves and applauds.

> *Dress as a cultural phenomenon has several essential attributes. First, a person's identity is defined geographically and historically, and the individual is linked to a specific community.... Dress is an indication of the general social position of the person in the society.... As an emblem of power, one's position may be communicated by a crown, staff, or robe. Dress is also a symbol of economic position.*
> (Barnes and Eicher, Eds., *Dress and Gender*, p. 1)

MM: Have you had experiences where the very dress that you would be wearing had a specific impact on the way you would perform or come across or were perceived?

RK: Well, I remember in the Sixties, when I was teaching in New York State – and the kind of cultural revolution was taking place in the Sixties – an older professor told me: It all really comes down to whether you wear a tie or don't. The young professors, we were refusing to dress like professors.... We wouldn't wear ties to class – we wore jeans to class.... And he was right. Because it was you announced that you were on the side of change, on the side of the young people. You were willing to break down the barrier between yourself and students and create a barrier between yourself and old professors. So there was an enormous shift of power signalled by clothing.

MM: If a 'normal' dress itself has this apparent capacity to empower its wearer with credibility, authority, or even the appearance of authenticity – how much more then can dressing by way of disguise or masquerade lend agency and power to figures?

RK: You know, I used to have through all my books the sense that clothing is a highly signified system. Right from nakedness to the sense of the wedding dress, and in *The Puppeteer* he says the wedding dress will speak almost. Well, I think these objects almost

can speak, like the crown. Or it's interesting in our own time, where the crown is being rewritten, almost, as a joke instead of a symbol of authority.

MM: Where, by the way, can we draw the line between 'regular' dressing and disguising by way of wearing a particular dress? Or aren't we all under disguise, one way or the other, whenever we dress in specific ways according to specific occasions – for sports, for the bar, for the lecture, for the hike, for the journey, etc.?

> *Throughout the history of the human race, people have wanted to change the appearance of their bodies. Archaeological evidence and contemporary practices around the world have shown that humans add clothing, paint, or jewelry, and even alter the shape of their body parts. Hardly a society exists where some form of alteration or addition is not considered essential as an emblem of the person as social being.... A cultural identity is thus expressed.*
> (Barnes and Eicher, Eds., *Dress and Gender*, p. 1)

RK: Hmhm. Well the question – that I don't think I ever brought up in my novels – is the contemporary ease with which people alter their bodies – face-lift, piercing, loosing weight, actually having weight removed from your body. Well .... first of all, I don't think it's ever been this easy, in a certain way, as it seems nowadays. What do you think about it? How would you think about this ease, what does it say about identity?

MM: Well, I first of all wonder whether people actually do it with ease. I think about the pop icons .... that we have out there. Michael Jackson and Madonna. Especially 'Jacko' – he has undergone such a major metamorphosis in various stages. He has transformed from a sort of regular and nice-looking young man into an almost non-human, hard-to-describe kind of figure that to me really looks alien and almost lifeless. So I don't actually think that he has ever felt very much at ease by what he has done. Madonna, on the other hand, I think has been probably much more at ease. We know of her that she has done a lot of lifting and alterations, too. But I wonder in how far their sense of self and identity has even been eroded and erased by the transformations they've exposed themselves to.

RK: No, I agree. You see, you can't become so fluent that you just flow away, I mean there has to be some some kind of dynamic relationship between the possibility of – of a fixed self, I guess, though that's too strong a word – and this change. You know these are just incredibly difficult questions....

MM: Back to the case of Michael Jackson: It seems to me he's constantly trying to escape himself, whereas Madonna probably tries to keep herself in fashion and at the

same time create new styles; to keep herself appealing to the public and audience. To me, there seem to be two totally different motivations behind their stages – and stagings – of changes.

RK: Yeah, that's good. I like that. And you know, right now on TV there's an add of a woman who is some 50 years old, and she looks that age, and then she takes some mysterious medicine which you can buy and her face looks younger. And the curious thing: I find the older face more attractive, in a sense, because it doesn't look so tampered with, you know. I like what you're doing with Jackson and Madonna; I think that represents the choices that we have.

MM: Either you can willfully try to erase the traces that life has inscribed on your entire body – and especially on the face – or you can, well, maybe even highlight and accentuate them.... But let's switch a bit here: If we think of *the* – no, it would be better to speak of *a* – history of masquerade in culture, Italy and the Venetian Carnival and then the English Renaissance come to mind. A Swiss Count by the name of John James Heidegger is said to have introduced the masquerades into England and London in 1708, where it *soon became the most popular entertainment in town* (Ribeiro 3). For an entire century, masquerades and disguises would dominate cultural life for various reasons and purposes. Of course, they had been known long before – and also constituted major elements of literature, as in Shakespeare's comedies or Homer's *Odyssey*. But now something altogether new and almost revolutionary happened; as Terry Castle says in her interesting study, *Masquerade and Civilization*,

> *The masked assemblies of the eighteenth century were in the deepest sense a kind of collective meditation on self and other, and an exploration of their mysterious dialectic.... New bodies were superimposed over old; anarchic, theatrical selves displaced supposedly essential ones; masks, or personae, obscured persons.... One became the other in an act of ecstatic impersonation* (4).

MM: Would you say that this sort of captures the/an essence of the whole notion of masquerade?

RK: I think Terry Castle's phrase, *collective meditation on self*, is a wonderful phrase, because – and I know it sounds like a contradiction, but I don't think it is – because one only has a self, some of us would argue, in the context of others. That notion of an independent, fixed self seems to be plain wrong, but in this great era of the masquerade ... – you know it would be so nice to act it out with other people.

MM: So again this is the idea of everything and everybody being relative to each other, defining itself and themselves in relation to the other things and the other people out there...

RK: My growing interest in chaos theory – I'm just beginning to explore a bit – would say that society is just too complex for us to understand in certain ways, and yet there are structures operating, even in what we could call chaos. That 18th-century investigation of masquerade was finding some of the deep structures, I think, in what seems to be a chaotic society. The societies as a whole have identity problems, and that same problem goes right down to the family, right down to the individual, right down to the educational institutions, right down to the church. And Castle – I haven't read this book of hers but – I think she's really right on when she talks about this *collective meditation.*

MM: What I like about the above-quoted passage, too, is the sense of performance and also the movement away from self to other; Castle writes, *The true self remained elusive and inaccessible – illegible – within its fantastical encasements. The result was a material devaluation of unitary notions of the self* (4). So here already is the movement away from the Cartesian subject, towards our modern, contemporary conception of the subject as being fragmented and split. What I simultaneously dislike – or am suspicious of – about this interpretation is Castle's way of ascribing rather contemporary critical practice and thinking to a cultural phenomenon that dates back at least two centuries. She tries to make us believe that even then people were consciously aware of their selves as non-fixed, unstable & floating 'entities' – and that they even dramatized that knowledge willfully and playfully! .... How do you feel about that?

RK: I guess one thing that you could argue, is that by doing it all together in such a ritualized way, they don't really quite have to face the issues that she says they're facing. I mean carnival is more chaotic in a certain way, literal carnival. But this was so formal. I don't know. That's an interesting question – is part of the formal surface of this 18th-century masquerade, is that too part of the disguise?

MM: Maybe the playful but not too conscious use of masquerade sort of helped transport archetypal notions to the surface, and helped enact these patterns on the collective level. I suppose that by ritualizing it collectively in communities, there evolved a consciousness about the process that the self assembled towards, too.... Her description almost sounded too perfect to me.... – Anyways, I want to look at your works a bit now. When we look at early models for disguise in literature, we certainly cannot skip a book that has had some impact on your writing: *The Odyssey*. I think that in there, disguise is not a device or method employed by many people – or a culture – but by singular figures

that are usually god-like, with the exception of Odysseus. Having set foot on the island of Ithaca again, very close to coming home, Odysseus adopts the disguises of an old man and of a beggar (Book 13). Not only does he perform roles of social difference or inferiority to his 'true' status, but also does he endure this existential game with patience. This capacity distinguishes him from his contemporaries and underlines that *disguise is typically not a human but a divine strategy* (Murnaghan 11). Now, when we switch from the world of Greek myths to that of the Canadian Prairies, and look at *The Studhorse Man* and Hazard Lepage's disguises as mountie or priest, would you say he is willingly acting out a 'divine' or shape-shifter's strategy?

RK: Well, off-hand, I would say he's a little more parodic, maybe. We're inclined to laugh at these two representations, the mountie and the priest...

MM: Hazard seems solitary & distinguished from his environment. His quest is a re-questing after the *Odyssey* on the *mare* of the Canadian Prairies. I wonder if he really undergoes a profound change though? According to Forbes Irving, protean transformations require that the *shape-shifter completely submerges his personality in the thing he becomes* (171). What is becoming of Hazard while under disguise; what alters inside of him when changed outside?

RK: You know in that quote – that's a little bit debatable, isn't it, whether the *shape-shifter completely submerges his personality in the thing he becomes*? You have always a little awareness of acting, or that this, too, is just another shape, rather than some final shape.

MM: First of all, I think it's also part of the fun, whatever the shape-shifter does, that he or she is not fully submerging into what he or she becomes. There should always remain a portion of awareness: This is another version I am willfully acting out, temporarily. It is not myself; I am just performing this role.

RK: I think Forbes Irving loses a part of the complexity of it by going that far. What makes it so exciting is that we are and are not ... – you know when I dress up like a tourist in Key West, on one hand I enter into being a tourist, on the other hand I know that I'm entering into being a tourist. That kind of play between the two possibilities ... I guess the real test in our time is being the lover in a certain way. When one becomes the lover and the demand is for sincerity and truthfulness, and yet I wonder if you aren't aware that you're ... Well, you see you're caught up in discourse in a certain way, you're aware that you're entering into a discourse. And I don't think that makes it false, what you're doing; it

doesn't mean you're being false. Because, going into disguise is to enter into a certain discourse.

MM: The question is, are the others aware of my being disguised or not? And if they're not, well, it might be more fun for them to enter the discourse – or it might be less. Is it important to remain hidden and concealed for a little discourse to go on, or is it the other way around – as soon as I reveal myself, will that give way to a new discourse?

RK: Cause you see, when you go to the masquerade in the 18th-century, you know that everybody else there is masqueraded. Good grief ...

MM: My question about Hazard was whether he really undergoes a profound change, a change that would be related to the disguises he goes through, and I tend to argue he does not.

RK: Or you could argue, I suppose, that he gets trapped into one of the disguises he enters into. I don't know. I'm hoping to learn some things from you here today...

MM: He's sort of pushed into disguising himself for the first time after his sexual encounters in the museum; the second time he is disguised, it's in the dress of a priest – and that takes away agency from him; he wants to buy volumes of the Encyclopedia Britannica and he cannot even try to make a bargain, cause as a priest you are not supposed to do that. That role he performs there is a very restricted one that doesn't really allow him to change very much, does it?

RK: Oh, that's a good question: We think of entering into disguise as giving us freedom, but it also seems to take away freedom, or agency.

MM: Hazard seems to have these two opposite experiences: being dressed as a mountie ... gives him agency; being dressed as a priest ... takes away agency from him, he's very limited in his scope. John Thieme, among others, sees Hazard as exemplary of a new type of hero, and of changing gender roles; Thieme argues that in your fiction, *the male must surrender his notion of autonomous identity*, and his *traditional heroic quest pattern* (for which the *Odyssey* set the standard) must undergo a metamorphosis on the basis of *a new textual erotics* which you yourself outlined in "The Fear of Women in Prairie Fiction." ("Robert Kroetsch and the Erotics of Prairie Fiction", 1986: 98). Is it really true that the male must surrender his notion of autonomous identity?

RK: Well, I think so, yeah. I can't say he must, but he'd better, in order to live a better life. Autonomous is autonomous, it's away from the world. And, you see, it loses that sense of interplay. I think maybe the hero is trying to escape that sense of interplay, but having escaped it, you find out you are a solitary figure.... He's always coming back into the world. Often in the form of being attracted to a woman.

MM: Thieme concludes that Hazard's *disguise typifies his trickster-like subversion of the symbols of Western Canadian authority, as well as his repudiation of official versions of history* (96). Is there so much motivation behind Hazard's disguise – or does he simply try to, in rude words, save his ass?

RK: Well, I don't think it's an either-or-situation. He's doing both – I mean soldiers risk their lives, but they're getting paid, too. I mean there's always the sense, it seems to me, that the kind of the ridiculous and the sublime are pretty close together. And it's the same for Hazard: He just wants to get out of there alive sometimes. Resisting history, in order to get alive, he has to.

MM: I think it was Donna Bennett who was looking at the name Hazard itself; her interpretation says that Hazard is the one who dares to go out there and combines his heroic quest with his subversion of ... Canadian authority and of history. He is the male protagonist who dares to subvert and also dares to give up a former, let's say, a male, almost autonomous position in the novel. He ventures forward into new ground.

RK: Oh, that's really dead on. I think the word *hazard* is really one of the words that informs my thinking – the chance and danger, all of the things Hazard can meet. You hazard a guess, we say. Or there are hazards in taking a trip. For me, that's: You have to go there. Like I use the phrase in a poem [*The Ledger*], *You must marry the terror*. And that *is* marrying the terror. And it's not a nice or easy thing to do, cause you are gambling, you might not survive. I realize, you don't see it at the time, but you realize how often you come back to that *motif*.... And I think a society needs its hazard figures, the people who disrupt or gamble or take a chance.

MM: Otherwise it would give in to stasis – that much-dreaded version of death?

RK: Yes. Right on. Well, I think some of us are almost sort of genetically doomed to be the people who venture; in the whole kind of gene pool, there has to be a number of – I don't know, maybe you call them artists, maybe you call them scientists, I don't know what you wanna call them. People who say: Is that really true? Well, what's over the hill?

MM: In your first two novels, Robert, disguise does not play an important role, or none at all. *But We Are Exiles* (1965) is very much about the identity quest of an all-Canadian guy named Peter Guy, based on the Narcissus-myth, but no literal disguise seems involved; *The Words of My Roaring* (1966) has somebody who disguises himself professionally for the sake of entertainment – the rodeo clown. This is not even a 'real' disguise, in the sense of deception, since everybody knows – or should know – that the person seen is not really himself but performing as somebody else. And yet, when the clown gets lethally injured by a bull, Johnnie Backstrom looks after him & seems almost surprised to find a human being of flesh and blood inside of the clown's costume. And this realization leads Johnnie to identify with the clown and ushers him into his *first major speech* at the very centre of the book. It seems as if the person in disguise, the clown, here figures as *alter ego* or foil for identification & suddenly empowers Backstrom with voice – so, in a sense, the death of the disguised or masqueraded figure gives birth to a non-disguised one?

RK: Well, that's another question: When the person so explicitly announces disguise like the clown, does that person remind us that those of us who are disguised as sober citizens are also clowns? Or is there a clownish dimension to all that?

MM: So the fool figure that serves as a foil for our own foolishness.

RK: You go back to that model of the king in medieval courts having a clown or fool or jester, whose function is to remind the king of his own foolishness. That was great fun, wasn't it?....

MM: *Words* already presented a trickster-like protagonist, Backstrom, who is rather unreliable as a narrator, who fools around with others and is being fooled by others, too, but nonetheless wins Helen's love or manages to come up with rain at the end of the book. In *The Studhorse Man* things are already much more complicated: We have Hazard, the tragi-comic hero or anti-hero, and we have Demeter, the narrator or would-be biographer of his cousin & rival for the love of Martha. Of course, Demeter's sitting naked in a bathtub in a madhouse is supposed to emphasize his being unreliable – and at the same time his relative ease and the fact that he has survived, in contrast to Hazard, plays off the whole notion of sanity vs. insanity. Now, Demeter – a man who goes by the name of a woman – sits naked, why we can't really think of him (or her) as being somehow disguised. Is Demeter not only *an androgynous figure who represents a sharp contrast to Hazard's assertive manhood* (Thieme 1986: 98), but whose very nakedness serves as a kind of deceptive disguise here, on the psychological level maybe? Is nakedness really to be associated with naïvity or innocence here?

RK: I like that last question. What is nakedness, you know? Even that, I would say, nowadays is a kind of construct. Why do we make such a heavy reading of this? We have learned something about nakedness that has an enormous amount to do with clothing and so on; it's not that little kids are playing together out in the sand, where there is no awareness of it. That question of nakedness, I use it fairly often in my writing. But you say nakedness serves as a kind of deceptive disguise ...

MM: Demeter pretends: I am naked, so you should think I am telling you the truth. And that's a way of deceiving.

RK: That's right on. And then, connected with our social notions of madness ... I just heard a thing the other day on the radio about the storm of protest that developed when somebody invented the bikini some 50 years ago. People were outraged. And nowadays: who cares about it? But we had invented such a notion of being clothed that this was an astonishing thing. Now we've invented this notion of being naked.... it's almost a joke now. And now the ozon layer is entering the construction ...

MM: In *Gone Indian*, a man dressed as woman seems to set the tone for the novel: identity is continually quest-ioned. Jeremy Sadness (another one of those guys to be found everywhere) is on a quest, going west, wanting *to be Grey Owl*. Sadness has a self that is continually shifted throughout the book, by the actions he takes part in as well as by professor Madham's editing of his story-on-tape. Is Jeremy's self an illustration of your own concept outlined in *Labyrinths of Voice*, – which we quoted before – where you say *What I want to do is get back to a very amorphous sense of self which changes today and can still change, respond, alter, be changed* (188)?

RK: Yeah, if you can always be changed, are always open to change, that whole notion of ending – conclusion, finality – that just falls apart. And so much of our culture is still constructed around the notion of ending, solution or closure, or shape. These are pretty scary presences in our culture, when you start to say: I can go on and on changing, folks.

MM: That really seems to be happening in GI, with that ongoing process of transformation that refuses the notion of closure at the end.... Jeremy is that kind of figure that seems exposed to a simultaneous release from and realization of 'identity' by going through a series of transformative encounters. They are fuelled by disguises – he puts on Indian clothes or a digger's night gown in a hospital & thus finds his *alter ego*, Dorck. In the end, one possibility suggested by the book is that Jeremy and his lover die after jumping off a bridge, which would render his entire quest for identity useless, a farce,

almost. Of course, this is not the only ending imaginable. There is, after all, much more masquerade at hand in the book: Madham, who has himself adopted a false identity after going east, manipulates Jeremy's account on tapes. So, in a sense, GI as a book edited by professor Madham (who lives at the same address in Binghamton, N.Y. State, as you did, Robert), this very text masks the story of Jeremy's metamorphosis as only one, probably inaccurate version. Is all this maybe supposed to suggest that it doesn't really matter what identity we actually have or believe we have or pretend to have?

RK: No, not at all. It matters a great deal. But it has to matter contextually. It matters in terms of those relationships around us.... And I think the mattering, too, undergoes transformation. Some people who encounter this notion of this fluid self, and then nothing matters – well, it's really the other way around. If you have a fixed self, then nothing matters. I am a good human being, I don't care if the world is going into parts. But if I am a vulnerable human being, undergoing changes, then I have to engage every time in ethical questions, scientific questions, whatever ... It's exotic. In fact, I think it might be just finally so impossible, so wearing, to have to be responsible all the time that we retreat to this fixed self notion.

MM: Trying to have a fixed identity is a version of saving oneself from totally falling apart, I guess.

RK: Again, your example of Jackson is a kind of scary one, isn't it?

MM: It is. I wonder if he is maybe representative of cultural changes that are presently going on. It seems to me that Jackson, in his repeated escape from self, through repeated metamorphoses, maybe illuminates a state of loss or lack of orientation so many young people seem to suffer from...

RK: Also, as you said, it becomes a face that isn't, in a certain way, human. It's plastic, whatever. I guess cultural studies are very interesting, looking at pop figures...

MM: Towards the end, you make Madham utter a remarkably wise 'speculation' about the relationship of geography or place, and self, when he speaks of *the consequence of the northern prairies to human definition: the diffusion of personality into a complex of possibilities rather than a concluded self* (GI 152). Can this *diffusion of personality* be understood as *one of the healing acts that we engage in*, as you describe metamorphosis or the transformative act in *Labyrinths* (173)? Related to what we just talked about, this has to be questioned.

RK: Well, the diffusion of personality can be loose, too. There's got to be – it's a hazard, you know. You might just lose everything. On the other hand, you have to risk it in order to find that healing. Yeah, I guess we long so for safe ground, and there's really no save ground. And the continents are floating around on their plates...

MM: What about some middle-ground, a mixture of playing around and of being secure and anchored?

RK: Well, you have to be able to get out of the disguise as well as get into it. And how do you get out? I remember an actor telling me that it's very hard to get out sometimes....

MM: The actors I know quite often give me the sense of their suffering from the transitions between the roles they inhabit and the necessity to go back into "reality". They sometimes find it hard to differentiate even.

RK: You know, this actor .... she was telling me about acting the part of being in love in a play – and doing this for weeks on end with this other person, and *how you do fall in love with this person in a way*. It's very hard luck, in a sense, unless you really loathe him. And then you would have to walk out of the play and go to your husband who has been at home with the kids or whatever, and go back into this other world. And she said, some nights it was very hard to do. Because you have this – on the play, here is this kind of spectacular situation where you got an audience approving of it. And I think, unless obvious ways, we all have that problem. You see it in the university: The professor who has to walk out of class and just be an ordinary person when he steps out – they have difficulties, they want to go on being the wise person or whatever. And they become rather foolish in their outside world, they kind of do this on the street for somebody.

MM: Does GI mark the departure (into the North? the Unknown?) of the traditional subject that has freed itself of conventional identity formations? Is it maybe working towards a plurality of identities of which you spoke in "No Name is My Name" as a possible solution towards *self-realization*?

RK: I suppose a journey or a narrative is always to somewhere and from somewhere. It certainly is to the notion of plurality. I don't know – you mention the North here...

MM: I was also thinking of Madham's comment about man's *diffusion of personality* as an effect of entering the North.

RK: Oh, I see. I like that idea – certainly the Grey Owl figure represents that. It's interesting that a lot of the Native people knew that Grey Owl was a white man; it's that kind of thing we were talking about earlier, entering into it, but knowing at the same time that you're entering into it.

MM: Where would we locate the famous example of Frederick Philipp Grove in this context?

RK: That's an interesting question, because in a certain way he is very much drawn to the notion of a bounded self, of a highly defined self. And yet he is so transparently working from behind the disguise. It's obvious that he wanted to get caught, so to speak. He was having this battle with the fixed self that we are talking about.

MM: So .... he was trying to escape from or keep his notion of fixed self, to stabilize it even?

RK: Oh, I have the feeling that, in a strange way, he was still trying to stabilize it. But he tricked himself as well as tricking other people. Out of one corner into another maybe.

MM: Robert, we haven't even touched on a topic here that is essential to your approach towards literature: the carnival. You have talked about it in various papers and have repeatedly acknowledged Bakhtin's influence on your conception of carnival.

> *Carnival is the place for working out ... a new mode of interrelationship between individuals.... The behavior, gesture and discourse of a person are freed from the authority of all hierarchical positions (social estate, rank, age, property) defining them totally in noncarnival life.* (Bakhtin, *Problems* 123)

MM: In *Labyrinths* (37), you say that Sadness *is completed by [carnival], even by the loss of identity and the shift into a new identity by accident, by the mixing of life and death that takes place, the kind of phallic connection.* In how far would you say that the act of disguise contributes to this *new mode of interrelationship*?

RK: Well, when we put on a disguise, we can't be sure what's gonna happen. And that word *accident* is so important, isn't it? Because if we really knew what was gonna happen, it wouldn't really be a disguise in a certain sense. You have to be vulnerable and I suppose that notion of the phallic, it's close to the trickster notion. Now, the Bakhtin quote is interesting, because it talks about *a new mode of interrelationship* and, as we said earlier, you don't operate alone – it's a matter of collective action.

MM: Bakthin speaks of *disguise – that is, carnivalistic shifts of clothing and of positions and destinies in life* – as one of the *various accessory rituals of carnival* (*Problems* 125). Is not disguise itself a major vehicle to undermine established orders or hierarchies and to quickly introduce carnivalistic powers? Would you yourself see disguise or masquerade as rather minor instruments of the whole carnivalistic process, or rather as integral elements?

RK: Well, in Venice, for example, it seems to me that it's almost impossible to have the carnivalesque without *some* understanding of the mask, you know. You may think you're taking masks *off*, as far I think, when you take off certain versions of social order. It would be pretty hard to proceed without that.

MM: I fully agree. With reference to Bakhtin, though, I have to admit I was quite surprised, a little disappointed even, to see him put the whole notion of disguise or masquerade aside, pretending it were only a very minor aspect of this entire examination of the carnival. So I would think he doesn't give full credit to the importance of masquerade in relation to the carnivalistic realm.

RK: Oh, I agree. I agree. I don't know what his reasons are. Maybe he is working so much with that upsetting of authority, of hierarchy, that he doesn't want to admit to this as being important.

> *the masquerade was also an indispensable plot-catalyst, the mysterious scene out of which the essential drama of the fiction emerged.* (Castle, viii)

RK: That's a profound, difficult statement she makes....

MM: You said that carnivalization in *Gone Indian* is *happening to the characters and it's happening to the novel. It's double* (*Labyrinths*, 37). The same thing, I think, is happening in the next book I'd like to discuss, in *Alibi.* Perhaps even more so than your previous protagonists, *Alibi*'s Dorf is a man driven by desire – and that, of course, is essential to the motivation of carnivalistic life, seeks its own transgression through the crossing of boundaries...

> *the carnivalesque becomes a resource of actions, images and roles which may be invoked both to model and legitimate desire and to 'degrade all that is spiritual and abstract'.*
>
> P. Stallybrass and A. White, *The Politics & Poetics of Transgression* (18)

MM: Can you see that happening in your books, escpecially in *Alibi*, too?

RK: I guess I wouldn't go quite as far as they go.... No, I think desire always leads to the opposite; it might lead to degradation, but it also leads to the opposite of degradation.... We often idealize what we desire; on the one hand, it's very physical and so on, but on the other hand, it leads ... Because of the unattainability, it becomes idealized.

MM: It would quite often be attached to the notion of transcendance.

RK: It often is. I think it is. No, I mean – and desire itself is translated away from the body, toward abstractions. But, you know, I sort of like to recover the sense of desire as operating in a physical world. But I'm aware that you're not really going to erase that other possibility, or I don't really say that I want to necessarily.

MM: In *Alibi*, the carnivalesque sites are not only located in various geographical places, but also in both the physical body and that of the journal or book – so also in the act of writing itself. Referring to your statement about GI, here the carnivalization is even more than double: it's multiple. But disguise in itself ... is of no importance on the literal level.... Nonetheless, I believe that *Alibi* – as a narrative of desire – has a subject of almost excessive masquerade: the text itself. We have Dorf transform, or note, his actual sexual encounters into his journal on a first level. Then he transcribes his entries into his *Manual of Health* on a second level. We, as readers of the spectacle, get at least a third performance in writing through Karen Strike's editing of the manuscript. In a way, the text hides itself through this elaborate labyrinth of manipulation, shifting, altering. There is a quote from Jacques Derrida's *Of Grammatology* coming to mind, where he says:

> *Writing, sensible matter and artificial exteriority: a "clothing." ... For Saussure it is even a garment of perversion and debauchery, a dress of corruption and disguise, a festival mask ... (OG 35)*

RK: Isn't that great? I like this quote. Good grief. Isn't that good?

MM: There is so much shifting and masquerading going on on the textual level ... Where, in all this, is Dorf and his attempt at writing one version of himself, at having an identity...? Is it still possible for him to render his identity, his self, via textual production?

RK: The minute you start writing, you have given up some of your hope of establishing a single identity.

MM: .... The very moment one sets one's mind to writing, the self seems automatically exposed to the act of textual disguise.

RK: Even if you're writing, frantically, to establish a secure self; you know it's leaving you, it's an excretion in a sense, isn't it?

> *I cross out* I am *and write in* He is *... He ... I ... What does it matter? I am, he is, at last, this morning, trying to catch up*. (*A* 51)

MM: So, we have this switching between various pronouns that designate possibly totally different entities like 'I' and 'He', and in this passage they seem somewhat equal to one another, if not synonymous or identical. This also illustrates the impossibility of representing the 'I' fully and properly in a text, in language ... Speaking of himself as his *own vegetable garden*, and of *tending my journal as a gardener tends his sprouts and blossoms*, Dorf's physical body gets linked with his textual one. The book figures as garden, the text as self; as the title – alibi means 'elsewhere' – suggests, this self is to be found somewhere else. *Alibi* here foregrounds the notion of a self that is made up of various layers and a series/conglomeration of versions, characterized by an emptiness or absence of essence. Again, here's the problem of identity representation in language.

> *Writing veils the appearance of language; it is not a guise for language but a disguise.* (de Saussure; in Derrida OG 35)

MM: This comes back to our idea of writing as a hiding instead of presenting of identity.

RK: Yeah, isn't that right? It's a kind of covering over.

MM: I read in *Alibi* Dorf's wild attempts at finding his own position and place in there, and the more he goes on, the more he's bound to fail. He just can't render himself properly in his journal. There is one exception though.... the carnival-culmination at Laspi that gives temporary relief and unity of soul and body to Dorf; when primacy of bodily life and experience over cultural codings and inhibitions is given to the protagonist, his self seems momentarily unified, in harmony with the world.

RK: Well, I suppose at that time, I wasn't as aware as we would be now of body itself as an invention, so to speak, as a construction. How do you feel about this talk about the body as construct? Do you think we can still say there is a body?

MM: I think it's kind of hard nowadays to speak of 'my very own body' anymore – we all expose our bodies to so many changes, influences, alterations.

RK: Oh, that's right. Contemporary popular medicine certainly makes enormous claims on us. Look at vitamins or exercise – we really surrender our bodies to these.

MM: I don't actually think the body is free of all these other cultural inscriptions going on that contribute heavily to our identity formations. Maybe we have neglected to investigate that sufficiently. Foucault has talked a bit about this, and Judith Butler for sure has. She would criticize almost all other previous attempts at looking at identity formations, because they all seem to have neglected the body.... – In another carnival scene, we have two authors enter Deadman Spring, one of them touching *Karen's buttocks* and *slipping her bikini bottom an inch lower*. I read this as a reversion of Susanna Moodie's distance and voyeurism at the sight of bathing people who have fun (*Roughing It in the Bush*; you quoted a long passage in "Carnival and Violence: A Meditation", 96f) – the two authors in your book engage in true carnivalesque immersion. And it seems quite obvious that these two are Rudy Wiebe and Robert Kroetsch ...

RK: Hmhm, that's what I've heard. Yeah, and Moodie, she keeps her distance – and yet she is so attracted. Whereas these two guys ... enter into the scene.

MM: In terms of cultural identity formation, we could say that Moodie very much sticks to her conservative and quite fixed notion of herself, to all the cultural luggage she brought along.

RK: You know, one time I was in Finland, at a conference, and I had the choice of going to the sauna or to an art show – and I chose the art show. It was an exhibition of the great Russian posters from right after the Revolution, so that I was attracted on the political level. I sometimes wonder if I was still afraid to go into the water naked.

....

> *Within the carnival, the subject is reduced to nothingness, while the structure of* the author *emerges as anonymity that creates and sees itself created as self and other, as man and mask.*[...]*The scene of the carnival, where there is no stage, no "theater," is thus both stage and life, game and dream, discourse and spectacle.... [where] drama becomes located in language.*
> (Kristeva, *Desire in Language*, 78f)

MM: This is pretty packed... I was, first of all, thinking of the authors – that example from *Alibi* of those two guys entering the scene – or an author's emergence, in one way or the other, as mask, in their own writing. Look at you and Wiebe emerging in/from the bathing scene there, not being named but nameless. Also, the whole notion of the carnival as a stage, the boundaries being transgressed, stage and life become one... But what do you make of the *drama becomes located in language*?

RK: I resist that just a little bit. It isn't just that – no. I think we have to put all of this back in its context in a certain way, too.

MM: Is the subject really *reduced to nothingness*? We were talking about carnival affording agency, even on the collective level.

RK: I just don't think that is the case. I can't go that far.

MM: In *The Puppeteer*, the play of language on the surface and the diffusion of personality into flatness or irretrievability seems pushed even further, I would say. Everything and everybody in *The Puppeteer* seems to be floating. Signifiers do – *He spoke pizza as if it was a language* (124). Even the categories of space and time do – and they are, as Kant would insist, indispensable parameters for the formation of cognition and identity. *The kitchen was a cave of light hung with four calendars that didn't agree on the month or the year* (3). The cave here, and more so the attic later on, seem to be calling for a Jungian reading. But I suspect you don't really want your reader to go into too much psychological depth there and interpret the book on the subconscious levels, do you? – I could add that David Arnason argues that depth psychology is almost entirely absent in both *Alibi* and *The Puppeteer* .

RK: Well, I certainly, intellectually, was resisting it at the time, and I probably still would. I am much more interested right now in what we call surface. And the whole narrative of depth psychology is a narrative that I find myself resisting.

MM: Isn't it, to some extent, also always affirmative of old established orders, of old conceptions of more or less fixed identity?

RK: Oh, that's what I would hear in a Jungian reading, and you know when I bring up the notion of the cave and the attic – and I mean, here are two sites that have been read over and over in very Jungian ways, I suppose – and the problem is to go back to the cave and the attic instead of to the interpretations. I guess that's what I mean by surface in a

certain way. I mean not that you aren't going to start reading Jung or Jungian again – you can't avoid that.

MM: Oh, on the contrary – I think that if we do it consciously, it contributes to our plural interpretative possibilities.

RK: Well, that's right. And it's a part of our intellectual history, too.

> *If the unconscious means anything, in fact, it is precisely the guarantee against a return to the traditional idea that the subject is one, full, self-transparent entity, governed by the laws of rational discourse.* (Rosi Braidotti, *Patterns of Dissonance* 35)

MM: Here's an argument saying: If we go back to employing the unconscious levels in readings, this helps us to get away from the old model of the round, full, fixed self. I'm not sure though whether I'd like to subscribe to that.

RK: That's what the quote says. I have a little trouble buying that, too. By going to the unconscious, you're not going out to the world, where the frictions are – I think that's really where I end up disagreeing. It is such an interior journey that it just denies what life is about in a sense, that outwardness, you know. You have to go buy groceries. And those are significant things.

MM: If we would go back to the model of the unconscious as being composed of archetypes, that again would be affirmative of the old notion of fixed selves...

RK: Yeah, I think so.

MM: In *The Puppeteer*, there are so many references and allusions to disguise that it is kind of hard to just select a few for discussion. First of all, Dorf's initial appearance is in the guise of a Greek orthodox priest, with a long black hat. He calls himself *the pizza man* and is then referred to as *Papa B*. In addition to his dress, the very language used both by him and others serves to hide – or masquerade – him, too. His attempts at remaining incognito are merely a farce, though. And when he dresses as a monk on the island of Sifnos, escorting the mules with the stolen icons, the narrator speaks Maggie Wilder's mind: *He is, she thought, a monk after all. Being a fake monk is as close as he can get to being what he is* (242).

RK: I just agree with what you're saying...

MM: With this notion of disguise replacing essential identity, I am tempted to argue that in *The Puppeteer,* if not earlier in your works, disguise has ceased to function traditionally. This would apply to Deemer, the mysterious collector and god-like figure, too. Having searched for and, eventually, gotten a glimpse of the *icon with the face of God as a woman* – the ultimate goal of his collecting – Deemer undergoes a crucial transformation. Although he originally intended to disguise himself with Maggie's wedding dress, the same cloth now makes him note, *I was no longer simply myself* (251) – and yet he remains visible as himself. He is not disguised in the traditional sense anymore.... Or look at Maggie's comment about Dorf as a fake monk – the performance itself would come close to replacing whatever identity there is...

RK: It's even stronger than that. There's a kind of possible emptiness ... You're right. I think you're right. There's a greater doubt coming into my mind about disguise. The disguise is still ... there is some reality which you then can see by putting on a disguise. But what is it that you're disguising? And that's what you are saying is now up for some serious questioning.

MM: So if disguise does replace sort of an essential identity, would this not also testify to the absence or emptiness of such an identity?

RK: Yes, yes. But you see: that's why the changes ... Instead of trying to look *through* the disguise, what we have to do is look *at* the disguise. And see ... I think that's one of the places where we make a shift, you know, not just me, but I mean it's in our culture. Yeah, that's right – instead of trying to look through it, at this essential, we are saying: This is all that we've got. This is all there is to work with. And I find that not discouraging at all, I find that exciting. And also .... you have to work with the senses then, much more. It's funny that we were so skilled at looking *through* things that we can hardly look *at* them. It may be that things on TV and the movies have made us look at them.

MM: Your whole fascination with surface is very close to that shift from looking *through* to looking *at*, too. Recently, you examine the surface much more than the depth that eventually lies behind ...

RK: It would be interesting to speculate about how that does relate to our spending so many hours in our life looking at films or looking at – well, what are they, they are almost shadows in a certain way, but they are very real to us, aren't they? When we watch a movie in a theatre, we believe that.

Or is that part of your disguise, letting us think we see right through you? (*Puppeteer* 14)
He believed in his own disguise, even if it didn't for an instant fool another human being. (22)

MM: .... The appearance of this disguise as a monk apparently serves to make Dorf come as close to his own self as possible. Could we call this a shift from physical disguise to guise? These disguises are simply so obvious that they cease to be disguises...

RK: That's right.

MM: If this is a shift from physical disguise to guise, maybe that reflects the shift from questioning the other's identity to questioning one's own. Not the encounter with the other, but rather a figure's very own transformation is focused upon. For example, Deemer's cross-dressing and his *tendency to retain water* – possibly alluding to menstruation – [- Oh sure, RK says -] here foreground the notion of androgyny. [- That's right, he's getting there, RK says -] A male puts on a dress, a highly culturally coded symbol, originally designed for a woman, and suddenly he begins to transform into somewhat of an androgynous being.

RK: Oh, I mean it is a remarkable example of cultural coding, the wedding dress. Just amazing. You have this garment that you only wear once, and how much it is associated with gender. And the way culture buys into it so much... Financially, we spend fortunes on these dresses.

MM: Women, apparently early on, get trained to crave for this one moment in their life. They really want to have this possibly beautiful, white, spectacular dress... And then there's the whole notion of purity, of virginity attached to it.

RK: Well, and then the unveiling after, the notion that there's going to be some revelation, for the bride and for the groom or whatever...

MM: You made Deemer put on a wedding dress and claim he is not longer himself. Of course, I read this as parodic. I think there is also a movement away from the old traditional role of the male figure, ceasing to be 'truly' male, but opening up to more 'feminized' versions; David Williams speaks of Deemer as *feminized*.

RK: Well, I suppose there's even a kind of return to the matriarchal world. I like to believe it's older than the patriarchal. The dress could give birth again to ... It revalidates

the dress in a certain way, I suppose, having him put it on. It is the feminine about to give birth to – potentially able to give birth to – the male, I mean it makes much more sense.

MM: So the wedding dress would be recontextualized and thus reevaluated. Williams also speaks of this border of gender identity that Deemer crossses as *the least natural border* (70) to be crossed. In a sense, Deemer here is very much the hazard figure we mentioned earlier on.

> *Inasmuch as 'identity' is assured through the stabilizing concepts of sex, gender, and sexuality, the very notion of 'the person' is called into question by the cultural emergence of those 'incoherent' or 'discontinuous' gendered beings who appear to be persons but who fail to conform to the gendered norms of cultural intelligibility by which persons are defined.* (Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 17)

MM: Butler seems to say that sex, gender, sexuality have so far contributed to the formation of identity, but that it is only a cultural coding, basically. And we would need to rethink these categories, if not totally abandon them. I thought that the way you have inscribed Deemer, that would come quite close to pushing this concept of gender-related identity construction.

RK: Well, and then again, in so far as the gender construction is aimed at getting us to reproduce at a mad rate, with the difficulty of keeping our genes in the world... As that has become so successful that it's now the problem, we start to look at other configurations, I think. In a certain way, it was set up as a binary so sharply by society that people reproduced madly. And now, it's a different game... Well, in one sense, it's more narcissistic now.... But also, one of the positive things, you can be into relationships with a lot of people that are important. Or even, I think the kind of narrative of ecology is interesting now, how we place ourselves in a very different narrative, much more in a position of relatedness instead of superiority, don't you think?

MM: Yeah, that opens up the space for many more possible relations, new interrelationships, I guess.

RK: I really think that's gonna be an enormous area, because we got to be so good at this one model – not only at reproducing, but at keeping it alive – that now we have to start shifting the paradigm again. So I think Deemer putting on a wedding dress might be a good thing, certainly.

MM: At the end of *The Puppeteer*, we have Deemer in the wedding dress, and I think Maggie is wearing pants...

RK: She's in sports clothes..... It was developed, I'm sure, as a male clothing system. I think it's interesting in itself – I mean it seems you can't run unless you got out and got the right costume. That's quite amazing, isn't it? That goes back to the question of disguise, too. Maybe we are just fooling ourselves – if I dress up in the right way, I'm in good shape. It's interesting, too, how people now wear that sports clothing as everyday clothing.

MM: Alright, since we are trying to investigate gender roles here, I want to have a look at Dorf himself. As representation of old, traditional male model, he undergoes a transformation from late to early phylogenetic human being, becoming a *beast man* while living and playing in the attic. This might illustrate that Dorf, as a male, and according to contemporary feminist criticism, is lacking the capacity to progress on the tempo-cultural axis (of course, this is also carnivalesque eccentricity). It's interesting, though, that he lets *the puppets say what couldn't be said* (106) – so he displays extraordinary skill as a Karaghiozi. I've read an interesting article by Linda Suny Myrsiades on "The Female Role in the Karaghiozis Performance", which she examines in the light of male role dominance and the gradual emancipation of female 'characters' as partly reflecting the *newly independent urban woman* (160). A very similar process seems to be staged on Papa B's screen in the attic; his puppets display women, like Julie or Maggie, as emancipated agents of their own. The performance here narrates events of the past and the future; ironically enough, it (still) requires a male performer. Maybe this is the only realm where Papa B is still in control of things – simply by letting them happen on the screen? I might be going too far in my interpretation here...

RK: No, that's good. I like that. That's really good.

MM: Is his performance as puppet master the last area where he still has a certain say and authority?

RK: Cause the person who seems to be the puppeteer is dead – but the show goes on. That raises wonderful questions, doesn't it? Yeah, I quite agree. I quite agree with that.

MM: Is Papa B's physical death at the end also a symbolical one of the traditional male (hero) figure and of patriarchy, too? And, of course, I think of the very name here, too: Papa, first of all, also standing in for the patriarchal line; and then B, maybe, as signifying some sort of a second or by-now inferior position? Could that be a possible explanation?

RK: Oh, sure. That's right. He was trying to *be* Papa, but he can't do it, also.

MM: Along with the extinction of the male figure – as representation of the power to signify – comes a shift in language, an upward movement from depth towards surface in a Derridian sense. Of course, this has happened in your previous works, too, Robert – but not as intensively. *The Puppeteer* is one large, flat icon, with all its pizza language, the floating signifiers and the mise-en-abîmes that endlessly replicate without properly representing or conveying definite meaning. Of real icons, it is said they make dissolve the boundaries of past and present, represent transcendence and are themselves; of iconicity, then, it is said that it is a rewriting and incessant transformation of reality (see Filer). Could this be reflective of the language/character games going on in *The Puppeteer?*

RK: Well, by taking pizza as an icon, you may call these shifts in contrast to the icons that were the object of the theft. Say some more...

MM: Well, I like the idea of real icons making dissolve the boundaries of past and present. So, the collapsing or fusion of spatio-temporal categories in *The Puppeteer* seems to be a major thing going on, and the icons would contribute to that past-and-present-not-being-separate-anymore. Being fused, dissolved. And then the idea of iconicity as a rewriting and incessant transformation of reality – which would even tie us to the surface all the time. It would not allow us to go beneath the surface and really go for depth, cause we would always have to witness and watch the transformations, the constant rewriting (of reality) that is going on before our eyes. Again, there is no original or essential notion of truth, of reality, whatever – that's what I like about the icons in here. And I think that's very much a thing going on in popular culture – the pop icons like Jackson... Maybe that's what they do through their repeated performances – they try to rewrite reality, their own reality, their audiences' reality, maybe, too...

RK: You might be interested in Smaro's books on Karaghiozi and on iconicity. Cause they would support things you say. Cause, you see, the icons didn't use that kind of Renaissance notion of depth perception – they just play with ... they're flat. If somebody's bigger... If it's a Saint, they make him bigger. There's no attempt at the point of view that we're having.

MM: Things are out of proportion, and they would not pretend to be in a three-dimensional, real-life-imitation cluster... So how come you have Deemer have this vision of *the icon with the face of God as a woman*?

RK: Again, that goes back to what you were saying, that whole patriarchal thing is a kind of cover-up deal on what was especially coming out of the Mediterranean, the Near East and so on. You know their Gods were obviously ... female. But the male, the patriarchy is not yet willing to surrender.

MM: I think I do agree. Though in my generation...

RK: Oh, it's changing. I just think, if they ever went back to... It's funny some religion doesn't start with recovering the sense of the femaleness of the divine. Maybe it will. You think it would sweep the world, in a certain way.

MM: Do cross-dressing and androgyny not only contrast with, but also replace traditional models of behaviour and gender roles?

RK: They surprise us, don't they, with possibility. We become blind to ... what is culturally prescribed, we think is in nature somewhere. And it isn't in nature, it's cultural. I mean, why not dress up the groom as a kind of object the way we dress up the bride?

MM: The groom to be appropriated by the bride?

RK: That's right. In most species, that's what's going on: The female goes around, there is all the males, they strut their stuff, and the female takes one.

MM: A lot of spiders just simply devour their males after they got impregnated...

RK: It's funny we allow women to cross-dress in a certain way. But it's so taboo for men. Why this profound anxiety about maleness? Why are we so rigorous about it? Even today: You look at a bunch of businessmen – and you can hardly tell them apart. They work at it – they don't resist.

MM: They even seem to enjoy it, as if they had to exaggerate or stress this male coding. Maybe behind this dress – or disguise – there is a certain lack of maleness.

RK: Of course, I think so. They could use some more flexible sense of what they are; they have such a narrow, rigid definition.

MM: Coming back to cross-dressing:

> *gender parody reveals that the original identity after which gender fashions itself is an imitation without origin.* (Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 138)

RK: Yeah, isn't that interesting?

MM: That brings us back to the whole notion of origin and trace. Butler would claim that whatever we started out with in the beginning, in terms of identity formation, is only an imitation, a trace, an imprint ... of a possible origin. If this is 'true', every notion of gender will have to be seriously rethought and reconceptualized, if not freed from any kind of category. This would also explain why, up to this very day, we have worked so hard at constructing ourselves along just a binary frame.

RK: Yeah, that's right.

MM: Are the women, as it would appear at stages, gaining more and more agency and gradually overtaking the male protagonists in your work?

RK: Oh, I think that's my own personal view. Of course it reflects the society as I perceive the society.... I thought of that as being part of what was going on in my total work.... I think it's more difficult for men to write about women than it is to write about men generally. And I was starting out where I thought I could write about men, I was slowly trying to understand how one would write about women. But I think it's a response to cultural change. I think fiction is *very* responsive to what is going on. Very, very responsive. A book you write in one year, you couldn't write ten years later. It changes that fast. Any novel, very quickly, becomes historical in that sense.

MM: When we think of the female figures in your early novels, let's say Helen Murdoch in *Words* – for all her sweetness, she is still very much the object of male desire; and, in *The Studhorse Man*, Martha Proudfoot maybe has a little bit more agency already, but is still the desired object. But then looking at Karen Strike in *Alibi*, for example – she's doing all the editing and manipulating, even rewriting the story, so she's much more important to whatever is going on. *The Puppeteer*, of course, is again a different story, with several important female figures. So they have moved in almost central position.

RK: Well, in my early work, I suppose, I am more concerned with parodying the male quest. Oh, I'm still doing quests, in a strange way, I guess. Probably always will.

MM: Maybe it is an inescapable pattern.

RK: Well, as long as we are going to work with narrative. As long as we are fascinated by narrative – and that could change, but I doubt it... I don't know. Maybe the play on television can do something else... But film and novels are really caught up in narrative structures. That's what the audience goes there for – What's gonna happen next?

MM: You can complicate the whole thing by inserting flashbacks, upsetting the time-space-categories etc, but nonetheless people always need some string to hold on to. I need that too, whenever I watch.

RK: You know, one of the interesting things is the video that goes along with a song. They have more liberty in a certain way, about narrative.

MM: They can narrate a story with their song – which some people do in both their music and their video. But they can also come up with a wild series and fusion of incoherent images, do experiments in light, fast cuts etc. without reflecting the content of the actual song at all.

RK: And if you think of the generations of young people who absorb that method as kids now – that's gonna open things up, make new possibilities for art.

MM: Were you ever accused of having female figures inscribed as objects of desire, lacking agency?

RK: Oh, I think in my earlier work, before *Badlands*.

MM: Did this accusation inform your writing of *Badlands*?

RK: Oh, I don't know if it did. I was picking up what was going on in culture. For one thing, I was living with a woman who was incredibly well-informed. So I learned a lot. She was a very early feminist, I guess, if you wanna call her that.... Yeah, I learned a lot from listening to her talk about these things.

MM: Robert, I want to switch to another piece of your writing & look at a long poem, *Letters to Salonika*. I found it remarkably complex, alluding, and partly revealing in terms of gender roles as well as the construction of the "I" in writing.

> *Autobiography, as I conceive it, is paradoxical: it frees us from self. Saying* I *is a wonderful release from **I**, isn't it?* (*Labyrinths* 209)

RK: Well, I – "I" – I still stand by what I said. It's a ... once I have said "I", I make something exterior, in a certain way, and I've entered into a kind of dialogue with that "I" that I have enunciated and this I that I am but not enunciated. And I suppose any speaking of the "I" is going to be less than what you are, but maybe more focused. So you can engage then in a dialogical ... project.

MM: So you could always switch between the exteriorized versions of "I" that are much more on the fictitious level, and the non-enunciated core-I that remains interior?

RK: Yeah, I guess it's even better to say that it's not enunciated, you know. I'm not even sure what interior means, cause my exterior is part of what I haven't announced.

MM: What goes on in this poem is relevant for the composition of *Alibi*, and then in *The Puppeteer* afterwards, too, I think. You seem to use the poem as journal as confession as a writing out of loneliness and desire.... Still, you seem to use the "I" with considerable ease, in spite of the position 'it' is in. Shirley Neuman writes, with reference to your *Field Notes*, *[t]hat the I is a composite of selves – social selves, temporal selves – is a cliché*, and then goes on by quoting Genette's "Complexe de Narcisse": *the Self is confirmed by itself, but in the species of the Other* ("Allow Self, Portraying Self" 104). Now, it appears to me that you manage to adopt both positions – that of the cliché and that of the narcissistic self-mirroring – in *Letters to Salonika*.

the self is just a kind of fragment, a shifting pattern (*Labyrinths* 7)

I am not myself and cannot ever be again. (*Letters to Salonika* 140)

RK: Well, *the self is just a kind of fragment,* I guess I'd be tempted to make that plural now, maybe. Even to say it's a fragment ... reduces it somehow. It is a fragment, but it's more than one. So there's a kind of play.

MM: Would you agree with the assumption that in LS there is still the cliché notion of the "I"?

RK: Oh, I think so. What Shirley Neuman brings up there is very interesting – it becomes such a cliché that it has made a lot of contemporary poets anxious almost, that you want to somehow make it – yeah – a cliché, and then something else as well. And I suppose that's what I've been trying to do by a certain kind of biography or autobiographical detail.

MM: There's more than one addressee in that poem, isn't there? Or maybe there is only one, though not the official addressee – Smaro, I take it? – but rather you yourself? Or the reader? Or the text?

RK: You see, that's interesting. I think you're making a good point – we have problematized "I" so much but maybe we should be thinking also about the "you" more than we have. And I would certainly agree that it's multiple in that poem, and partly I was adressing various perceptions of Smaro, various recollections – she was away and I was home. And then that kind of connecting her with city, with place, with country, with text. Yeah, I think you're right – we really have to look at the "you".

MM: Looking at this quote from LS, though, there almost seems to be a refusal:

I am writing these letters to myself, writing myself the poem of you. (147)

MM: Inhowfar do we really address the other, and speak to the other, instead of – more or less – writing not only *about* ourselves, but almost *to* ourselves?

RK: You know especially when you're writing a love letter, I think it's ...

MM: ... narcissistic?

RK: Yeah, very narcissistic.

MM: So you are playing around with the mirroring of your own self in writing to somebody else – the other – and that is tied to, I guess, your playing around with the quest pattern of the *Odyssey*. You 'simply' reverse it here, with the female figure as agent on quest, while the male is staying at home, almost immobile, facing not only the threat of stasis (another version of death, yes?) but also that of alienation. 'Your' possible loss of self in the face of that absent other-as-mirror who transforms is emphasized by *I receive a letter from you and it's so old that you are already someone else* (155) or *Your language has changed, in Greece* (154)... This alludes also to what we've just talked about, that you were trying to locate Smaro in place, in another time, etc.

RK: Well, what you just said is a piece of very nice prose. I mean it says so much that it kind of silences me. No, it does. It' a ... maybe, this too, becomes a version of death for me, because you've stated it so well.

MM: Somewhere along the line, you have also reversed your own duality of the horse/house and the motion/stasis opposition, as outlined in "The Fear of Women in Prairie Fiction". Man locked in, woman free to roam – well, why not for a change? But what are we to think of a man exclaiming *I am, today, my own widow*? Is this simply the adoption of the opposite sex's position, do the gender concepts collapse here, or ... what?

RK: Oh, I guess I'd like you to answer that for me... Certainly, the way one can trade gender – with the mother person, with the loved one, or whatever – I think we do that in love-relationships. We can abandon this kind of fierce notion of maleness or femaleness and love them to watch over each other.

MM: ... very much like the idea of writing as a possibility of trading gender.

RK: Yes. Oh, even if I say I am you – in a sense *I am you*, then. In writing, these possibilities manifest themselves.

MM: Finally, another reason why I wanted to discuss *Letters to Salonika* is the strange naming of 'yourself' that you adopt towards the end: *I'm Ramonde Atteste Fidelus, born June 31, [...] I'm the son of an itinerant Japanese rodeo rider and a saskatoon bush that was in full flower* (161). You present a mock-ironic identity here.... Maybe you're only naming this figure into poetic being. Nonetheless, the name Ramonde appears, in just slightly altered form, as Raymond, in PRK. Is that sheer chance or a matter of 'genealogical concern'?

RK: I would say it's a matter of genealogical concern. In fact, I confess that in a certain way it goes back to Wallace Stevens's poem, "The Idea of Order at Key West", where he addresses a figure named Pale Ramon. Whenever I was reading as a graduate student, I was taken by that – addressing Pale Ramon – R-A-M-O-N. And then for me, I think, extending it into Ra*monde* – you hear the word punning on world, more. So there is very much a sense of genealogy. In that poem by Stevens, there is such a puzzling sense of identity and non-identity.

MM: So why the first name – Pale?

RK: Making him pale, you know, is already interesting because it's like a death figure, or ghost-like.

MM: That ties in nicely which what you are working on in PRK...

RK: ... yeah, because Raymond is so ghost-like. He's becoming more and more a ghost as the poem goes on.

MM: It's wonderful that we've come up with this trace ...

RK: ... yeah, that is a trace. Exactly. And you know, the thing announces trace right off the bat, as a concern. And *this* is trace. And that whole... Well, I mean, you know – here I am writing about poetics. Where are the other poets? In a sense, if you're gonna write about a poetics, you have to acknowledge you're not the first poet ever. And so I wanted it to only be trace. So that is a trace.... I really think that most poets are working from models that they could not name any more, but the traces are there.

MM: But they would aspire to appear very much original, having not been influenced by all these previous thinkers.

RK: Often, I think in our own time, the notion of originality has become a kind of denial, hasn't it?

MM: I had read PRK before the *Letters*, and the *Letters* appeared to me like some kind of *nucleus* for your latest piece – not only because of the trace we just discussed. The basic position of the male figure – domesticated and pondering over the absence of the female – is the same. Both 'narrators' go into questioning themselves in the face of the missing other. But in terms of psychological mechanisms, PRK have clearly departed from older works, I think.

> *Womanliness [...] could be assumed and worn as a mask, both to hide the possession of masculinity and to avert the reprisals expected if she was found to possess it* (Joan Riviere, "Womanliness as a Masquerade" 306)

MM: So I'd like to play a game of hypotheses here, for a while, and fool around with a theoretical construct that we can discard and abandon later on. But let's try to take for granted that what Riviere posits here is a functioning mechanism. Women, as Riviere and Butler assert, put on masks in order to fit the *heterosexual matrix* constructed by male significations, and that way women try to *be or become woman*. Now, PRK only has an absent woman figure, that of the mysteriously vanished poet, Rita Kleinhart, whose literary papers the male narrator, Raymond, claims to quote from and to handle. It is hard to associate the absent figure with such a womanliness-as-masquerade, but it might not be as hard to associate *Your own Raymond* with it; so let's assume that he cleverly adopts this psychological mechanism of wearing a specific identification that usually women do to

'be female'. This would make it rather likely that Rita herself is non-existent and that the poetry ascribed to her is in fact Raymond's.

RK: Well, I like that kind of speculation, because ... I am teetering on the brink all the time, I'm falling into these possibilities. It could also be the other way around, of course, that Rita is inventing Raymond, you know – but in a poetics, that's what's happening in a way – that the reader invents the poet, but the poet invents the reader.

MM: It only works on this mutual basis, right?

RK: Yes, yeah. And it's a kind of attraction that one almost resents at times, as Raymond does, he is ... he feels ... he's being – instead of being inspired or whatever, at times – he's being rendered helpless.

> *You must practice, she told me, and this in no uncertain terms, to confound the possibilities of your encountering your own double.* (PRK 212f)

MM: Now, in *The Puppeteer* and in *Alibi*, William Wiliam Dorfendorf already functioned as his own double or dopplegänger – according to Arnason. I wonder if we could think of either Raymond or Rita as appearing as their own double or dopplegänger?

RK: Yeah, I've been thinking about this dopplegänger-thing for a long time, as you know, since I encountered mine at the Frankfurt Hauptbahnhof – it's funny how Frankfurt is also where I have this encounter in the art gallery. It becomes a kind of crucial city. Well, I guess, one of the things I would say now about the dopplegänger is that fear of being consumed by yourself. Cause it does go to the question – at least one version – of the narcissistic fear. As I would think about this poem or piece, whatever it is – if Raymond contemplates Rita and wants to conceive her as other, and then starts to hear her slipping toward being a double ...

MM: ... that must be pretty frightening for him.

RK: You're darn right. That's right.

MM: And that would go totally beyond the usual frame...

RK: ... and I think we do that as readers quite often. We read a poem that strikes us as being other, and we slowly ... start to see it as a double, you know. So I'm trying to talk

about the reading experience there. You can take a poem sometimes if you think it's alien to you – and after you've studied and read it for a while...

MM: ... you think it's part of you...

RK: ...yes. Well, and I mean – this never happened to me, but – you get stories about readers who accuse a poet, saying: You stole my life. This is plagiarism.

MM: If Rita were indeed nothing but Raymond's fiction, and her writing his, then PRK would evoke Raymond's internal other on the matrix of the other sex (maybe as a quasi-androgynous dialogue voicing both his *animus* and *anima*). The character of this text would not only be fragmented, but actually split into versions of self and other – as we've just discussed, the double thing: *"'Who is this I?' she asked." – "Your own Raymond.'" – "I can't place him.'"* (198). To have somebody else, or another aspect of your dispersed personality, state the indeterminability of your own identity is quite something, and very threatening too, isn't it? This way, PRK could be read as a very skilfull textual cross-gendering of self.

RK: Well, I really like the quote you picked – *"'Who is this I?' she asked." – "Your own Raymond.'"* – I mean that is so ambiguous that it kind of unnerves me to think of it.

MM: And, to look at it linguistically – who is being placed here/there, by whom? *Your own Raymond* is in the possessive case... That sounded very much to me like somebody addressing himself here – Raymond making up the she-figure...

RK: Or, it also could be that she is creating him. I am *Your own Raymond.* I am, not in the kind of lover's sense, but in the sense of you have ... – I only exist because you made me exist.

MM: If we could think of it as a textual attempt at cross-gendering, I'd like to link this idea to a quote by Butler that has to do with performative enunciation:

> *gender proves to be performative – that is, constituting the identity it is purported to be.* (Butler, *Gender Trouble* 25)

RK: That's a good quote from Butler. I think that – very much in this "Poetics" – gender is performative. Raymond is having trouble with his performance.

MM: Raymond threatened by paralysis.

RK: I think so. Also, there's a kind of gap between what he thinks he should be doing and what he's doing.

MM: A very difficult thing I'd like to discuss here now – Butler's quote that draws very heavily on Freud/Lacan, incorporating Lacan's *Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*:

> *The mask has a double function which is the double function of melancholy. The mask is taken on through the process of incorporation which is a way of inscribing and the wearing a melancholic identification in and on the body; in effect, it is the signification of the body in the mold of the Other who has been refused.* (50)

MM: This is not only very complex and abstract, but I am also not quite sure what this could possibly all mean. I am somewhat willing to buy into the performative aspect of gender, but I am very much at a distance and reserved when it comes to the attribution of the mask as melancholic identification with the unattainable other. I don't know if that's really working...

RK: .... I think I was working so, in a certain way, cryptically – and your act of recovering what's going on, in terms of trace or whatever, is right on, Markus. And you see, melancholy ... aside from the fact that I think I'm afflicted with a kind of melancholy and, I think I would say I'm not depressed; it's a kind of melancholia which I think is a different thing, which is induced often by love, and it doesn't have to be a love of a particular person or a bad love-relationship, or something, it's a...

MM: ... love for things even, various states of being...

RK: ...Yes. And I think the melancholia comes out of our sense of the connection not quite working, and the sense of all that you don't know and can't know. Including – *including all* the traces that are operating in us. It's forty – not forty for you, but ten – years ago somebody touched you and it's still reverberating. It's a ... you know the word sadness appears in my work. Literally – Jeremy Sadness – and in disguise, and I think maybe I should think about hiring somebody named Melancholy.

MM: There's this running joke – or pun – about the Melon Collie; you can find it on T-Shirts even, and I think a band named Smashing Pumpkins called their latest album that way, too. Maybe melancholy is a very wide-spread emotional state these days...

RK: It may be that we are in a time where the melancholy describes where we've come to.

MM: Maybe its our very understanding of the impossibility to synchronize ourselves with the world at times.

RK: Yeah, I think so. Also, I think we are getting used to the fact ... that illusion of control is indeed an illusion.

MM: What do you think could be meant by this quote from your "Poetics"?

> *Poetry itself is just such a surmise. I speak to no one, knowing you will recognize that I speak to you.* (PRK 193)

RK: Oh, I suppose it's exactly what we've been saying: instead of the notion of authority, or truth, revelation or something – This is a surmise. It would be nice if this is true. Let's consider this possibility. Maybe this is the way. – I think the word *maybe* is part of the root-cause of our melancholy.

MM: It's a word you very much employ – in all its variations, like: perhaps, eventually, etc. It's the same kind of thing I am very fond of employing whenever I want to avoid very concrete definitions, statements, or decisions...

RK: Yes: This is the most I can say right now.

> *Did Rita write those exquisit lines, or did I* (PRK 185)

MM: The way it is phrased, one would tend to assume again that this is Raymond inventing Rita...

RK: Well, I think again, it's arguing against originality. I mean the poet is really echoing rather than originating. He might dress it up a little. You don't ... you're not inventing these lines. You're kind of... In fact, I think, the word echo also is interesting, isn't it? The poet echoes the world, in a sense.

MM: Although we have come up with alternative possibilities already, I want to look once more at Raymond as playful site of echoing here: Maybe we could simply say that Raymond writes the female voice and attributes it to the fictitious Rita Kleinhart – or vice versa. And I have to talk about – though I don't really want to – Rudy Dorscht's paper,

which I think is overly simplistic, because she's trying to fully equate whatever notion there is of Robert Kroetsch with that of Rita Kleinhart, the poet in PRK. Very simplistic; I mean you have this convergence of the fictitious and actual author's initials, but it's so obvious that you are playing and punning on this... I can't quite believe that she would do that...

RK: Well, that's almost... I mean, when you're saying 'simplistic', you're being very kind.... I mean it's ... the word Kleinhart is something you have to think about a little bit... You know, we talk about a big-heartedness of the poet, but we can also think- in the face of the whole world, the poet is very small.

MM: What about that genealogy of yours and one of your great-grandmother's by the name of Tschirrhart? Did that somehow inform your coming up with the name Kleinhart, or was it just sheer coincidence?

RK: Well, I'm not aware that I ever used it consciously, but that would be a perfect example of trace, because Theresa Kleinhart, I mean Theresa Tschirrhart, was an *incredibly* powerful woman. She had three husbands in her life, and she outlived them all. And when the family was in trouble, she kept it going. I mean she would be a model of... If you want to look for a feminist model – she kept the watermill going. I like to think that she *was* a trace there. And we – the rest of the family – thought of her as educated.

MM: I guess after all we've said so far, you would agree that we can speak of the selves as constructed here in a text-as-labyrinth that masquerades a playful adoption of the opposite gender role...

RK: Oh, yeah, very much the part of it. It goes back to what you said about *Salonika* there – the male at home, so here is Raymond in the house, and the one who is wandering the world to the point of seeming to disappear is Rita. So that is upsetting a very old literary tradition about ... the man in the forest and the woman at home.

MM: I want to make a shift towards autobiographical investigations, starting off with a quotation from PRK:

> *In one of her letters she tells me, "If you are going to appropriate from your own life, do so with immense care."* (PRK 181)

MM: As far as I can recall, there is no passage where Raymond would speak of *his own* trying to write either a biography or an autobiography. But you have published "The

Poetics of Rita Kleinhart" in the book *A Likely Story. The Writing Life* and you've called the pieces (Anti)Autobiography...

RK: You're right on that the context in which this appears invites Rita to think of this as autobiographical. Sure, that's right.

MM: Interesting to look at the possessive pronouns here: She speaks of and stresses this *your own life* – as if he were to appropriate more from other people's lives... At times it's kind of hard to figure out who is talking to whom here. And also, it seems hard to follow the "I's" and the "You's", the "She", "He"...

RK: Yes. That's right. See, I think it is hard to follow, in life. We have all these pronouns floating around – we seem so sure of them ... Even the word "you" in English – it's just appalling. You never know if it's singular or plural, or general .... If you wanna go downtown and go to this corner – who is this "you"?

MM: I wanted to examine your masquerading of autobiographical inscriptions under the guise of 'Anti-Autobiography'.

> *The fiction which disguises the autobiographical element, displaces the autobiographical persona, separating the focalizing points of vision of the narrator and her protagonist.* (75)
> (Rachel Feldhay Brenner, "Genealogy and Identity: Excavating the Self ...", 75; here referring to Lily Brett's *Things Could Be Worse*)

MM: Can you see this related to what's going on in *The Writing Life*?

RK: This is just right on. The fiction of Rita and Raymond, in a sense, it's a very classic narrative situation – I mean, again, that's a trace of the fiction.

MM: Rita as autobiographical persona, then, since she seems gone, seems vanished, is very much displaced – and again, this would be another version of disguise, cause, after all, it could be possible that she's the actual narrator inventing Raymond...

RK: Yeah, sure...

MM: I was looking at an essay by Julia Watson, "Toward an Anti-Metaphysics of Autobiography." In there, she paraphrases some of what Mary G. Mason has come up with, which I think is interesting:

Mason argues that women writers delineate identity relationally, through connection to significant others, that "the self-discovery of female identity seems to acknowledge the real presence and recognition of another consciousness, and the disclosure of female self is linked to the identification of some 'other.' (Watson 69; in Folkenflik)

MM: Now, it seemed interesting to me that women would always position themselves in relation to others...

RK: You know, Helen Buss has talked about this in her book – how a woman writing autobiography would talk about her husband or her father or certain things... I don't know... I guess, she can document it. What were you gonna ...

MM: Going on with the quote, it might become more lucid, cause it says this women's approach is very much contrasting to *the self-dramatizing ego of the white male autobiographer à la Rousseau* (Watson 69). Who, even when he uses other figures in his autobiography, would employ them for the sole purpose of highlighting his very own self; others would simply appear as attributes of his own extended self.

RK: Yes. See, but I think Raymond is in-between these two possibilities. He wants to dramatize this white male autobiographical life, whatever... But he can't succeed – he always has to do it in terms of this identification with the other. So even there, if you take the validity of the statement, there is this kind of gender-sliding going on for him.

MM: Raymond's predicament seems to be his dependance on the other gender out there … on Rita – otherwise he would not even be existent.

RK: Oh, sometimes he's almost plaintive, in a sense – Please, please let me exist, almost...

MM: Still sticking to Watson's article, now paraphrasing Sidonie Smith's work:

Smith argues that, historically, Western women's four life scripts – wife, nun, queen, and witch – undermined the possibility of subjectification, of claiming bios for their lives, except within prescribed and highly encoded male scripts such as queen or "rationalist." What women could inscribe was their textual invisibility... (Watson 71))

MM: And this is what drew me into this quotation, first of all – the notion of *textual invisibility*, coming to think of Rita again, who has vanished, is absent... Inhowfar she as a

female figure had managed to have some subjectivity or more than a trace of herself inscribed in PRK. But this business of the four life scripts sure is not relevant for Rita...

RK: That's right, I think that kind of reduction bugs me, is just too simplistic. Because one of the things that Rita is playing with ... – or Raymond is trying to turn Rita into a poet, I suppose, and yet she's ... escaping. She's literally getting out of it all.

MM: Instead of claiming fame, she would want to avoid it... Maybe she goes for textual invisibility ... as a version of freedom...

RK: Oh, what is writing? That's what I'm asking, I suppose. Is it an announcement of myself, or is it a disguise, as you say? Or is it a presenting of another whole possibility? I mean, how valuable is this self in terms of poetry, you know? Even – our great test is Shakespeare. We know *so little* about him.

MM: We've come to think of him possibly as an invention...

RK: Yeah, that's right. In fact, we do. We got whole books written, proving he's somebody else – we do know something about him... And that's why, you know, there are many meanings of anti-autobiography. She – Rita – is in a certain way trying to escape the limits of autobiography by writing I am other than my own autobiography. Oh, ... some of these things are so cramping that they come up with nowadays. If I imagine myself as a woman – this is liberating, in a sense. Think of all the things I haven't...

MM: I was quite fascinated by the study of a German scholar named Meike Fessmann, who has examined the works of a German author named Else Lasker-Schüler. Now, I don't know if you've ever come across her writing...

RK: ... no, I haven't...

MM: ... but she was, out of her Jewish background, writing plays, prose, poetry – covering a wide range of genres, like you. The most interesting thing about Else Lasker-Schüler's works, in both Fessmann's and my own reading, is that they appear to graph multiple configurations of the "I" behind various masks of transformation. So, in her case, too, the autobiographical movement is toward the adoption of different names and opposite gender positions. For example, she has this one prose piece – *Jussuf von Theben* – and behind this figure of Jussuf you can very much find ELS; also behind Tino of Bagdad – it's always behind the male figure in her work. For her, it must have been a very liberating thing to do, to cross the boundaries of gender.

RK: Oh, yeah. Sure.

MM: What she does in her work breaks a rule which Philippe Lejeune has called *le pacte autobiographique*; he claims that autobiography exists only when the author and his/her subject's name in the text are identical and explicitly marked. I guess nowadays we can't stick to that anymore.

RK: I don't think we can. I mean, what Lejeune says is generally true, but you have to acknowledge there are exceptions.

MM: Fessmann locates Lasker-Schüler's 'creations' in the realm between 'normal' characters and the author's alter egos, and deduces from that in-between state of writing implicit poetics. Of these poetics, she speaks as a counter-movement to the authorizing act. The written text, she argues, would transform the author from empirical into poetic figure. Interesting, too, is the fact that she considers game as the essential basis of all these poetological processes; there is a notion of writing as search for the author(s) (*Spielfiguren* 128).

RK: This is so close to what I'm doing that I think you're inventing this! Is there a real poet named Else Lasker-Schüler?.... That's great. It's incredible. It is. – What are her dates?

MM: She was born in 1869 and died in 1945, quite impoverished, after a long life of migration and increasing mental derangement. – I know a bit about this because I happened to proofread an M.A. thesis on her work, on the movement of the real figures as well as of the I-configurations in ELS.

RK: It is really quite remarkable. It's ... I mean I'm really excited to hear about this... It's just great. It sort of authorizes my own transgressions, to say there is a literary precedant. Because the details you give – *the written text would transform the author from empirical into poetic figure* – you see that is, that is what's happening in a way, isn't it, in...

MM: ... and what *should* happen even in the autobiography, isn't it?

RK: Oh, yeah, that's right.

MM: I mean, it's probably unavoidable, but a lot of people still tend to believe that they can avoid it by going so hard for autobiography. And I think the harder they go for it, the

more they are bound to fail, the more they – automatically – turn it into fictionalized or poetic figure.

RK: And, you see, that's why *A Likely Story*, with its subtitle *The Writing Life* – which is a pun, too – is about this, in a sense, just acknowledging or accepting that this is what happens.

MM: And I think also, as Fessmann points out, the notion of games is essential to all this. That you free yourself from the notion of – Oh, I have to get this right and straight, have to be as truthful about it as possible -; I think that takes away a lot of the flow and energy and possibility in writing. – But would you say that the application of your label of 'Anti-Autobiography' *is* another one of those liberating and releasing acts? Or is it just giving credit to the impossibility of a true, authentic autobiography?

RK: No, no. I think it's a liberating act, it's a releasing act, sure. I quite agree with that.

> *her notion of collective biography ... could not be located in a system of beliefs or a narrative of origins. It could only be located, literally and momentarily, in back doors.* (PRK 173)

> *Genealogy is a primary version of narrative.*
> *The nature of the genealogical patterns, when tested by journey and quest, becomes more and more elaborate, more nearly a maze.... There is no single source; rather, a multiplying of possibilities.* ("Beyond Nationalism: A Prologue" 64f):

RK: Well that goes back to where we started, and your interest in the maze. You know, I hadn't thought of that, but the notion of back doors would connect with the notion of the maze.

MM: It's another turn you can take, isn't it? If you think of it as an escape, where would it lead? Maybe even deeper into the maze...

RK: Sure. It's a part of the – maze, you know, is part of the temptation – what looks like an escape, like a solution...

MM: Looking back at *The Puppeteer* again, it was Maggie Wilder who was trying to write the *autobiography of a wedding dress*. Maybe the dress itself, as a cultural signifier, was writing the story... David Williams would argue along this line, too. – In "The Poetics," Rita Kleinhart claims, *"I am attempting to write an autobiography in which I do*

not appear." – and she *is painfully absent* (194), as Raymond comments. Now, here's a very long quote from Daphne Marlatt, and I think it's a fabulous one:

> *Autobiography would seem to occupy the opposite end of the spectrum from ghost-writing. Not the writing of someone standing in for someone else, but writing in your own* stead*, i mean listening to and writing the movements of your story, their strange patterns, their forward-and-back that form the* place *you recognize yourself in – you/i – a place occupied not by one but many selves, a place full of ghosts, those visitants from previous and other ways of being. As such this writing probes the house of the self, haunting its narrow construction, breaking down its oh-so-edified walls....*
> *For a woman writing autobiography, history itself becomes a ghost, one that is always disappearing only to reappear on the page ahead. Collective* and *personal....*
> *And so we keep reinventing ourselves, without models (or so we think). Our histories ghostly. And ghosts, who are hungry for recognition as we know, return, return....* (Daphne Marlatt, *Ghost Works* viii)

MM: I was very much taken by this passage... I think it's dead on in terms of what we are trying to look at, especially *a place occupied not by one but many selves, a place full of ghosts, those visitants from previous and other ways of being* ... In "The Poetics," ghosts are mentioned fairly often. And in one passage, it says:

> *That her house has only a minimal attic is a shame: even a ghost in Rita Kleinhart's attic would find itself homeless.* (PRK 214)

MM: Here we have the notion of attic again... But early on, we have Raymond commenting that *She had the sensation that the ghost, not she, is Rita Kleinhart*. My favourite quote in terms of ghost writing in that piece... I wonder if you had been thinking about a ghost writing his or her story?

RK: Oh, very much so. I'm quite taken by this whole business of the ghost... You know I think ... I'm afraid we've become more and more ghostly in our own world, in a sense.

MM: We think of the electronic netscapes that are connecting us all over the world, which make the passing on of information so easy, so fast, but at the same time we are getting face-less. We are becoming ghosts because there is no physical presence, no real dialogues anymore.

RK: Oh, that's right on. I mean people tell me they're having these almost intimate relationships with people on the network, but they don't even know that's the person's name for sure. And you have no idea what they look like.

MM: Or think of the whole notion of telephone sex. You can get turned on by somebody you can't see but you only hear. It's another way of ghostly encounter.

RK: At least on the telephone, you have some idea of the gender of the voice – and here, even that could be entirely fictitious, in a sense.

MM: Though on the phone we would know – unless we wanna give in to the illusion – we would be aware of the fact that the person on the other end is simply faking the whole thing from beginning to end.

RK: Sure, we know that. And that's ghostly, too. I'm just struck by watching movies. Remember when people used to smoke in theatres, there'd be enough smoke so there'd be a veil. That was very strange, and you realized how ghostly this thing was you were watching.

MM: Now, we've touched on some theory related to autobiography. What do you think: If one tries to employ a genealogical method of assembling fragments, and if one also tries to abandon the "I" for the sake of the less conspicuous third person 'mediator', can this help to claim new ground and work towards a 'new autobiography'?

RK: Well, I wonder about that. I don't know. I mean ... 'he' and 'she', at least, are being much questioned right now too, I suppose. What do you think, I mean what's your sense?

MM: I think it's probably the right direction, to at least try to escape the dominance of the "I" and to try to go for other writing positions, and other pronouns, too. Maybe some sense of liberation is coming out of that.

RK: I think I once tried to write something that had no pronouns in it, didn't I? *The Criminal Intensities of Love*. You almost wonder if you could just – temporarily at least – suspend the pronouns from their activities.

MM: What would the result be, if they were totally banished?

RK: Well, I suppose in the long run, it would be a little bit absurd... They are wonderful things, aren't they? And another thing that the pronoun is full of is trace.

MM: There is a book called *Writing Selves. Contemporary Feminist Autography* by Jeanne Perreault, and she's basically trying to locate this new feminist autography in a field between the "I" and the "We". So, subjectivity, contextuality of the writing are very much bound in the context of the community, too. Which goes back to what we said about the theory of women always writing in relation to an other consciousness out there. This tries to resist the monadic notion of an entity, too.

RK: Yes, and that's why – you know the thing about collective biography, or autobiography, which I actually picked up in the Museum of Modern Art there... However you can interpret it, it resists some of this *enormous* privileging of the "I". And how unique are we really?

MM: Which is a wonderful transition to this quote from PRK (176):

> *In her questioning of notions of the unique and singular self, Kleinhart turns often in her work to the slippage between the words "I" and "It".*

MM: There is some movement away from the dominance of the privileged "I"... even towards the much more neutral, 'impersonal' pronoun "It".

RK: I suppose there's a little bit of room there for that melancholy that we talked about...

MM: Do you think that PRK can be seen as another metonymic approach to the writing of a self?

RK: Yeah, I would say so. That's very much a continuation of my interest in the metonymic.

MM: I have come to think of metonymy as a possible analogy to putting on various guises; I think that's what you basically do when you follow the metonymic pattern. Maybe metonymy allows for performing plural identities...

RK: Yes. Yes.

MM: ... maybe to proceed through the spectrum of multiple personalities that constitute a notion of self.

RK: See, you *really* have ... That's very good. It really is. Because the metaphoric is still trying to get to the single, unified ... and the metonymic says: It's unspeakable, or it doesn't exist, or whatever, all I can do is say: I see these manifestations.

MM: The metaphoric is trying to clothe somebody in some fixed guise, and then you still have to stick to that model. Whereas the metonymic opens ... breaks it up; there is a *long* list of options you have, it's plural, it's multiple.

RK: And that's why I'm so attracted to the list, I think. No, that's good. Boy that's really...

MM: There's an article by Donna Bennett – "Weathercock: The Directions of Report" – and I very much enjoyed reading it, because I thought she pretty much captures some of the essence of your theoretical writing – at least up to 1984, when the article was written. In there, she says

> *metonymy is concerned with the matrix that ties surfaces together, the complex of relationships, accidental or causal, neither spatially nor temporally limited, that forces whatever essence there is to be bound to a discrete occurence. Thus a metonymic analysis follows the archaeological and genealogical patterns Kroetsch prefers* (137).

RK: That's really good, yeah.

MM: Bennett also summarizes that the *genealogical methodology [...] pervades all of Kroetsch's criticism and gives to it as a whole a sense of an extended conversation [and also serves as] a means of keeping the subject open and unresolved* (136). There are two things in here that I want to relate to PRK: first, this piece – at least the way I hear it – has the quality or tone of conversation and, second, the subject of difference remains very much open and unresolved, it seems. Would you agree? We have the shifting and changing positions of male and female in there, so in a way, it's a subject of difference – it's anything but fixed or stable.

RK: No, I agree. Isn't it... You know, I think that's one of the problems I'm having with some of the current multicultural writing or criticism – it's so *confident* about the nature of difference. Here I am – self and other. I mean, I just can't buy into that. Cause we're all ... each of us is self and other, sliding around all the time... I mean they map it out politically, or often for political purposes... – you are self and I am other, you treated me incorrectly... Or I'm self and you're other ... and you better draw the line... See that's why your notion of the maze is interesting: You are always up against what you don't know.

MM: We keep on stumbling through the maze...

RK: ... and we keep kind of just *hoping* ... I think. At least most of us do. And we walk around the next corner: Oh oh, trapped again... This is not it. Another misreading.

MM: What I also found interesting about PRK is that, in spite or because of the floating language – abundant in poetic musings, rich in oxymorons, always slipping between self and other and gravitating towards back doors – the text seems to withhold the more information with every new word or sentence it ushers. I wonder if we are really given more information in the course of the reading/writing process...

RK: Yeah, that's right ...that is very... I like that. Again, the whole attempt to give information frustrates itself in a certain way, doesn't it? Because information announces new unknowns, if you will. So it withholds, but it also recognizes or announces more of the impossibility, you know.

MM: This again, would bring us back to melancholy – this aspect of impossibility, our recognition of our lacking certain capacities...

RK: Yeah, that's right. That's one of the causes of our melancholy – this recognition. Well, I'm feeling very melancholy... [laughs]

MM: Here's a long quote of yours:

> *Canadian writing takes place between the vastness of (closed) cosmologies and the fragments in the (open) field of the archaeological site. It is a literature of dangerous middles. It is a literature that ... comes compulsively to a genealogy that refuses origin, to a genealogy that speaks instead, and anxiously, and with a generous reticence, the nightmare and the welcome dream of Babel.* ("Beyond Nationalism: A Prologue" 71)

MM: I begin to think of *the nightmare and the welcome dream of Babel* as the confusion and ultimate loss of self...

RK: Oh, I think that's ... We are often so busy denying dissolution. I think, to go back to your earlier speculation about – information can contribute to dissolution as well as to solution.

MM: As you can probably tell by now, I am quite interested in trying to establish or outline something of a genealogy of the characters and their identities in your works. The frame of the labyrinth appears as only possible structure in which to 'place' them. You have repeatedly affirmed your fascination with the labyrinth, of which not only the fitting title of your interview-book gives testimony. Of course, I wonder whether you conceive the self as a labyrinthine structure itself, or would you only attribute this structure to the process of self-writing?

RK: Well, you know, I like your project of seeking to establish a genealogy without an origin. Because genealogies are *so caught up* in the idea of origin. You know, Rome was established – and then there's a story around it... We are the descendants of the – let's say, the American who says: The people who landed at Plymouth Rock were my ancestors! – Where did they come from, and how many of your ancestors were from Plymouth Rock? So it's always a kind of... It's such an incredible fiction to say that there is a point of origin, you know. And, like if you ever start to try to think about where language comes from, how it all just multiplies out, where language came from, instead of coming to a nice little point where somebody... – Hey, guess what! I just discovered language this morning.... Anyway, to go to your question – do you *conceive the self as a labyrinthine structure itself, or would you only attribute this structure to the process of self-writing* – I think I would attribute it to the process of writing, myself, I think. You are always turning corners. Going through doors. But the hedge around is always too high, you can't see – whatever labyrinth there is...

MM: Here is one quote from Barthes, related to that:

> *And then, the scene changes: I conceive myself seeking a dialectical way out of the maze.* (Roland Barthes, *Roland Barthes* 114)

MM: He clearly places the "I" *in* the labyrinth. In your essay "No Name Is My Name", you discuss Atwood's Surfacing, and you speak of *the idea of identity itself as the labyrinth* (LT 50).

RK: Well, I guess that ... I am becoming the more puzzled – of course that's what ... the word puzzle might put me right back into the labyrinth. I would tend right now to put the emphasis more on the writing.

MM: If you put the emphasis more on the writing, would that underline that there is almost a movement toward entering or dwelling in the labyrinth by engaging in the act of writing?

RK: Yeah, you see, if you argue that the mind itself, or the self itself, is a labyrinth, then we go with the Greek story of the Minotaur at the centre. And if you go to the writing ... – God, you ask good questions, Markus, that's really good – If you go to the writing, you are not only seeking, you are avoiding. There are some things you don't want to ... You don't want to come around a corner and see certain things. And I think the moment you enter, you're not only trying to get in – you're trying to get out. And a lot of human beings are quite happy just to... I mean, one way animals survive is to stand stock-still. Nobody gets them.

MM: Could we think of writing as the way of entering the labyrinth for the sake of getting out?

RK: I don't think you *enter* for the sake of getting out, but once you find yourself in it, you are proceeding toward whatever you are going to find in the labyrinth ... the exploration. You are also tempted to [abandon?], if you could, and I think if you aren't scared, there's something wrong.

MM: Is escape from the labyrinth desirable at all?

RK: You know I like that thing by Sartre, *No Exit*: You know the man who is in the prison and the door is open; it's not locked. He can't go out. I think once you've discovered the excitement of the labyrinth... If you got to the exit, you might turn around and go back in. I'm sure there are people who do exit, but into a kind of secure faith or what they have... It's exciting in there, it really is. And we make a narrative of our entering.

MM: If we established a very simple analogy and would think of writing in general – or your writing in particular – as a labyrinth, and if we supposed that by tomorrow morning you would say: OK, I've had it, I stopped writing – would that then be the attempt at escaping and getting out of the labyrinth?

RK: Yeah, I think so. In fact, I have many little narratives of escape in my life. One is a – if I finish two more books, I can quit. But I usually make a kind of impossible task for my quitting.

MM: So you are going to stay in the labyrinth for another while?

RK: Well, that's a possibility. And I like what you say there. I mean for years, I promised myself I wait to quit, to escape. Like sometimes I say: At a certain age, or: I

must write two more books. And I even have .. actually a number of flight fantasies, going to another culture sometimes. Go and work in China for a year or so. And also, there are many, many patterns of evasion. I mean a title like *A Likely Story* is, if you like, a version of evasion. Because if you say that's a likely story – like I don't quite believe your story. You have already left the door open so you can get out, sure... I just think anybody who can march into the labyrinth with a certain resolve – that's an other from me.

MM: I want to have a quick look at what Shakespeare does in his plays, in terms of disguise and masquerade. Especially in *Twelfth Night*, we find a constellation of characters suggesting that no one is actually without a mask. Somehow, everybody is given to illlusion, deceiving and deceived. You seem to trace other regions of the spectrum of identity – whereas Shakespeare still held on to the essentialist notion, you seem more concerned with the unaffirmable unity of self, with fragments etc. And yet, what is very similar is that disguise or masquerade of one kind or the other form an essential part of how both you and Shakespeare constitute your works. What is different in Kroetsch, as far as my understanding goes, is that beyond the very tricky issue of the self or identity of individual or even nation, you extend that examination to the field of the text. Shakespeare, I think, didn't go as far.

RK: I think there's just the unavoidable difference that Shakespeare was writing plays – and they're gonna be seen. So there's such a – on the one hand, easily available sense of the mask, but on the other hand ... a kind of blatancy, I suppose, that you don't use in a written text. You know, I find Chaucer much more instructive to me as a writer than Shakespeare, because he's writing narratives. I think what you were saying much earlier about the history of the mask and the masquerade – Shakespeare had available to him an audience that I would say was more sophisticated about masquerade than ours is. I think ours has fallen prey to some notion of truth, some ... that you can just lay it out. I think the audience of the Shakespeare play would be way ahead of our audience, in anything to do with masquerade – and they wouldn't see it as bad. We have a sense of – The masquerading is lying or something – but it isn't, you know. But our audience would think: Now, that was dishonest – he put on a mask. Shakespeare's audience would say: Hey, look at that. Look what's being revealed.

MM: Quite often, I think, it simply served as a strategy of survival. If we think of *Twelfth Night* and the female figure of Viola – she has to masquerade herself as a male named Cesario, in order to first of all enter society and survive there. And only at the end, working towards resolution, she is able to strip off her masquerade and reveal her 'true' identity.

RK: And then, you know, the fact that Shakespeare was working with male actors...

MM: ... boys, in particular, would dress as women, playing the female roles...

RK: ...so that you had, just *visibly* again, in front of you, a sense of masquerade. And an audience that was willing to play with all these possibilities. And, I suppose one of the things that intruded was the history of the novel, this notion of realism. Not that the great 18th-century novelists knew a hell of a lot about masking and so on but ... you almost have to... Boy, you envy Shakespeare's audience in a certain way.

MM: So Shakespeare did a lot of playing with what reality could possibly be, or how it could be shaped. I wonder if playing itself can afford us a new sense of what our identiy is or could be like – actually, I think it's quite essential...

RK: Oh, I think so, yeah. You see, the trouble is again in our culture, what we think of as play ... I suppose one of the things is athletic games .... the demarcations are so clear, you're either for Toronto or you're for Vancouver, you know which team you are rooting for.... In a play as sophisticated as one of Shakespeare's, oh, everything is just jumping all the time. We have a ... I think we have a reduced sense of play.

MM: You know, just when I was on the plane coming here to Canada, I read a very interesting article about an Italian performance artist by the name of Luigi Ontani. He is very much into the narcissistic self-imagery and quite often he would perform naked in various poses.... He's done this for more than 20 years, and in the course of his performances, he apparently has managed to go through chameleon-like transformations, which go as far as even erasing his personal identity. Cause he's doing so many of these performances, and incorporating so many roles. He's sort of living them.... It seems a very interesting approach and, at the same time, it seems to be quite reflective of what is going on in popular culture. We seem to be so much fascinated by all these performances, drawn into them. We seem to be threatened by surrendering our notion of identity...

RK: Yes, yes. In fact, you know, we watch an enormous amount of play in a certain way ... because on television. And that sense of ... these impossible people who are ... the so-called comedians. They live in these worlds of... On the one hand, everybody seems to be well-off and rich, on the other hand ... the notion of triviality seems to have a value. Maybe we are willing to risk this identity more than I'm saying. Do you think so? Maybe a lot of people are doing what this guy does.

MM: It seems so – a current thing to do. We go more and more into performing, we really sort of depart from a traditional sense of: This is somehow related to the identity I have. – We're moving away from it.

RK: I am what I say I am.

MM: I am what I *want* to be. I am what I *perform* to be.

RK: *Yes*. Instead of *discovering* what you are in a kind of psychoanalytic sense, you are *deciding* what to be. I'm gonna be *this*.

MM: It seems to be the new thing that apparently *turns on*, especially the younger people.

RK: You see, that opens up another possibility for art, in a way.

MM: If you consciously apply specific appearances, dresses, if you consciously engage in a specific performance – inhowfar and how strongly does that change your whole notion of a self, your essence of the self or an identity? That seems to be very much of a big issue nowadays – that it would be possible to affect and change and transform your identity simply through the application...

RK: I suppose the conservative would say: You are not really changing it. But the possibility is *that you are* changing it. That you have become somebody else. You go buy this new outfit and listen to different music and start to become somebody else. You can. You can change yourself. You know, when I was in Key West with my daughters, we were watching street performers. One of them was a juggler. And his final act was on a highwire. And he kept telling you how dangerous it was.... I was intrigued by the little kind of titillation he engaged in by making us worry. It was in fact true – that he was risking himself.... And it's the same with this playing with these new identities – I think a lot of people say: I'm gonna be this for Saturday night or for the week or whatever. But you might fall. Yeah, the distinction between the mask and the person is not easy.

MM: Look back at some of Shakespeare's plays: No one of the participants in there would be without a mask; all of them would be somehow in need of it. It seems that especially nowadays, performative identities have become essential to our notion of what we are. If performance and role plays are truly essential to our sense of self, is this taking us deeper into the notion of identity as a labyrinth? And is it getting harder to escape this labyrinth if so much is depending on performance?

RK: Yeah, the disguises or the masks we put on become a version of the labyrinth, you say... That's a radical... That's a kind of rereading of the labyrinth. I like that.

MM: But it makes it much harder for us to figure out who we are.

RK: Cause if you think that the *Minotaur is the final face* you come to – but it's already a composite, isn't it? It's a bull-man. So there's... Already, it is a construct, in a sense. I like that. We could start... That too, would just become another mask in another way. I think what we should do as part of this is go to Crête and see the original labyrinth.

MM: Can we think of disguise as a staging of alterity? A staging on the body? On the psyche, too?

RK: Well, I mean this is your idea. It's good. That's a nice way to think of it. Very challenging. The *staging of alterity* – wow, isn't that interesting... I don't know how far I wanna go in my loss of identity here. You scare me.

MM: I think that in relation to the contemporary notion of performance, we do stage both our alterity and whatever notion of self we have.

RK: You know the thing that I was working from is the fiction of this interior rock-hard self that's just not there. But you're making it a much more positive thing. And I like that where you're going. You're going out and you're being creative about it. I think you are going *beyond* melancholy.

MM: I have a few more questions. One is about the notion of 'our' national identity. And I want to provoke you by quoting yourself on a possible vision of Canadian identity:

> *The question of identity is not exactly the Canadian question.[...] We ask, rather, what is the narrative of us? We continue to have a crisis about our own story.* ("Beyond Nationalism: A Prologue" 1988: 70)

MM: So the quesion of identity is not quite the Canadian question?

RK: Oh, I would certainly say that with a vengeance. I mean, I think it's a... I guess I would still stay with that – I'm sure people still tend to disagree with my putting so much emphasis on narrative – but at least narrative lets you change and it lets you move through time. Oh, and I think we – unless I'm badly mistaken – we certainly have a crisis about

our story. But I think part of our story is *having* a crisis. We're just so busy having a crisis about this Quebec-Canada thing, or whether it's B.C. deciding to separate, and Alberta deciding to be American, all of these things where... And then crisis is a very basic .... Oh, the Americans are so powerful, they can just invent crisis outside of themselves. They can turn poor old Cuba into a crisis. For us, because we don't have that kind of presence in the world, we have to generate crisis within Quebec, within our borders.

MM: What do you think about the social function of the writer? Eli Mandel, for example, claims that the writer is very much at the very centre of it all. He thinks a lot about the responsibility of the artist. And art, in a way, manages to disguise social criticism, doesn't it?

RK: Yeah, that's right. I think art has kidded itself about its own virtues, in a certain way. It's a... If we have those obligations, we're not taking them very seriously. But, as long as you go with a kind of centre-margin model, the artist who in one sense is on the margin tries to centre himself by saying: I'm the most important thing around. – And what I'm trying to suggest, is: Let's do away with the margin-centre paradigm. Because we're flexible. And you know, at some point or some place, the artist *is* important. The next place, it might be fishermen.... But it's interesting how the artists who often criticize the margin-centre paradigm, they are so willing to enter into the paradigm... In the 19th century, the poet was so produced in this model – and now, let's face it, the film-maker...

MM: The poet as artist has lost a lot of his or her social power?

RK: Well, he's lost the privileged place for being a spokesperson.

MM: Is there more social pressure on poets nowadays, or less?

RK: We have less authority, but it creates a situation where we don't have this inherited authority, as the Modernists had it. We have to ... establish it... I think if you at your age decided to be a poet – that's one hell of a job right now.

MM: ... almost the infinite task...

RK: Yeah. The first thing, I guess, you'd have to do is say: How does the computer fit this? I have to work on the computer. There is still a great magic about books – but even that is just my ... another trace...

Hiermit versichere ich, daß die vorliegende Arbeit von mir selbständig und nur unter Verwendung der angegebenen Hilfsmittel erstellt worden ist.

Markus M. Müller