

**TIME, MEMORY AND TRANSFORMATION:  
Representations of Development  
in the Nova Scotian Novel**

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by

**Erik Randolph Kristiansen**

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**Abstract****TIME, MEMORY AND TRANSFORMATION: Representations of  
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Hugh MacLennan's Barometer Rising, Charles Bruce's The Channel Shore, and Ernest Buckler's The Mountain and the Valley and The Cruellest Month are concerned with the transformation of pre-modern rural communities to a modernized countryside. This is a central preoccupation in these novels, but one which has not been explored in the critical literature. It is my intention to show that the transformation of pre-modern Maritime communities, and the emergence of a capitalist modernity are problems which preoccupied MacLennan, Bruce and Buckler. My analysis of these novels will be based on an historically grounded interdisciplinary perspective which will clearly show the inadequacies of previous interpretations. Such issues as rural/urban polarities, an experience of a radical discontinuity with the past, a quest for some sense of continuity, the decline of small commodity production, the growth of the marketplace, the expansion of wage labour, changing gender roles for women, and the rapid commodification of so much of our reality are found throughout their works.

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Hugh MacLennan, in Barometer Rising, favours capitalist development combined with a form of middle class individualism. Charles Bruce's The Channel Shore is pervaded by a sense of uncertainty, a deeply rooted ambiguity about modernity that is never finally resolved. Ernest Buckler, however, rejects modernity in all its guises. Exploring these diverse literary reactions to modernity should provide the beginning for a new and more distinctively Maritime way to look at our literary creations.

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## Introduction

To speak of Nova Scotia is not to speak of its thoroughfares of traffic, business, learning.... These are the same here as everywhere: where the din of striving and the tin of words deface the face and puts price tags on it. The heart of this province is, rather, the province of the heart: in its enclaves of farm and seaside village.

Ernest Buckler  
Nova Scotia: Window on the Sea

The literature of Atlantic Canada is permeated with specific visions of our historical transformation. Differing ways of seeing the world are structured in the works of our literary intellectuals. No individual can weave the remnants of the past into interpretive patterns that are anything more than provisional. The historical construction and patterning of common sense, memory, and truth has moorings in both our individual and collective navigation of past and present. In our role as an interpreter, our "common sense" frames, rather like the borders on a series of snapshots, and infiltrates our historical consciousness. The related conceptions of historical change and community transience are central concerns in the novel of regional development, and indeed constitute a common paradigmatic feature of many of them. Unfortunately this is a theme which has been largely ignored by Maritime literary critics.

Many of our regional novels convey representations of



the capitalist transformations of the countryside. This fictionalized treatment of the rapid growth of capitalist social relations, combined with the corrosive effects of industrial capitalism on Maritime rural life, will be the focus of this research.<sup>1</sup> A detailed examination of Hugh MacLennan's Barometer Rising, will be followed by a re-reading of Charles Bruce's The Channel Shore and Ernest Buckler's two novels, The Mountain and the Valley and The Cruellest Month. It is my intention to show that the transformation of pre-modern Maritime communities, and the emergence of a capitalist modernity are problems which preoccupied MacLennan, Bruce, and Buckler. My analysis of these novels will be based on an historically grounded interdisciplinary perspective which will clearly show the inadequacies of previous interpretations.

Charles Bruce and Ernest Buckler were intimately concerned with the transformation of small face-to-face pre-modern communities to a much more impersonal modernized<sup>2</sup> society. This is a theme which is, of course, not confined to Maritime novelists. It was also a preoccupation of many nineteenth and early twentieth century social theorists.<sup>3</sup>

The German sociologist Ferdinand Tonnies (1855-1936) was probably the most well known theorist to provide a paradigm for examining the differences between small pre-modern communities and contemporary urban dominated societies. Tonnies in his classic study Gemeinschaft und

Gesellschaft (Community and Society)<sup>4</sup> focused his attention on the binary concepts of community and society. It is important, however, to note that these concepts represent neither universal stages of historical development, nor actually existing forms of social organization. They are rather--to use Max Weber's term--ideal types; they provided the conceptual framework that permitted Tonnies to examine different types of social organization.

Existing social formations will always contain elements of both the Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft models of social organization. The ideal type of Gemeinschaft community emphasizes the "naturalness" of their way of life. Such a community was rather like an extended family. Face-to-face social interaction dominated human relationships. Gesellschaft orientated societies were seen as rational social constructions and were not thought to be "natural." Gemeinschaft communities were rooted in a single language, a common set of values, and a single world-view expressed in a common religion. The modernized Gemeinschaft society was largely contractual. There was a pluralism of religious belief and values. In Gemeinschaft culture everyone felt a strong awareness of community and belonging together--a we-consciousness. People in Gesellschaft dominated societies lost this sense of community and kinship; they saw most of their relationships in the context of their own self-interest. Such societies emphasized I-consciousness and

valued individualism. Gesellschaft dominated societies also attempted to eliminate "difference," by reducing diverse cultures to a common cultural pattern. In a Gemeinschaft world, cultural diversity--not within but between communities--prevailed.

The ideal type of Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft forms of social organization are also a central preoccupation of the English literary and cultural historian Raymond Williams who refers to them as forms of transparency and opacity. Much of what I have to say has been greatly influenced by Raymond Williams' cultural and literary history of English literature--a position which he refers to as Cultural Materialism.<sup>5</sup> His brilliant work The Country and the City<sup>6</sup> explores the transformation of the English countryside, and the evolving relationship between the country and the city. The interpretive accessibility of history, society and community in a literature, predominantly urban or rural, perhaps representing the transition to an urban and capitalist modernity is referred to by Williams as forms of transparency or opacity. Distinguishing between transparency and opacity, Williams tells us that:

it would then be possible to set up a contrast between the fiction of the city and the fiction of the country. In the city kind, experience and community would be essentially opaque; in the country kind, essentially transparent.<sup>7</sup>

He goes on, however, to qualify this distinction between transparency and opacity. Certainly, as Williams puts it,

there will be found in urban areas a greater complexity of relations both between and within classes, as well as a more fully developed division of labour.<sup>8</sup>

When you combine increasing social complexity with a larger concentration of people "any assumption of a knowable community --a whole community, wholly knowable--became harder and harder to sustain."<sup>9</sup> In such situations the "forcing into consciousness of the suppressed connections is then a new way of seeing the human and social order as a whole."<sup>10</sup> Williams, however, is careful--as was Tonnies with his *Gemeinschaft/Gesellschaft* paradigm--not to use the transparent/opaque distinction in a simplistic way that would romanticize the past.<sup>11</sup> In postmodern culture<sup>12</sup> the alchemy of corporate and government constructed images transforms nostalgic remnants of the past into commodities for sale in the cultural marketplace. Williams escapes this quagmire of nostalgia by inserting the very "act" of knowing in its historical context. He is attempting to uncover and disclose "suppressed connections" and prevent "perceptual confusion."<sup>13</sup> Williams avoids an empiricist epistemology--understanding what is known as the simple product of an external reality imprinting itself on the mind--and he goes on to argue that the "known" is

also a function of subjects, of observers--of what is desired and what needs to be known. And what we have then to see as throughout, in the country writing, is not only the reality of the rural community; it is the observer's position in and towards it; a position which is part of the community being known.<sup>14</sup>

Rural communities are transparent--Tonnies' Gemeinschaft form of social organization--not because they are knowable in a simple empiricist manner, but because their indigenous observers are grounded in the language and "reality" of their fellow inhabitants mode of living in and "thinking" the world. "There can be no doubt," Williams tells us, "that identity and community became more problematic, as a matter of perception and as a matter of valuation, as the scale and complexity of the characteristic social organization increased."<sup>15</sup> The opacity of cities results not only from their complexity of organization, but from the diversity of languages and "visions" which are characteristic of urban experience--Tonnies Gesellschaft societies. A "suspicious," or theoretically informed re-reading of Bruce, MacLennan, and Buckler, reveals more than their interpretations of our regional history; it also uncovers the social positioning of these writers in the complex and multi-voiced debates surrounding an emerging Maritime modernity.

Janice Kulyk Keefer in Under Eastern Eyes: A Critical Reading of Maritime Fiction<sup>16</sup> also uses the concepts of transparency and opacity.<sup>17</sup> Keefer's use of these terms, however, is fundamentally different from Williams' understanding of them. Williams finds the concepts of transparency and opacity useful--as did Tonnies with his Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft research strategy--for

understanding two conceptually distinct forms of social organization, and the differing types of consciousness or perception associated with them:

Thus it is still often said, under the pressure of urban and metropolitan experience, and as a direct and even conventional contrast, that a country community, most typically a village, is an epitome of direct relationships: of face-to-face contacts within which we can find and value the real substance of personal relationships. Certainly this immediate aspect of its difference from the city or the suburb is important; it is smaller in scale; people are more easily identified and connected within it; the structure of the community is in many ways more visible. But a knowable community, within country life as anywhere else, is still a matter of consciousness and of continuing as well as day-to-day experience. In the village as in the city there is division of labour, there is the contrast of social position, and then necessarily there are alternative points of view.<sup>18</sup>

Keefer uses the concepts of transparency and opacity when referring to two quite distinct approaches to literary criticism. She understands that the opaque critic

practises a restrictive discipline, responding to any given work of literature exclusively in terms of what goes on in other literary works or within the chosen text itself. Refusing to submit to the 'mimetic enchantment' of the text, refusing to consider the fictive world as having any relation to or engagement with the world outside it, the opaque critic likewise refuses to talk of the text in ways which would compromise his and the work's autonomy.<sup>19</sup>

This position, however, becomes complicated when she conflates opaque criticism with post-structuralism.<sup>20</sup>

Keefer emphasizes the transparent critic's ability to do everything done by the opaque critic, but will also undertake other forms of analysis and evaluation as well.<sup>21</sup> Simply put, the opaque critic avoids history; the

transparent critic has the potential to engage history.

Keefer admits that she has presented a schematic account of transparent and opaque criticism.<sup>22</sup> She ignores the theoretically informed approaches of many opaque/post-structuralist literary critics. In particular, Keefer silences the criticism of her simplified theory of "reading." She does, however, emphasize that "behind these different critical positions lean complex and sophisticated sets of philosophical... religious--or at least metaphysical--beliefs, arguments, and rationalizations..."<sup>23</sup> Keefer is, of course, right about the philosophical assumptions involved in her analysis of transparency and opacity. However, she opts for a transparent criticism and rejects sophisticated post-structuralist understandings of opacity. She concludes her analysis of these contrasting terms by suggesting that her choice to apply transparent

criticism to Maritime fiction is thus not to be old-fashioned however much it may be out of fashion. Rather, it is to use certain perspectives and techniques developed by post-structuralist or postmodernist criticism which seem particularly suited to certain Maritime texts...<sup>24</sup>

I certainly have no objection to combining elements of post-structuralist (opaque) literary theory with a historically conscious approach to literary criticism. The usefulness of Keefer's strategy is, however, extremely questionable. Keefer seems to be arguing that both Maritime history and our regional literary canon are transparent and "simple" to

understand. Such an assumption, however, reveals a naive understanding of both our regional history and literature. Keefer writes, for instance, that

Maritime writers would seem to share a confidence foreign to modernist and postmodernist alike, a belief in the reality and significance of the accessible world of human experience common to reader and writer. That which is actual, to hand, and meaningful by virtue of association with established patterns of thought and action...<sup>25</sup>

In the following paragraph Keefer continues this line of thought:

Maritime fiction is overwhelmingly representational in that its producers engage in what Joseph Conrad called making us 'see'--selecting, out of the welter of phenomena, impressions, actions, and events, those things that have a peculiar resonance for the writer and have been habitually overlooked by the reader. Representation in this sense is no illusionist's substitution of cardboard words for elusive realities but a matter of integrity and honesty... That such work can be arduous is presupposed by the intractableness of reality, of a phenomenally 'given' world which is not the pliable product of perception, language, or cultural and social schemas, but against which the truth of the meanings we have composed in language, and the various schemas we develop to structure our lives, may be tested.<sup>26</sup>

These passages help, I think, to illuminate Keefer's philosophical underpinnings, and throw some light on her defence of a transparent theory of literary criticism. She is clearly arguing that "the intractableness of reality" forces all but some recent Maritimers--readers as well as writers--to prefer a representational fiction. With the exception of Ernest Buckler--whose writing will constitute a central part of this research--this is probably a defensible position to hold.<sup>27</sup> Keefer is, however, arguing something else as



well. She is suggesting that the literary critic should accept Maritime realism (transparency) as the critical approach suitable for the study of our regional literature and history. (Would she also argue that such an approach would be suitable for the literary productions of such postmodern centers as New York, London, or Paris?). This is not the place to engage in a debate between the relative merits of representationalism and a more consciously paradigmatic and epistemological understanding of how "the accessible world of human experience" is known. It is important to keep in mind, however, that Keefer is arguing for an approach that downplays and even avoids the difficulties inherent both historical and literary interpretation.<sup>28</sup>

An alternative approach to Keefer's--and one that will be used in this analysis--involves the combination of an opaque criticism with historical analysis. Keefer's philosophical approach to history precludes this possibility. However, when history is understood as the interpretation of past and "present" actualities rather than the actualities themselves, we have the opportunity to combine historical analysis with an opaque criticism. The emphasis on historical interpretation, instead of attempting to locate an always absent history, permits us to view history as a "text" which then becomes available as intertextual material for the opaque critic. The opaque

critic using this historicized conceptual framework can now move from fictional literary texts to historical texts without requiring a simple representational understanding of the relationship between mind and the reality external to it.

The readings of MacLennan, Bruce and Buckler developed in this analysis will concentrate on their awareness and articulation of historical, social, cultural, and economic issues. Most of the research devoted to these authors has been strongly influenced by the New Criticism<sup>29</sup> and has centered on their biographies, the analysis of literary structures, and on a biographical and psychological approach to understanding the motivations of their fictional characters. As my review of the literature and later analysis will show, there is a need to combine the study of literary structures and the psychological examination of fictional characters with the biographical study of the authors' developing world-view, and their and understanding of the rapidly changing world in which they lived. Such an approach must involve a broad interdisciplinary and intertextual grounding, and would migrate across the borders of such textualized disciplines as social history, political economy, sociology, anthropology, psychology, philosophy, and social and political theory.<sup>30</sup>

The interpretations of Hugh MacLennan's Barometer Rising have largely focused on patterns of archetypal myth--

Odysseus, Oedipus, and Eve--believed to be located in the novel, usually combined with readings that stressed an emerging Canadian nationalism and the rejection of colonialism, and imperialism. These interpretations have overlooked or only paid lip-service to the Maritime historical, economic, social, cultural and political material so abundant in the novel.

George Woodcock's interpretation of Barometer Rising obscures rather than clarifies the text. In 1961 Woodcock published a brief but influential reading that concentrated on the supposed parallels between the Odysseus myth and the personal relationships developed within the novel.<sup>31</sup> MacLennan, however, quickly refuted this interpretation.<sup>32</sup> Unfortunately Woodcock has not changed his interpretive tactics, and defends this approach in his recent study of Barometer Rising.<sup>33</sup> In spite of the explanatory weakness of his version of the mythic paradigm, Woodcock does make an important point:

Whatever else he may be, MacLennan is very consciously a social novelist, both in the sense that he writes about men and women in society, and in the sense that he rejects, both explicitly in his statements and implicitly in his practice, any idea of a literature as an esoteric or reclusive discipline, "It must grow out of society itself," he has said at many times and in many ways.<sup>34</sup>

Woodcock develops this line of thought even further:

for a view of the past which includes the ability to set specific events within a pattern from which a theory of history can be drawn, is an aspect of MacLennan's social realism that appears in all his novels...<sup>35</sup>

However, after reading Woodcock on Barometer Rising, one is left wondering why he drew attention to the significance of history, even a theory of history, and then proceeded to effectively silence it. Nowhere does he probe MacLennan's obvious historical concerns.

Woodcock suggests that "there are really two types of social fiction, and each offers a different kind of communication."<sup>36</sup> The first type simply communicates "an intimate view of a local society..."<sup>37</sup> The second kind of social novelist has "the reforming urge, and offers us a critical portrait of a society in which a hope for change is projected so that the flaws they present may be removed..."<sup>38</sup> Woodcock unfortunately reduces the evils in MacLennan's world--and thereby largely silences MacLennan's solution--to a banal statement about "inequality and carelessness for human suffering...",<sup>39</sup> and to the survival of a colonial and imperialist mentality.<sup>40</sup>

Woodcock reads Barometer Rising as an allegory. He understands an allegory to exist when the events of the narrative systematically refer to another coexisting organization of events or ideas.<sup>41</sup> MacLennan becomes the author of a national allegory. Woodcock explains that:

All of MacLennan's novel's have this element of the allegorical in them, and always the core of the allegory, whether it is directed towards Canada's internal relations (between English and French speakers) or to its external relations (with Great Britain or the United States), is the Canadian patriotism which MacLennan developed in young manhood.<sup>42</sup>

If Barometer Rising is read, however, from a perspective grounded in our regional social and economic history, the need for an allegorical reading vanishes.

Both George Woodcock and T.D. MacLulich<sup>43</sup> extend the mythic interpretation of the human relationships in Barometer Rising. Woodcock develops the Oedipus myth<sup>44</sup> to illuminate the relationships between fathers, surrogate fathers and their male children. Such a pattern of father, surrogate father, and son conflicts range throughout MacLennan's novels, but an exclusive emphasis on a mythic paradigm tends to eliminate MacLennan's interest in history, and severs the novel's male characters from their historical context.

T.D. MacLulich rejects Woodcock's use of the Odysseus myth for interpreting Barometer Rising.<sup>45</sup> He does, however, defend Woodcock's use of the Oedipus myth. MacLulich argues that the Oedipus myth is a male myth, and that the women in MacLennan's novels need a myth to clarify their relationships. He chooses the myth of Eve--woman as both mother and lover. MacLulich also severs myth and the human relationships they are supposed to clarify from history. MacLulich writes, for instance, that

MacLennan's true subject is the individual in his family setting rather than the individual in his broader social and political context. Behind an ostensible concern with politics, society, and religion, MacLennan's novels pursue a single-minded scrutiny of the love-hate relationships which fester so intensely within the family circle. The novels are built around struggles between parents and children,

between husbands and wives.

I am not suggesting that The myths of Eve and Oedipus are without value for understanding MacLennan's novels. Indeed they can be quite useful. What concerns me, however, is the ahistorical way these myths are used. They, in fact, function as a silencing mechanism which prevents questions of history, class, politics, and economics from emerging in an interpretation. MacLulich's position--even more than Woodcock's--tends to be reductive; complex issues raised in MacLennan's novels are reduced, in one way or another, to the family circle and the psychology of individuals caught up in the web of family relations.

Elsbeth Cameron, MacLennan's biographer, provides interesting details about the publication, and early reception of Barometer Rising, but little, if anything, new as far as interpretation goes.<sup>46</sup> Although Cameron doesn't either consciously or unconsciously downplay history, she doesn't push her material far enough. Cameron is aware that the young MacLennan was not an advocate of confederation,<sup>47</sup> but this awareness never becomes a part of an interpretive strategy.

Like the other interpretations of Barometer Rising, the distinctively Maritime is silenced.

Robin Mathews informs us that Barometer Rising is "a novel about de-colonization in Canada."<sup>48</sup> At the centre of his interpretation is the identity crisis that results from

colonization, and the search for a new national identity that will provide a restoration of community and a new sense of human significance.<sup>49</sup>

Mathews' interpretation of Hugh MacLennan emphasizes the significance of both history and class. MacLennan "consciously uses documentary and chronicle forms, closely connecting the larger history surrounding the actions of the characters in his novels."<sup>50</sup> Describing the ideology that penetrates MacLennan's historical fiction, Mathews tells us that he

writes himself down as an elitist, as a man who refuses to face the implications of capitalism, who is sturdily anti-socialist, who has a sense of history that ultimately preaches helplessness before its determinism, and, finally as a man who falls back upon individual salvation as the key to value and the good life. As a result he is haunted by individual human transience, and he sees human salvation in the almost private realization of the individual.<sup>51</sup>

Mathews grasps the significance of determinism for understanding MacLennan's novels, but fails to distinguish between the social historical approach of Barometer Rising and Two Solitudes, and the psychological and theological approach to history that fully emerged with Each Man's Son and was most effectively developed in The Watch That Ends the Night. Although the investigation of MacLennan's psycho-theological history of these and later novels will not be a part of this study, the significance of his earlier determinist social history on the form and content of Barometer Rising will be examined in detail. Finally it

must be stressed that while MacLennan was a social and economic determinist--at least from the mid 1930s to sometime after the mid 1940s--this is, however, not the whole picture. MacLennan also emphasized the significance of chance events in his overall theory of history. (Indeed one can see moments in Barometer Rising when the determinist thrust of the novel actually breakdown.) This emphasis on historical chance can certainly explain the pattern of chance events that are so important in the narrative of Barometer Rising.

Mathews also misses much of the history of Nova Scotian development that forms a central part of the historical analysis present in Barometer Rising. He either ignores or fails to see the "Maritimeness" of the novel, and the important connection between the novel's nationalism and the transformation of small pre-modern rural communities--a theme which will be explored in detail in this analysis.

Janice Kulyk Keefer writes that "it is refreshing to recognize in Barometer Rising traces of something resembling 'Literature of Protest'..."<sup>52</sup> Keefer connects this protest element to market forces which "brought about this profound, and to MacLennan, destructive change in the very 'layout' of Maritime society. Keefer, however, does not develop this analysis in any detail, and certainly makes no attempt to connect it to MacLennan's larger vision of history. She does, though, by stressing the importance of market forces



in Barometer Rising, open a new door for Maritime literary criticism.<sup>53</sup>

Keefer also suggests that class antagonisms are an important element in Barometer Rising. However, she fails to see the obvious middle class thrust of the novel's narrative. Like Mathews, Keefer fails to read Barometer Rising as a naturalist<sup>54</sup> novel, and therefore misses some significant aspects of MacLennan's treatment of class.

The interpretations of Charles Bruce's The Channel Shore also largely ignore the history foregrounded in the novel. John Moss writes that "The Channel Shore is a place of people, of memories and the patterns of lives."<sup>55</sup> Moss, however, produces an interpretation of The Channel Shore which ignores Bruce's obvious concern for the historical context of his characters lives. Moss emphasizes that it is enough to realize that the setting, ultimately, is people. Time and the landscape are the informing principles of their lives. It is people with whom Bruce is concerned, on whom his vision is relentlessly focused.<sup>56</sup> Moss assumes that emphasizing history will in some sense detract from Bruce's concern for people. It is, I think, a mistake to understand history as separate from peoples' lives. A close reading of The Channel Shore strongly suggests that Bruce was not attempting to artificially separate people from their history. In, fact, an historical interpretation of The Channel Shore will actually enhance our understanding of

personal relationships in the novel.

Andrew Wainwright in the first paragraph of "Days of Future Past: Time in the Fiction of Charles Bruce"<sup>57</sup> brings the readers attention to the historical foundation of The Channel Shore by stressing that the novel is about "the evocation of a way of life in rural Nova Scotia..."<sup>58</sup> In the final two paragraphs of the article, Wainwright again draws our attention to history: "the theme of time's unity not only binds together Bruce's individual fictions but transcends and contains them as well."<sup>59</sup> Life and death is seen as part of "a continuing whole."<sup>60</sup> The article is framed by an historical awareness. Wainwright's actual reading of The Channel Shore, however, subverts this historical awareness. History is mentioned but never engaged. Wainwright's reading concentrates on the lives of the novel's characters severed from their historical context. The multi-voiced debate about the real or imagined merits of modernity is silenced.

Wainwright's recent biography<sup>61</sup> of Charles Bruce pays lip-service to the historical construction of The Channel Shore, but focuses on the largely de-historicized lives of the novel's characters.<sup>62</sup> Although Wainwright's biography contains a wealth of detail about Bruce's life, it fails to capture the complexity of his aesthetic and historical vision.

Andrew Seaman writes that The Channel Shore "is not a

place of disintegration. On the contrary, The Channel Shore describes a process of social integration taking place over a quarter of a century from 1919-1945."<sup>63</sup> This statement I find rather puzzling. Is Seaman implying that social integration did not exist prior to 1919? Not likely. The pre-modern communities along the Shore were as socially integrated as the new communities that were emerging there. The Pre-modern communities were integrated economically--small commodity production with little wage labour--and also along kinship lines with religion playing a significant role as both a social cement and a socially divisive force. The modernizing communities along the Shore were being re-integrated through the rapid extension of the marketplace combined with the emergence of a "new kinship" pattern that transcended blood kinship.

Seaman's lack of interest in the historical dimension of The Channel Shore prevents him from seeing a process of disintegration coinciding with the development of new forces of integration. It is, I think, necessary to understand the fictional world of the novel in a way that would have made sense to Bruce. As far as it is possible, we should attempt to read the past--including the fictional past inscribed in historical novels--on its own terms, and avoid imposing our present on historical interpretations. Unfortunately, I think, Seaman is quite unintentionally silencing both economic disintegration, and the emergence of a capitalist

economy--a form of economic organization that was resisted by many traditional conservatives--a silencing that may well be part of the current forgetting, so widespread in the postmodern world, that capitalism was not always there.

Janice Kulyk Keefer tells us that in The Channel Shore the "dominant force is that of the passage of time and the process of change, both of which, we are made to feel, will ensure the Channel Shore's survival as a living community."<sup>64</sup> We also learn that the novel "deals with the cast of characters within a tightly bound community."<sup>65</sup> Keefer is aware that The Channel Shore "redefines the concepts of kinship and community by emphasizing the needs and claims of 'spirit' over those of 'blood.'"<sup>66</sup> She also emphasizes that Grant Marshall and his step-son are responsible for establishing a "new form of community, a living narrative of communal experience."<sup>67</sup> There is, however, once more the silencing of history that can reveal so much about the personal relationships in the novel and the coming into existence of a new community. Keefer also misses--as do Moss, Wainwright, and Seaman--the debate about modernity that is developed throughout the novel. It is surprising that Keefer's awareness of class, capitalism and market forces, so effectively used in her analysis of Barometer Rising, is not extended to her analysis of The Channel Shore.

The critical studies of Ernest Buckler's two novels--

The Mountain and the Valley and The Cruellest Month--are also largely non-historical. Gerald Noonan's reading of The Mountain and the Valley raises a number of interesting questions about David Canaan's--the central character in the novel--mind and his fascination with language.<sup>68</sup> However, Noonan's research agenda, and obvious fondness for the New Criticism limits his ability to fully develop these insights:

In this paper, my position is that the overwrought style leads Buckler into his narrative disharmony just as David is led into his personal disharmony by his overwrought preoccupation with words.<sup>69</sup>

"The style," Noonan suggests, "is in accord with the character of Buckler's central figure, David Canaan, who also offends in the fiction by being overly-conscious of self."<sup>70</sup> Noonan reads the novel as a narrative simply about the failure of "a young man victimized by a dominating egoism and by a dominating concern for words in themselves."<sup>71</sup> Noonan finds the novel a failure. However, the novel's "narrative disharmony" and David's "personal disharmony" and preoccupation with words should be interpreted within the narrative of historical change so clearly present in the novel. David's "problem" then becomes more than simply a personal psychological problem. David's mind and his preoccupation with language are symptomatic of Buckler's diagnosis of modernity.

Andrew Wainwright's study of isolation and death in The Mountain and the Valley continues Noonan's exploration of

language.<sup>72</sup> Wainwright, once again, following a New Critical perspective ignores the history which traces a narrative of development throughout the novel. Wainwright seems--like Noonan before him--to be unaware of the serious philosophical issues which emerge in the novel, and dominate the epilogue. David Canaan's feeling's are word-shaped; Wainwright, quite correctly, I think, makes a great deal out of this. He emphasizes that David's artistic talents are "essentially solipsistic and destructive."<sup>73</sup> David, however, becomes the failed artist; Wainwright's concluding remark makes this point most emphatically:

David's "bright intensities" have been viewed ironically by Buckler; his struggle to find words with which to break the silence has been self-deceptive and futile from the beginning. In inevitable defeat, the protagonist who does not become an artist deserve's our pity, not an heroic appellation.<sup>74</sup>

Wainwright is certainly right in seeing David as pitiable and a failure. He is unfortunately missing a larger dimension of The Mountain and the Valley, one that is continued and more thoroughly developed in Buckler's second novel, The Cruellest Month. This larger dimension is modernity, and Buckler's association of modernity with "languages," visions, fragmented personalities, and solipsism. David Canaan's narrative is far more than the biographical journey of his short life; it is the cultural trek, for Buckler, of countless women and men as their minds and bodies have become thoroughly modernized.

Andrew Seaman's interpretation of The Mountain and the

Valley is on the verge of historical consciousness. He has an extremely important insight when he writes that "David is ultimately left isolated by the disintegration of his childhood world."<sup>75</sup> David is the failed artist who, according to Seaman ends his life in "absolute isolation" because of his "total isolated self-centredness..."<sup>76</sup>

Seaman expands on this interpretation of the novel's epilogue:

Having reached this purgative experience of total isolated self-centeredness, David has been prepared for the reversal, for the translation to another kind of consciousness. What we are about to witness is the archetypal moment of tragic realization when the human soul, led to the point of destruction by the sin of pride, crosses over into a state of perfect humility and clarity of vision before death closes all.<sup>77</sup>

Seaman's strictly psychological interpretation of the epilogue doesn't come to terms with the crisis of language which is so obviously there. The transition to modernity has produced in David a different way of seeing the world, and has resulted in a sense of isolation that has penetrated to the core of language itself. Only by connecting historical transformation to the psychological experience of the epilogue can we approach the complex historical, cultural and philosophical insights revealed there. D.O. Spettigue's "The Way It Was"<sup>78</sup> provides both an important analysis of The Mountain and the Valley and attempts to explain its connection to Buckler's second novel, The Cruellest Month. Describing the writing style of The Mountain and the Valley, Spettigue makes the intriguing point that

This is the language of simile--not what is, but what it is like. The basis of the similes is the division of personality which can find analogies in two contrasting kinds of scenes, those of unity and those of discord. The basis of this division, in turn, is the divided personality...<sup>79</sup>

Spettigue, continuing this line of thought explains, that the "book is "about" the achieving of unity in an environment that does not seem to encourage unity..."<sup>80</sup> We also learn that "David's environment provides him with a stimulating flux; it does not provide the models of harmony that he needs for literary form..."<sup>81</sup> Spettigue argues that

The challenge his environment offers him is to create the intelligible order of literature from what might be called an "unintelligible landscape." He tries to acknowledge each component individually and of course is overwhelmed. What he lacks is the abstracting power of symbol, the kind of pattern his grandmother weaves out of experience.<sup>82</sup>

These are fascinating issues raised by Spettigue, but what interpretive horizon has captivated his mind's eye? What does all this mean to him? David becomes the failed artist, unlike his Grandmother who is a successful weaver of rugs. David, the fragmented personality, does not have the power to overcome infinite "difference" and abstract a "picture" of the whole. He cannot get at either "the way it is," or "the way it was"--a recurrent phrase, as Spettigue points out, throughout Buckler's work.<sup>83</sup>

Spettigue develops this even further. Buckler he tells us "distrusts words."<sup>84</sup> Why, however, does Buckler distrust words? We learn that Buckler is skeptical about



words because of that North American dislike of "whatever savours too much of the study."<sup>85</sup> This explanation

continues:

one detects in David--perhaps in Buckler himself--that sense of guilt on the part of the very articulate person that an anti-intellectual society fosters...<sup>86</sup>

David becomes the failed artist because of a fragmented psyche, fractured vision, and guilt--a powerful trio. These elements are, I think, present in The Mountain and the Valley, and indeed in Buckler himself. Why, however, are they there? And could they mean more than Spettigue suspects? What if the failure of David, the artist, can be connected to a critique of both aesthetic and philosophical "realism?" How does this connect to the Grandmother's "art," an art which--and Spettigue doesn't seem to realize this--is abstract and not representational.

Spettigue argues throughout the essay that Buckler is preoccupied with reminiscence--the word "history" does not appear in the analysis, rather unusual for an article entitled "The Way It Was"--and yet he makes no attempt to understand the trio of fragmented personality, fractured vision and guilt in a transforming historical context.

Spettigue's analysis of The Cruellest Month "examines city people whose complexities are word-shaped, whose pastime is finding the words for their own emotions."<sup>87</sup> He points out that Buckler contrasts the native simplicity of rural people with the artificiality and complexity of city

people.<sup>88</sup>

Spettigue mentions that The Cruellest Month also provides--as did The Mountain and the Valley--a contrast "between a world of childhood which recurs now only fitfully to remind you of the way it was, and a present world which is a state of experience, of knowing."<sup>89</sup> However, Spettigue does not pursue this contrast; there is simply no attempt to pursue Buckler's critique of a Maritime modernity so clearly present in the novel. Indeed Spettigue undermines Buckler's rejection of modernity when he writes that

for Canadian literature the here and now is the place of knowledge, and knowledge is the fruit of the archetypal fall. The person who knows can never be content with this environment, and can never escape it. One hears, in The Cruellest Month, echoes of The Mountain and the Valley in the images of the great good time and the great good place that were one's childhood in rural Canada--and one realizes that one is hearing them from generations of Canadian writers. In The Mountain and the Valley too there was a fall to mark the loss of that time and place, after which place becomes bondage and exile, and time the one inexorable fact.<sup>90</sup>

Spettigue emphasizes that this is a "criticism so often made of the younger generation...that it knows too much..." "It is an acknowledgement of the growing sophistication of an affluent society." Other writers "made the same observation a generation earlier, and perhaps every generation makes it."<sup>91</sup> Spettigue is certainly correct. Nostalgia for one's childhood can certainly be a source of creativity. However, if accepted uncritically, it can prevent a serious

study of a writer's moral and intellectual disengagement with the world of her/his maturity. It is also a position that fits well with the New Criticism's disengagement of the text from the non-"literary" discourse foregrounded in so much fictional writing.

Claude Bissell's biographical study of Bucker doesn't ignore history, but unfortunately, however, he doesn't foreground it in his analysis.<sup>92</sup> Bissell explains that "The Mountain and the Valley is about a paradisaal rural society to which the passage of time brings change and decay."<sup>93</sup> I couldn't agree more. However, Bissell modifies this position during his analysis of the novel. He suggests that "Buckler is not interested in chronological or historical time, time that is measured by external events ..."<sup>94</sup> Buckler does, as Bissell acknowledges:

glance briefly at a more subtle expression of chronological time, the change in social attitudes. He records briefly and fiercely the effect on the rural community of the spread of urban civilization.<sup>95</sup>

Bissell goes on to say that the "changes in social attitudes are accompanied by the physical decay of the original community."<sup>96</sup>

There appears to be a contradiction at the heart of Bissell's analysis. Bissell can't make a complete break from the biographical and psychological study of the novel's characters. We learn that

Buckler is concerned with the inner movements of the mind far more than he is with external events. His concern is with the tensions that arise between people,

often between those who are close to each other, and how these tensions are either resolved or explode in action, usually of an irrational nature.<sup>97</sup>

Bissell's interpretation of the personal relationships and family life in The Mountain and the Valley also becomes severed from the historical transformation taking place. Family transition becomes independent of community transformation.<sup>98</sup>

Bissell also is unable to connect the historical disruption that is occurring in the novel with the psychological crises David experiences during the novel's epilogue. This is a crisis which is closely connected to Buckler's rejection of modernity, and the historical transformation of his beloved Annapolis Valley--an anti-modernist position Bissell is quite familiar with.

Bissell's interpretation of The Cruellest Month ignores both history and the critique of the modernity. We are told that this novel "is about an urban, sophisticated society, temporarily shifted to a rural setting, in which the burden of the past brings time to a halt."<sup>99</sup> I couldn't disagree more. The Cruellest Month is about the triumph of modernity in rural Nova Scotia as it is intensified and extended through tourism. It is centered on a dialogue between a past which is dead and an urban modernity which has thoroughly enveloped the rural Maritimes. The distance between the country and the city has shrunk, and now we see a countryside which is becoming more thoroughly modernized

than it was in The Mountain and the Valley. The Cruellest Month can be read as a sustained and skeptical gaze at modernity, and, in part, as a critique and rejection of the culture of tourism generated by a modernism rooted in regional underdevelopment. Bissell's interpretation misses the most vital concerns of the novel.

Janice Kulyk Keefer provides an extremely penetrating analysis of the epilogue to The Mountain and the Valley.<sup>100</sup> Keefer argues correctly, I think, that Buckler

lets stand the whole intricate narrative of perception that begins with David's setting out on the road that leads to the mountaintop, and ends with his reaching both the very top of the mountain and the realization that he can become the thing he perceives, and, in finding their 'single core of meaning' tell everything as it is in itself. It is this 'narrative of perception' with which Buckler is most insistently engaged, and, whatever his intentions, it has almost nothing to do with his attempts to give 'an absolving voice' to the 'misread' lives of the ordinary, inarticulate people of Entremont.<sup>101</sup>

Keefer grasps what she refers to as Buckler's "epistemological and metaphysical preoccupations,"<sup>102</sup> and considers The Mountain and the Valley to be "one of the most problematic novels we have..."<sup>103</sup>

Keefer also makes an important observation which never becomes a part of her extended analysis of The Mountain and The Valley. She notices the "novel's sabotaging of David's vision in the epilogue," and the fragility of the rural community because of "the erosion of its rooted values and precepts by the technological changes which, by the novel's close, have penetrated Entremont."<sup>104</sup> If Keefer connected

technological change to the actual economic, social, and cultural transformations that were happening in Nova Scotia during the first half of the twentieth century, The Mountain and the Valley might be less perplexing to her. Combining Keefer's important philosophical insight--Buckler's agonizing concern with epistemological questions--with a historically oriented conceptual framework will take us further into Buckler's tormented world-view.

Keefer's analysis of Buckler's The Cruellest Month continues her attempt to silence history, and fails to see Buckler's critique of modernity which is so obviously foregrounded in the text. She doesn't explore the epistemological problems which were central to her reading of The Mountain and the Valley.

Instead Keefer reads The Cruellest Month as a novel about the importance of achieving a unity between human beings and the natural world in which they live.<sup>105</sup> However, she never asks why Buckler would want to regain this lost unity--a unity which was present in both The Mountain and the Valley and his childhood memoir, Ox Bells and Fireflies.

Alan Young in his study of Ernest Buckler writes that The Mountain and the Valley "provided the necessary scope for a detailed portrayal of the vanishing rural culture of Buckler's childhood."<sup>106</sup> Young grounds his reading of the novel in history:

the relationship of Prologue and Epilogue to the six intervening sections reflects an important theme of the novel in that they provide a manifestation of the manner in which time present is to be viewed, as far as the human psyche is concerned, as the sum of time past, the moment of David's life recorded in Prologue and Epilogue being the cumulative total of all that has preceded it.<sup>107</sup>

Young argues that the principal theme of the novel revolves around David's major psychological dilemma: should he stay on the family farm and continue to live in the rural culture of his childhood, or should he leave for the urban world outside?<sup>108</sup>

The rural community life portrayed in The Mountain and the Valley is seen by Young as the central part of Buckler's social vision. Young stresses that "existence in Entrement, for example, is one of slow thoughts, few words and, for the Canaan family, minimal material concern. It is non-competitive."<sup>109</sup> He perceptively notes that the "acute tension in David further derives from his awareness that the Valley, far from being a refuge from the historical process, is about to become the victim of technology..."<sup>110</sup>

Young's interpretation of The Mountain and the Valley is, from my perspective, the most useful starting point for further study of the novel. His reading, however, lacks a thorough analysis of the specific kind of historical change that is transforming David's rural community. It is far more than the technological change which Young mentions. What we have is the gradual capitalist infiltration of the countryside. Both economic and class organization are

undergoing a revolutionary upheaval. Young does not mention the crisis of language, and the breakdown of a "realist" perception of reality. For this reason he seems unable to grasp Buckler's critique and rejection of modernity. He does, however, suggest that David's crisis on the mountain needs a complete reassessment which would take into account Buckler's intention to end the novel with his complete self-deception. To begin such a reassessment would mean bringing together David's linguistic crisis with the crisis of a community undergoing a rapid transition to modernity.

Young's analysis of The Cruellest Month lacks the perceptiveness of his earlier interpretation of The Mountain and the Valley. We are informed that "the primary concern of the novel is with the painful redemptive process that all the major characters undergo, the underlying secondary concern is with the situation of the artist."<sup>11</sup> There is no attempt by Young to connect writing with the critique of modernity present in the novel. In fact, Young refers to the modernizing rural setting of The Cruellest Month as "Buckler's pastoral world...",<sup>12</sup> and by doing so misses the point of the novel. Historical awareness is silenced in the analysis of this novel as Young becomes more rigidly bound to the New Criticism.

The re-readings of MacLennan, Bruce, and Buckler undertaken in this analysis reveals the importance of allowing history both to enter fictional texts, and to be



read from them as well. A knowledge of the historical transformation of the Maritimes can, I think, enrich our understanding of both our regional writers and their aesthetic creations.

It is only reasonable to assume that Maritime novelists--and other creative writers as well--were profoundly concerned with the transformation of the countryside and the spread of modernity. Such issues as rural/urban polarities, an experience of a radical discontinuity with the past, a quest for some sense of continuity, the decline of small commodity production, the rapid expansion of wage labour, and the commodification of so much of our "reality" are found throughout the works of MacLennan, Bruce, Buckler, and many other of our regional writers.

**Chapter One**  
**Hugh MacLennan and the**  
**Transition to Industrial Capitalism**

Those who believe that history can satisfy more than mere curiosity have an obligation to fulfil in these days of intellectual bewilderment. Any completed human pattern has a meaning; and if that meaning can be isolated and rendered coherent, it must necessarily help to explain our society to ourselves.

The personal attitude of the present writer, then, is the not uncommon belief that we have reached the end of an era, though not of our civilization...

Hugh MacLennan  
"Roman History and Today"

Hugh MacLennan's novels are preoccupied with conflicts that emerged with the transformation of both subsistence and small commodity production to a market economy dominated by the social relations of capitalism. The social, economic, political and cultural milieu produced in urban/capitalist industrial and commercial centers was far removed from the mode of living associated with the social relations of peripheral communities only remotely connected to external market economies. My analysis of MacLennan's Barometer Rising (1941) will focus on the fictionalized representation of the revolutionary changes that occurred with the transformation of the countryside and the emergence of industrial capitalism. A theoretically self-conscious

(opaque) reading of Barometer Rising should make "transparent" MacLennan's concern with regional economic development. MacLennan, I will argue, implies that the decline of nineteenth-century mercantile and shipbuilding interests was leading to a new hegemony based on an alliance of industrial capital and a rapidly expanding middle class. This transformation of class relations was accompanied by fundamental changes in the labour process and an increase in the numbers of wage labourers. Although Barometer Rising has been read as an urban novel, it is more adequately interpreted as a novel which is fundamentally concerned with the transformation of rural/urban relationships and the emergence of modernity.

In his essay, "Where is my Potted Palm," MacLennan emphasizes that the historical context in Barometer Rising was the most essential part of the novel.<sup>1</sup> The novelist, he argues, must describe, and if necessary define, the social values which dominate the Canadian "scene," and do so in such a way as to make them appear interesting and important to foreigners<sup>2</sup>: "he must for a time be something of a geographer, an historian and a sociologist." Unless he did this, his stories would be set in a vacuum. He could not, as British and American writers do, take his background values for granted, for the simple reason that the reading public had no notion what they were. He must also design and equip the stage on which they were to be played.<sup>3</sup>

MacLennan's remembered intention to "design and equip" the national and regional "stage" can be used for re-mapping the terrain of Barometer Rising. Such a reading makes it quite evident that he has foregrounded both the social history and the political economy of development of Nova Scotia.<sup>4</sup>

MacLennan's approach to regional modernization utilized an extremely mechanistic form of determinism. In 1935 MacLennan published "Roman History and Today", an article based on his doctoral dissertation for Princeton University.<sup>5</sup> With broad strokes, he sketches a determinist interpretation of history, while also emphasizing the significance of chance events. Although this is not the place to undertake a thorough analysis of the article, there are several passages that deserve careful consideration. MacLennan writes:

It is our axiom that history is a melange of determinism and accident. It follows, therefore, that the first task of the historian will be to distinguish, where possible, the fields in which accident enters and those which are determined...<sup>6</sup>

He then goes on to argue:

To the individual immersed in events it often seems that everything depends on the decision made at this or that moment. To the historian in this study it just as frequently appears as if human decision mattered nothing and all was predetermined... So much as this, however, is certain. The time at which an event takes place most certainly hinges on human decision; the manner in which the event takes place more or less hinges on human decision. But, notwithstanding, there are tides in the affairs of men that no individual can possibly stem. There are times when the process of events is seen, with pitiless clarity, to be issuing from formal causes far remote, when individuals are like flies [sic] on a torrent. When almost everyone

seems to want something not to happen, and yet later ages, looking back, see that it had to happen. Such times are vital crises, like the collapse of the Roman Republic, like the downfall of the Roman Empire, like the 1790's. In fact, like events of our own day.

MacLennan quite clearly believed--at least, during the middle of the 1930s depression--that the course of history was not amenable to human control. History is reified and appears to be the product of abstract historical forces rather than active human agency. People do have some control over the "time" and "manner" of major historical occurrences, but in the long run "individuals are like flies in a torrent." Human domination by uncontrollable historical forces provides for MacLennan the theoretical foundation for both Barometer Rising and Two Solitudes.

In an article published in 1947, MacLennan described his first two published novels as sociological.<sup>8</sup> Writing the following year, he describes both early novels as naturalist, and in a later article as naturalistic realism.<sup>9</sup> MacLennan rejected his earlier determinist position--a framework that included his theory of history as well as his aesthetic naturalism--"that personality is the product of economic conditions."<sup>10</sup> In Barometer Rising and Two Solitudes (1945) both cultural and psychological change appears to result from the economic transformation of society. A close reading of both novels reveals a conception of history as well as a fictional aesthetic that are grounded in this economic determinist view of the

historical process.

In "Roman History and Today" MacLennan also emphasizes what he refers to as the "significant determiner"--the dominating force that infiltrates every aspect of a civilization's mode of living. Keeping in mind again that this article was written during the Great Depression, we turn to MacLennan's analysis:

It concerns us, in the twentieth century, to know what is underneath our times. Obviously a great social idea, at least in its application is very nearly played out... If we want to know what determined Roman civilization, to know that is, its significant determiner, we ought to look for it in the formal cause of its peculiar quality. It differed absolutely from Alexander's empire, on the one hand, and from the Far East, on the other. I mean by "formal cause" the active, dynamic principle which actuated nearly all Romans in their daily life, which guided their approach to all their problems, which in fact, made them the Romans they were. This principle was precisely what we call today private enterprise. As practised by the Romans, it can be equated to the following crude descriptive term: "How can I acquire the largest possible quantity of material goods and material power for myself personally?"<sup>11</sup>

It is quite evident that the thrust of MacLennan's thought is as preoccupied with the twentieth century as it is with Roman history. Throughout "Roman History and Today" he is convinced that "we have reached the end of an era, though not of our civilization...."<sup>12</sup>

MacLennan's "significant determiner," we'll call it acquisitive individualism, is the single major problem in western society. He holds out the possibility of change, although without suggesting what the direction should be:

whether it is possible for Western man to lay a

different cause, or a cause operating in a different direction, from that which we have seen operating in Rome, cannot yet be told... unless state-education is altered and the values of the masses are profoundly altered, the new era will not escape the old vicious circle. So much, at any rate, seems the lesson of past history.<sup>13</sup>

MacLennan's short-lived flirtation with an anti-capitalist position was in part the result of an interest in socialism. In the summer of 1937, he conducted a five week tour to Germany, Scandinavia, and the Soviet Union. Elspeth Cameron, MacLennan's biographer, informs us that he "arrived in Russia expecting to find a brave new world; what he saw provoked profound disillusionment."<sup>14</sup> MacLennan's antipathy to socialism was acquired at this time and this attitude was clearly evident in both of his Nova Scotian novels--Barometer Rising and Each Man's Son.<sup>15</sup>

MacLennan's fascination with the birth of a "new age" does not, however, disappear with his rejection of socialist revolution. In Barometer Rising repeated reference is made to the birth of a "new age."<sup>16</sup> For instance, Colonel Geoffrey Wain, a central character in the novel, is obsessed with the awareness of historical mutation. The Colonel

comforted himself with the reflection that by the time the war ended, familiar conventions would be broken down entirely, and a new age would be at hand of power and vulgarity without limitations, in which the prizes would not be won by the qualified but by the cunning and the unscrupulous... It would change, everything, and it would soon be here. (126)

Central to MacLennan's representation of the transition to industrial capitalism in the Maritimes is his production

of a fictional world dominated by contradictory voices and desires. The novel is infiltrated by the remnants of a Golden Age ideology represented by the small commodity producers of a Maritime non-capitalist mode of production. MacLennan, however, never manages to surmount this romantic conception of the region's history, and suggests the possibility of a utopian modernity--a romantic utopianism based on the emergence of a university trained technical elite. Two distinct voices in the novel speak but they are, however, motivated by fundamentally different desires: one speaks to an inaccessible rural past, and the other engages in a dialogue with the not yet accessible urban future.

The plot of Barometer Rising is relatively simple and easily summarized. Neil Macrae, the novel's protagonist, returns unannounced to Halifax after being seriously wounded during the First World War. Eventually we discover that Neil was soon to be court-martialled for apparently disobeying orders during a major battle. Neil, thought to be dead, manages to escape and returns to Halifax. Neil's commanding officer in Europe was his uncle, Colonel Wain--a wealthy mercantile capitalist. Neil plans to expose Colonel Wain's responsibility for the military debacle that led to the court-martial proceedings he was facing. However, one person, Alec Mackenzie, Colonel Wain's former batman, could support Neil's position. The situation, however, is complicated because it turns out that Neil and Colonel



Wain's daughter, Penelope, were lovers prior to his departure for England. As the story unfolds, we learn that Alec MacKenzie is now employed by Colonel Wain, an obvious attempt to silence him.

Colonel Geoffrey Wain, the scion of a nineteenth-century mercantile capitalist family, has lost the core of meaning in his life. In a period when industrial capitalism was successfully challenging the dominance of mercantile capitalism in the Maritimes, Colonel Wain has little enthusiasm for defending his declining class position. He desires something "different" to suit the new age. His short military stint overseas, however, failed to provide him with his thirst for personal power and class position. It is quite obvious that MacLennan connects Colonel Wain's insatiable thirst for power with his family's weakening class position. Colonel Wain is quite clear that the merchant capitalist class, his family heritage, is no longer a dominant class. The narrator of the novel explains that Colonel Wain was

pervaded by a quiet and unquestioned confidence that the present had pulled adrift from the past and that his future had unlimited possibilities. Here in Nova Scotia his family had gone as far as the limitations of the province permitted. (66)

Barometer Rising employs an extremely inadequate account of the region's historical transformation. Penny, Wain's daughter, provides the only attempt to understand the political and economic forces which contributed to such

profound economic change in the Maritimes:

Fifty years of governmental neglect, years in which the politicians had turned their backs on the rest of the world in their eagerness to make money out of the West, had reduced British North America from her rank as the fourth mercantile sea-power of the world to insignificance. (5)

Situating Maritime underdevelopment in this restricted context is reasonable as far as it goes. However, such a position existing in isolation from other factors must remain only a partial explanation. A close reading of Barometer Rising should pose the question of regional underdevelopment as central to MacLennan's historical and aesthetic considerations. Wain's family had been closely tied to the historical development of Nova Scotia:

For five generations the Wains had been leading citizens in Halifax and the history of the family was to some extent the history of the town itself. In 1749 a Wain had been a sergeant in one of the regiments brought to Nova Scotia by Cornwallis to found a garrison city against Louisburg, the fortress in Cape Breton which secured the Gulf of St. Lawrence for the French and was a permanent threat to New England. This Wain later fought at Quebec, then returned to the garrison at Halifax where he died. (19)

His grandson became a privateer in the war of 1812; using prize money acquired from captured American ships, he founded the fortunes of the family. He built a wharf and warehouse, and established an exporting and importing business with the West Indies, exchanging dried apples and fish for rum, tobacco, and molasses. From that time until now, the Wain fortune had remained stationary, in the sense that it increased only in proportion to the growth of the

family's offshoots, which were fairly numerous.<sup>17</sup> It seems plausible to suggest that Geoffrey Wain was engaging in a form of class resistance and, of course, class conflict with the newly emerging monopoly/industrial capitalist class. His basic values are, to borrow a term from Raymond Williams, residual. That is, his values, beliefs and general structure of feeling were once dominant; they formed an ideology that was common among colonial elites during the nineteenth century. However, by the second decade of this century Colonel Wain's vision of the "good" society had become residual. MacLennan makes it quite clear that this colonial and mercantile consciousness must be disposed of in the proverbial dustbin of history.

Barometer Rising contains more than an analysis of the changing power relations among class elites. MacLennan is also concerned with the proletarianization of rural small commodity producers. Alec MacKenzie, a foreman now for Colonel Wain, had been before the war, a subsistence farmer and fisherman in Cape Breton. His family combined subsistence farming with inshore fishing. Because of their lack of purchasing power, they were only peripherally involved with market transactions and the gradual expansion of commodity culture throughout the Maritimes. By 1917, Alec, his wife, two sons and a daughter became a part of the migrant labour force and moved to Halifax. Alec and his daughter, Norah, become wage labourers--Alec working on

Wain's wharf, and Norah a typist. The narrator tells us that for the first time in his life, Alec MacKenzie was making a "reasonable" income. However, MacKenzie was experiencing "a vague restlessness, an uneasy sense of insecurity and disharmony." The narrator elaborates:

Later than usual, Alec's family had begun to follow the traditional pattern of Nova Scotia Highlanders. They had consciously given up the land and the fisheries for a life in the towns. Yet Alec was missing things he never thought about before: shadows travelling the steep hills of the Cape Breton shoreline; pockets of mist white as fleece in the sunshine along the braes opposite Boulardarie; a feeling that time did not matter much, a sense that when a man planted a field or built a boat he did so to meet a season and not a timetable; a habit of rising with the sun instead of an Ingersol alarm-clock. In an indefinite way Alec realized that he and his wife were at the close of an era and their children were entering a new one. (124)

This passage, quite explicitly, reveals a perceived distinction between a "natural" mode of living and the lifestyles and labour patterns of an "artificial" industrial economy. Juxtaposed to a historically specific aesthetic perception of nature is the "unhappy consciousness" of the birth of a new era which is estranged from the "natural" world.<sup>18</sup>

Even more interesting than MacKenzie's experience of the labour process as a subsistence farmer and impoverished fisherman, however, is his encounter with urban modernity. MacLennan emphasizes that MacKenzie loses control of his labour power when working for wages. Alec accepts his new proletarian class position largely because it will enable his children, especially his son, to prepare for the new

age. Alec MacKenzie struggles with his nostalgic attachment to a simplified past as a glimmer of hope, an utopian impulse, for his children's future. The impulse, however, is crippled, stunted, at its inception. MacLennan's version of historical determinism and its aesthetic offspring, naturalism, produces individuals who are supposed to be simple reflections of their class/economic background. MacKenzie could never under these historical and aesthetic circumstances become a serious critic of the newly emerging era. His anti-modern sentiments and his discomfort not only with cities, but with his loss of independence as a wage labourer remains stillborn when confronted with the appearance of inevitability.

Alec MacKenzie accepts as inevitable the "close of an era"; a new age was approaching--one bounded by timetables and alarm-clocks. MacLennan's portrayal of a rather passive MacKenzie reflects his belief that "individuals are like flies on a torrent" and are merely the playthings of remote and uncontrollable historical forces.<sup>19</sup> MacLennan's naturalist aesthetic form imposes a narrative closure on the novel's potential for an active historical response. It can also be seen that MacLennan's "significant determiner," private enterprise, has imposed itself on the lives of countless other individuals and families caught up in the expansion of capitalist market economies.

It is this pivotal historical transition that is

situated at the very centre of Barometer Rising. Throughout the Western world the ability to make an adequate living from a non-capitalist mode of production was becoming increasingly problematic. We learn that Colonely Wain's practices contributed to the difficulties of Nova Scotian small producers:

Firms like his own had done much to cause it, ... Few fishermen in Nova Scotia made any money because they could not easily market their catches, and prices paid by wholesalers like himself were infinitesimal. It was steadily becoming more difficult to persuade members of the younger generation in the fishing towns to stay there. (69)

MacLennan's emphasis on a narrowly conceived economic determinism, in spite of its lack of sophistication, enables him to make an important point about the connections between economic transition and a more general cultural transformation. The transformation of the labour process--the foundation of pre-modern artisan activity in both the country and the city--comes under MacLennan's critical gaze. Simon Perry, trained as a boat-builder, is experiencing the emergence of a new way of doing things. The narrator of Barometer Rising explains that

Like most of the old craftsmen of the province, Simon Perry worked from models of his own contriving, miniatures exquisitely carved out of a soft wood and complete to the last detail. But to get a contract from the government the submission of a blueprint was necessary, and Penny had offered to draw one from his model. He did not understand much about gasoline engines and required a mechanic to help with that part of the work, and it was his secret grievance that the engine was perhaps the most important part of his craft. He leaned now over the blueprints he could not understand and tried to look wise, his elbows holding

the stiff paper flat... (12)

This passage points out more than economic and technical change. It suggests that the state played a significant role in the growth of a new class of middle-class professionals--a class which contributes to the elimination of "traditional" craftspeople.

Penny Wain's location in the new middle-class as a marine architect does not make her immune to the "industrialization" of shipbuilding which was an accomplished fact in the United States. Penny's characterization reveals the dominant male-centered gender ideology reproduced in Barometer Rising. A close reading of the novel reveals that MacLennan was fully cognizant of the role transformation being experienced by women during the modernization of the countryside combined with the rapid expansion of urban capitalism. Penny becomes a marine architect; however, we are left with the definite impression that she is experiencing the frustration of her "natural" womanly needs--being a loving wife and mother. At the end of the novel Penny appears to be returning to her "private" world of the woman, and away from the "public" world of men.

MacLennan makes it quite evident that there were both social and psychological consequences resulting from Penny's changing class position--from upper middle class to the new professional middle class--and traditional gender role. MacLennan infiltrates the novel with a male centered

ideology strongly opposed to such gender role transformation. The psychic split that dominates Penny's personality--the contradiction between the "womanly," "motherly," and "wifely," nurturing impulses and the self-control and rationality of the technical expert--is resolved in favour of the traditional female gender role. The final four paragraphs of Barometer Rising foreground this conservative role reversal. However, a closer examination of the complete text will put this romantic conclusion in the context of a thoroughly phallocentric ideological perspective.

Why had Penny chosen a profession--marine engineering and ship design--which had been a time honoured male preserve? Penny, defying convention, studied science and mathematics at university; after graduation she lived at home for two years. However, she became bored with her role as an upper middle-class young lady waiting for marriage. She began reading books on marine engineering and, during 1914, she studied ship-designing at a technical school in Montreal(14-15).

Penny believes her new gender role is the product of forces beyond her control; we learn that

...she quivered at the thought of how helpless her existence had been in the current of forces she had been able neither to predict nor control. Yet, when she examined with detachment what had happened to herself and her relatives during the past three years, she was forced to admit that their experiences had not been unique. The war had taken control of them just as it had everyone else. (15)



The shortage of male ship-designers partly explains why Penny has her position; it does not explain, however, why she chose to study science, mathematics and ship-design before the war. Penny seems to have had a need to move outside the confines of her assigned gender role.

Throughout the novel we learn that Penny is not fulfilling her "feminine" nature. The ideology of a feminine "nature" is, however, not stated explicitly in the novel; it is submerged in the narrative. An archaeology of discourse can, however, reconstruct these phallogentric fragments into a coherent ideological position. Early in Barometer Rising we find out that

Penny continued sitting at her desk, tense and solitary in the empty room. It was as though a stone had been plunged into the pool of her mind until her memories were surging like troubled waters, and for a few moments her whole body ached with loneliness and a sense of loss. The anaesthetic of hard work could never compensate for the feeling of life and growth that had departed from her; and now, like a man in the desert obsessed by thoughts of green grass and running water, she remembered things as they had been before the war. She saw herself dancing at an Admiralty House ball. She recollected the odour of lime trees heavy in the streets on close summer nights ...and how those evenings as she walked alone it had been possible to imagine an aeon of tranquillity broadening out like a sea under the sky, herself growing old gently, with children about her, the land where she had been born mellowing slowly into maturity. (14)

Penny's active resistance to the stereotyped female role is responsible for her new position in a male dominated labour force. However, even the "anaesthetic of hard work" cannot compensate for her repressed "feminine" nature.

Penny is even more restless than usual the morning

after Angus Murray's proposal: "Penny looked out of her window at this familiar scene and felt alien to it. After her talk with Murray on Sunday night it had been impossible for her to settle back into the groove of her profession"(51). Her work is excessively abstract, she compares her mind to an adding machine. The reader is left with the impression that her work is lifeless(51).

Penny's successful ship-design turns out not to be her work; it was the design of her lover Neil Macrae(20,27). She didn't really think that her contribution to the design was significant(20). Penny is convinced that the design was "a product of Neil's brain and her patience..."(20). What we have here is the traditional representation of the "active" male principle, and the "passive" element of "feminine" nature.

Penny's dissatisfaction is intensified when she thinks of her young daughter--born out of wedlock--who is being raised by her aunt and uncle:

She could hardly remember what it had been like in the old days before the war when existence had been relatively simple and people had not found it necessary to live on short-term credits. She had gone through a ridiculous life during these past few years, trying to outwit the Almighty by handing over her daughter to a kindly uncle and aunt, pretending that her sole ambition was to succeed in a man's profession. (144-45)

Penny views her career as "a man's profession." This statement, I think, completes the conception of women reproduced in Barometer Rising. Modernization situates women in a contradictory role location. They no longer

occupy traditional women's roles, but they have difficulty in accepting roles that have been defined as male. This patriarchal attitude is reinforced by the reactions of various male characters to Penny's "male" occupation.<sup>20</sup> Simon Perry sums up these attitudes when he says "It ain't natural for a woman to be smart at this sort of work"(13).

Changing gender roles was not confined to urban middle and upper middle-class women. Young women from rural farming and fishing communities moved to urban areas and became part of an expanding working class. Colonel Wain's family maid Sadie from Newfoundland, and Evelyn, Wain's secretary and mistress are examples of the countless women who left their rural homes in the early decades of this century. The narrator of Barometer Rising gives us an interesting glimpse of Geoffrey Wain's consciousness of historical mutation: "In her native village a girl like Evelyn would have had some standing in the community; in Halifax nothing but his patronage had elevated her beyond the status of a domestic servant"(69). MacLennan repeatedly permits this nostalgia for "traditional" female roles to infiltrate the novel. But we also have an implicit critique of women selling labour power in the expanding marketplace.

Mass-production, its pace accelerated by war demands, seemed to be the final blow to shipbuilding as a craft:

She continued to examine the details of these strange new craft which the builders knew would never last more than a few months. The idea of building ships this way appalled her. The worst aspect of it

was that the principle was sensible. What was the use of quality in a world like this? ...If the war continued much longer they would be forced to build like this here, and what was left of the old Nova Scotia tradition of shipcraft would disappear entirely. It was going fast enough as it was. ...It was the end of ships if they mass-produced them. A good ship could never be duplicated exactly. Vessels in crates, and the devil the quality; men ...reduced as the assembly line! It was coming. Craftsmanship was already being apologized for, these days. The real skill of the future would be the manipulating of men, and ever-increasing dexterities would be developed to fit masses of men into the molds produced by the designers. (52)

Penny's despair and sense of alienation resulting from the transition to modernized ship-building is found again in this brief description:

The shipyard was flooded with sunshine and the air reverberated with the savage striking of the riveting machines, punctuated occasionally by a ringing clang of heavy metals knocking together. The outlines of the ship they were building were gaunt and uncouth in this merciless light, and the workmen moving about her looked so small it was hard to realize they could be doing anything that mattered. (51)

MacLennan is suggesting that the disappearance of craft production would culminate in "meaningless" and alienated labour. Such a hierarchically organized labour process would provide the foundation for rigidly standardized work. Workers would become so regimented that the most sophisticated skills would be primarily concerned with the development of techniques and technologies to "manufacture" a malleable industrial workforce. At this point in Barometer Rising, the reader may be left with the impression that MacLennan is rejecting industrial capitalism. However, a thoughtful reading discloses that he is primarily concerned

with the detrimental influences that these changes might have on the expanding middle class--especially the new technical professionals such as Neil Macrae and Penny Wain. On the whole, there seems to be considerably less concern for the working class--consisting of an increasing number of displaced small producers--represented by Alec MacKenzie and Evelyn Phillips, Colonel Wain's secretary and mistress.

In "Roman History and Today," MacLennan argues that science and technology would provide the only foundation for eliminating social inequality.<sup>21</sup> Yet, in Barometer Rising it is science and technology which is contributing to the growth of inequality and producing an obviously alienated labour force. Is this potential for the manipulation of people an indication that MacLennan is rejecting his earlier utopian faith in science and technology?<sup>22</sup> There does seem to be a fundamental contradiction between MacLennan's utopian impulses in "Roman History and Today," and the more problematic representation of science and technology in the novel.

If we juxtapose the destructive use of science and technology during the First World War, including the Halifax explosion, with the various techniques of human engineering, we are confronted with the dystopian potential of modernity. If MacLennan's naive optimism has been repressed, we are, however, left with an obvious utopian dimension centered on the new professional middle-class, mental labourers, who

design and supervise the operation of sophisticated technologies. This dystopian representations of science and technology does not appear to be a textual accident, or, we might say, the text does not seem to be subverting itself. It seems, rather, to be a deliberate textual construction.

It must be stressed again that the dominant ideological perspective in Barometer Rising is one that justifies the hopes of an expanding middle-class in the early decades of this century. The novel is structured in such a way that the author is able to project the reformist perspective of the increasing number of university trained professionals who were attempting to manufacture an ordered and meaningful world during their confrontation with the rapidly changing social order of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. (Ironically the changes encouraged by these professionals intensified the very problems they were attempting to resolve).

Penny Wain clearly expresses this concern for meaning and significance:

Did Neil have any idea what confronted him? By nature he would fight indefinitely to achieve a human significance in an age where the products of human ingenuity make mockery of the men who had created them. He would fight because nothing yet had been too big for his courage. And perhaps he would gain his significance...<sup>23</sup>

MacLennan offers us the heroic but isolated individual; the mythic man who is able to breach the barricades of modernity without the collective assistance of others facing similar

historically created dilemmas. This is of course, a strangely ironic position to take in a "naturalistic" novel; this is especially so, when we find out that Neil has had little, if any connection with the chance solutions that eventually solve his problems. MacLennan has reached the limits of passive subjectivity in Barometer Rising. A more active conception of the human subject seems on the verge of freeing itself from the restraints which naturalism places on both characterization and narrative organization.

MacLennan's focus on individuals rather than classes prevents a working class perspective from being reproduced in the novel. However, it must be remembered that the groundwork for such a class perspective is present in both the conscious and unconscious representation of the transformation of the small commodity mode of production, and the invidious penetration of industrial capitalism and the market-place throughout the nooks and crannies of the Western world.

For numerous Canadians MacLennan is thought of primarily as the novelist of Canadian nationalism. This is certainly a valid interpretation as far as it goes; however, his fictionalized national sentiment must be understood in its historical context. The death knells of the British empire are rung throughout Barometer Rising. Canadian nationalism is, for MacLennan, a response to fill the vacuum left by a retreating English colonialism. But there is more

than this in the novel. In Barometer Rising nationalism is connected with the wider pattern of an individual's life and death. Nationalism provided MacLennan with a form of secular religion that functioned as an alternative structure of meaning, at a time when the Maritimes, and, of course, the rest of Canada, was being rapidly transformed. In rural communities which were only minimally involved with the capitalist marketplace, as well as those with considerable market ties, the intersection of religion and kinship provided a cultural foundation for meaningful lived experience. The novel's narrator commenting on the death of Alec MacKenzie, a victim of the 1917 explosion, emphasizes the conflict between transparent and opaque communities:

the death of an individual was an insignificant event unless it could be reconciled with a pattern possessing a wider meaning. He was still capable of being moved by a village funeral, by the sight of a whole community standing about the grave of someone who had been a part of the lives of them all. But death in a great city seemed to him much like death in the war, an atomic life extinguished finally by an enormous process which had always been its enemy. (207)

MacKenzie's chance death, in the explosion, prompts these reflections on the apparent lack of meaning in cities such as Halifax. It seems quite reasonable to suggest that MacLennan is using Barometer Rising to articulate his desire for a new community, a national "community," one suitable for the new age he so frequently mentions.

Reflecting on the aftermath of the explosion, Dr. Angus Murray, another central character in Barometer Rising,



ponders the problem of meaning and of the necessity to find a pattern:

Perhaps it was fanciful to look for any pattern here; the explosion had been blind in its selection. Perhaps if there were a pattern at all it had been here all the time, and it had required this upheaval to enable him to see it. (207-08)

MacLennan's nationalism becomes the "pattern possessing a wider meaning." Nationalism functions as a replacement for the decaying rural communities whose social cement had been the ideologies of kinship and religion(207-208). He becomes the proponent of a new society, and of a new Canadian nationalism which would establish an independent identity from both England and the United States--a national ideology which would further contribute to the undermining of rural communities and their widely accepted values.<sup>24</sup>

**Chapter Two**  
**Charles Bruce and the**  
**Uncertainty of Modernity**

It was the fact that the idea I had never quite accepted, the idea of my birthplace as a region backward and static and bounded in space and fixed in time, was false. It was something quite different I had caught a glimpse of here. What I was seeing here was continuity. The continuity of birth and death and venture.

Charles Bruce  
The Township of Time

Charles Bruce's The Channel Shore--to my mind, the pre-eminent text in the Maritime literary canon--calls attention to the historical transformation of the region. Bruce's critical gaze focuses brilliantly on both the continuity and the discontinuity of our historical experience. He focuses, in particular, on the distance which separates urban capitalism's emergent social, economic, political and cultural realms from the mode of living associated with small Maritime farming and fishing communities. Bruce brings to life the transformation of class and gender relations that accompanied the gradual decline of both subsistence and small commodity production. He enables us to see what was entailed in the far-reaching changes to a mode of work widespread in the rural Maritimes.<sup>1</sup> In his fictionalized "Channel Shore" which is situated in the Port

Shoreham area of Guysborough County, Nova Scotia, Bruce captures the historic movement away from a culture and sense of community that were suffused with an ideology of kinship relations and a jack-of-all-trades craft mentality.

This historical rupture is situated at the centre of both The Channel Shore (1954)--spanning the years 1919-1946--and Bruce's later collection of thematically connected short stories, The Township of Time (1959)--covering the broad period of time 1786-1950. Both The Channel Shore and The Township of Time<sup>2</sup> are, in short, sophisticated historical accounts of the undermining of a largely non-capitalist rural community. With masterful historical insight, Bruce provides us with a glimpse of the complex interplay between the major centres of capitalist development and a region on the periphery. Indeed, his consciousness of an apparent historical mutation, and his attempt to come to terms with it, is the integrating preoccupation of much of Bruce's writing. Sadly, the depth of his historical insight, along with the critical edge of his thinking, have been largely ignored.

The economic life of Bruce's Shore is spread over a thirty mile area of fictional Copeland County.<sup>3</sup> The Shore of the novel extends from Copeland, the county seat, to Findlay's Bridge twenty-four miles away. The community known as The Rocks was the "beginning of down-shore," and thus:

began the stretch of shore on which men still gave most of their time to fish-trawling for cod and haddock, netting salmon, and setting their herring-baited pots for lobsters. (34)

From The Rocks to Forester's Pond, fishing dominated the economy. Up-shore, however, farming and working in the woods were the centre of a stagnating economic life. Currie Head, the pivotal community in The Channel Shore, largely ignores fishing; except for July during the annual herring run, nothing remains of the communities fishing tradition(15,61). Those Currie Headers still engaged in fishing are a handful of men--cultural and economic conservatives, antimodernists, out of step with their own time--who choose to march to the tune of a distant, long-dead drummer.

Early in The Channel Shore, the reader is confronted with a quotation from the first volume of Marx's Capital. Stewart Gordon, a descendent of pre-industrial craft producers, puzzling through the intricacies of Marx's political economy, discloses the seriousness of his reading: "This Marx," he remarks to his daughter, "Sometimes, you have to learn a whole new language. Listen to this":

The two phases, each inverse to the other, that made up the metamorphosis of a commodity constitute a circular movement, a circuit: commodity-form, stripping off of this commodity-form, and return to the commodity-form.  
(29)

"Now," Stewart concludes, "I've got to go back and figure out commodity-form again."

It seems unlikely that Bruce would have introduced Marx

simply to reveal Stewart's love of reading. This reference seems instead to provide a conceptual key that allows us entrance to a fictionalized Maritime community in economic and cultural transition. The concept of commodity--goods or services produced primarily for their exchange value, rather than their use value, in the marketplace--can be used to map a route through The Channel Shore and examine the political economy of the community described early in the novel.

Stewart's wife Josie stresses the scarcity of money and commodities, and the roughness of life when she was young in the closing decades of the nineteenth century:

"Yes. Rough. Life was a little rough..." "Y'know, when I was a girl--I used to help father with the fish. ...When I was fifteen, sixteen." She paused, said irrelevantly, "People thought it was a wonderful thing, I s'pose, when kerosene lamps began to get common." She paused again. "Oh, it was, too, I guess. But people were independent, years ago. Not much money, but they didn't need it. Caught fish and farmed. Always a market for fish, and all they'd need to live on was the oats and potatoes and pigs and cows you could grow yourself..." (352)

Josie's uncertainty about modernity and its benefits are foregrounded in this passage. The kingdom of the commodity had not yet penetrated the Shore's limited market economy. Describing the historic settlement and use of land and sea around the Shore, the novel's narrator outlines a history of development which was followed by prolonged economic depression:

This was the frontier of an old prosperity. By the opening years of the nineteenth century all the land along the water from Copeland to Findlay's Bridge had been taken up. Later, having served its first

purpose by freeing its settlers from the bond of Europe, the shore was to become a breeding-place for migrants, men and women who were born there, raised there, and who left the Shore in youth for the States and the West.

But during one golden period, the forty or fifty middle years of the century, it had prospered by the standards of the time in its own right. For a while it had exported products other than its flesh and blood, prospered on the basic economics of salt fish, enhanced at times by lesser pursuits--by vessel building and coastal trade, cattle and sheep and squared hardwood timber. It was a harsh prosperity, based on circumstances that were not to last; but while they lasted, the Shore overflowed, up its small and crooked water-courses, over the fold in the land, into the standing woods. Younger sons and new settlers chopped out and burned and planted new fields, a mile, two miles, and more, from salt water ...but most of the back fields had returned to woods. (12)

As soon as they are old enough to work for wages, young people leave the Shore. A few do remain, but, we are told, the best go to Toronto or further west, while the remainder find work in the "Boston States." The central character of the book is Grant Marshall, an ambitious and talented man who adamantly refuses to leave his life on the Shore for "steady" work. Grant combines the clearing and working of a small farm with short periods of work away from the Shore in order to accumulate much-needed cash. Eventually, he hires part-time labourers to cut pulpwood and lumber that he sells for a profit. Grant then goes on to establish a lumber mill, one of the few distinctly capitalist enterprises along the Shore. Grant's business activities will contribute to a far-reaching change in the class organization of the area. Grant and his foster-son, Alan, form a part of the nucleus of a capitalist class, and their wage labourers will

constitute an expansion of a local working class which had its roots severed during the economic depression of the late nineteenth century.

Grant Marshall, the main character in The Channel Shore, can trace his family roots back to the Shores earliest colonization in the late eighteenth century. We are informed that the "Marshalls came down from English officials who had followed the first settlers to Nova Scotia when the province was still a colony"(104). This class background can be readily observed in both the mentality and behaviour of James Marshall--Grant's uncle. James Marshall, for instance, always "changed from working-clothes to a suit for the evening"(151). Certainly this was not behaviour typical of the farmers and fishermen along the Shore. However, this symbolic gesture is only a surface manifestation of a sensibility that permeates James' mind--a sensibility that influences Grant in fundamental ways. James, an ambitious man, emphasizes "Hard work and careful figuring and virtue. The Lord helps those who helps themselves--if they serve Him"(57). Grant is described as having "a streak of puritan denial," a trait that dominates James' personality. The protestant work ethic underlies both James' presence in the world and his attitude to himself. James' dead brother Harvey, Grant's father, provides an interesting contrast to him and a significant influence on Grant whose personality combines

characteristics of both men. We are told that

Grant walked home behind the jolting cart with a light pulsing elation singing in his flesh. His thoughts were careless, a drifting web of simple things.... He laughed in his mind.... One laughing glimpse or two across the darkness of a generation... The whole moving dream of the Shore, a generation gone.

And in this at last he saw the face and heard the laughter of Harvey Marshall. Harvey, a Marshall, touched by the thing that pulsed in the Grahams, the Curries, the Neills, the McKees. The thing that was not exactly warmth, not sentiment, not... The thing that was alive, that was not cold doctrine or property or measured pride, but simple feeling. Life and death and achievement and failure. Laughter-wrinkles in a man's face, and the taste of tears. He was not thinking consciously of this as it touched himself. This was not thought, but feeling... From this day on he would know without thinking that all he did, and all he dreamed of, were woven into that. (159-60)

James Marshall, however, "did not indulge in undue fancies about clouds and distance, but there were times as he walked in the fields when he felt a kind of exalted pride"(57).

The "past to him was not the warmth of people and a place, but the cold pride of family"(88). James has, however, become a central figure in the gradual modernization process taking place on the Shore, and particularly in Currie Head. Instead of cutting hay with a hand scythe, James Marshall "sat the double-mower, pulled by his two work-horses, while the shuttling blades laid down a widening ribbon of mown hay on shaven ground"(56). When James built a machinery shed, it was not like a "hundred sheds along the shore" which "rested their sleepers on wooden posts or low walls of loose stone." It was rather "a building based on concrete, which would continue to take the weight of carts and trucks for



years after he was gone"(93). Buying a vacant farm to provide "the extra hay he needed for his sheep and cattle," as well as more wooded land were part and parcel of James' acquisitive and possessive personality.

However, Bruce makes it quite clear that James Marshall is not really an entrepreneur. When Grant is contemplating his future as a small capitalist, we learn that economic development involves uncertainty; however, "In years past it had been all certainty. Almost all. On James Marshall's place life came down as close to the rock of certainty as James could make it" (162). James operates his farm with the assistance of his two sons and his nephew Grant. It is a family farm and James hires little wage labour except for local boys who pick cultivated strawberries in their spare time (24). Although James is still a small commodity producer, as are the other farmers in the area, his economic status is widely acknowledged, and, in an important sense, his methods and farming practices make him an incipient capitalist farmer.

Along with capitalist modernization and the rapid extension of the marketplace, a corresponding cultural transformation takes place as well. The Channel Shore explores the waning and eventual demise of a variety of non-capitalist extended kinship bonds, and their replacement by a new capitalist spirit that only appears to express the collective interests of a community in transformation.

Bruce describes an economy composed of a single class of small producers, with varying degrees of status and influence, on its way to becoming apart of a more complex society structured around the existence of a highly differentiated class system.

Four fundamentally different voices emerge in The Channel Shore. Each of these voices is connected to--but cannot be reduced to--the differentiation of social classes resulting from both the development of capitalism in the countryside and its rapid intensification in the international marketplace.<sup>4</sup> One voice is scathingly critical of urban capitalism--and by implication rural capitalism as well. Another voice accepts rural capitalism as inevitably necessary if, at least, some rural traditions were to be preserved. A third voice is fragmented; while unsatisfied with modernity, this voice is unable to situate itself in a rapidly transforming countryside. A fourth voice--one representing both boredom and unsatisfied desire--echoes the urban spokespeople for an emerging consumer culture.

The critical viewpoint is represented by a pre-modern and anti-capitalist conservatism rooted in the independence of the small farmer and fisher. These producers work for themselves, to depend on someone else for wages means a loss of freedom. And, as one character, Stan Currie--a former professional journalist--argues, it was to rediscover

independence that the Shore was settled in the first place:

Some got pitched off the land when the lairds began to see more money in sheep than people. I'll bet you most of them ended up here because they couldn't stand being pushed around. Highlanders, lowlanders, Irishmen, Catholics, Protestants, Loyalist, all kinds. ...Only one thing they all had. They will not take a pushing 'round. Not for ever. They'll stand most anything from land and sea. That's all right. Nobody else is telling them..."

"What they did, getting out, was pull off a kind of rebellion. The only kind they could. Personal independence... For a while it opened out on this Shore... Then steam came, and other things, and it wouldn't work any more. A lot went to the States, and west, and some did all right. Then at last there was nowhere to go but cities. When you go to a city... unless you're good, in a profession or the arts, you put yourself under a boss. You're back where you were a hundred and fifty years ago. The sad thing is, you got there by following the same urge they followed when they rebelled against it..."

"That's why I'm back, if you want to know... What could a man do, that had venture in it, and independence? I look at what I'd got by leaving. Running water and central heat and something--of, cultivation... Well, they seemed to me to be cancelled out by the pulling and hauling, the pressure to say 'yes' when you wanted to say 'No'... There was venture in coming back..."<sup>5</sup>

In these lines, the dominant but endangered ideology of the rural subsistence and small-commodity producer becomes quite evident.

The sense of "venture" is developed especially well in chapter twenty of the novel. Grant Marshall is clearing land, for his future home, with the assistance of young Joe McKee. Grant admires Joe because he "had a mind full of schemes for making money..."(161). Joe's dreams, however, weren't merely wishful thinking; "Grant saw...that Joe's schemes were practical(161).

Joe's plans were compounded of small certainties and the eternal gambles of wind, weather, markets, the run of fish... the chances that added up to life on the Channel Shore. (162)

Grant realizes that his "own life, too, was a blend now of certainties and gambles. In years past it had been all certainty. Almost all"(162). Rejecting Uncle James' desire for certainty, Grant saw that "now the moorings were cast off":

He was afloat on the same sea as Joe. Joe and all the rest of them. It seemed to him now that this was what he must have been looking forward to, this tingling sense of the life half plan and half chance, in the days when he had traced his dream of the future here ... But--he had been dreaming in terms of certainty or something close to it. He had not seen the contradiction. (162)

Joe reinforces Grant's own plans for selling pulpwood (162).

Joe's entrepreneurial restlessness expresses itself in a burst of enthusiasm:

"Look, Grant; why don't you go after the trustees to let you cut the wood for the school-house? And next year... Instead've foolin' around, why don't you get stumpage on a lot of places? Put in a crew and go after pulpwood big? You could make a go of it..." (162-63)

Joe, however, instead of helping to develop the Shore's economy plans to leave the area as soon as he gets a stake: "That's what I want a stake for. That's all a man can do around here--raise a stake to get somewhere else"(163). Joe and his entrepreneurial imagination, however, leave the Shore.

Throughout The Channel Shore we are confronted with the reality of the region's gradual depopulation. Later in the

novel Grant's foster son, Alan, is reading his school history text:

Though not part of the loyalist movement, the Scottish emigration to Nova Scotia belongs roughly to this period. Economic conditions in the Highlands... (198)

Alan's reading of the text is, however, interrupted by a conversation with Grant about economic development along the Shore. The last sentence read in the history text is picked up again on the following page: "Economic conditions in the Highland's of Scotland were the principal cause. In 1773 the vanguard arrived..." in Nova Scotia. The depopulation of the Highlands resulted from economic underdevelopment. Without economic development the Shore someday would also face out migration.

Farmers and fishers in the Maritimes have frequently experienced economic hardship. We learn in The Channel Shore that

...years ago things changed in this part of the country. We got into hard times. It's like a tide, only it's years between the high and low. The tide went out because the nature of things change... Fish got to be business, and the mack'rel scarce... More money for day labour and less for what you could catch or grow. Cheaper to buy than to make... When a man made wages and spent them there was more to show in the house. Boughten carpets, parlour organs... but after a while there wasn't enough work for wages to go 'round. You can't turn the tide, so people had to find what they wanted... (352-353)

The comparison of the economy with the natural movements of the tide is significant. In The Channel Shore a transforming economy is experienced as both hostile and "natural"--and is intrinsically opposed to the needs of a

humane community. And, Bruce seems to be suggesting that societies are held captive by their economic organization. The gradual emergence of a commodity culture--one based on the production of goods and services for exchange in an impersonal and frequently unpredictable marketplace--reinforces this sense of powerlessness in a changing world. And, ultimately, it comes to undermine Bruce's beloved rural community as well.

This perception of an economy as both autonomous and reified--the inversion of a cultural production to an object of "nature"--establishes the boundaries of Bruce's historical vision. His tidal trope betrays and, to some extent, subverts the deliberate infiltration of history into The Channel Shore. The compelling intrusion of memory and hydra-headed time--the words memory and time occur repeatedly throughout the novel--never diminishes.<sup>6</sup> History, like the all-encompassing and unavoidable movements of the tides, fills every corner of this work. Therein lies its brilliance, but also a significant limitation that weakens this work as a historical novel: we are presented with major economic forces severed from the history of social relations, both along the Shore and the larger world outside.

The critique of wage labour is part of Bruce's dialogue with modernity, and clearly foregrounds a passionate voice of resistance to capitalist modernization. It is in this

context of capitalist expansion and the rapid extension of commodity culture that Bruce strategically situates the quotation from Marx's Capital. However, he presents the budding capitalist, Grant Marshall, in so favourable a light--the entrepreneur whose economic activity may prevent the gradual depopulation of the Shore--that the blunt critique of urban capitalism saved for the last chapter of the novel, is countered by a voice favouring, at least, some rural capitalist development. This dialogue between the opposing voices of development and conservatism appears to be resolved in favour of rural capitalism. But it never becomes an enthusiastic endorsement--far from it. Bruce must have been aware that Stan Currie's critique of urban capitalism would, in the long run, apply equally well to rural capitalism. A sense of despair and ambiguity pervades the closing chapter, and one is left with a sense that something irretrievable has been captured in an anguished act of aesthetic creation.<sup>7</sup> In the closing lines of the novel, the narrator of The Channel Shore, describes Bill Graham's thoughts about the many people who have left the Shore:

Idly he thought of them. Of their minds turning, sometimes, to the Shore in waking dreams. Wondering, perhaps, as he would wonder, how long a time must pass before they saw this land again, and heard its voices.

A long time...

Already it was passing. (398)

Does "it" refer to the passing of time, or the passing of the Shore? Or, perhaps, to both. The ironic tension

between Grant Marshall's voice of development, and Stan Currie's voice of rural conservatism may well have been a deliberate textual construction. It is entirely possible that Bruce was in agreement with the voice of rural conservatism, but thought that the transformation of the countryside was inevitable. Bruce's loss of his childhood home, of a present actuality that could satisfy his desire for historical rootedness, permeates both The Channel Shore and The Township of Time with a tragic sense of transience.

Bill Graham and Stan Currie have the final voices in The Channel Shore, and it is, I think, important to keep in mind that both of these men are alienated from the modern world. It is, I think, significant that both of these men are modern "middle class" professionals who are involved, in their respective ways, with the "commodification of the word." Stan Currie, a professional journalist, wrote newspaper stories read by people along the Shore(217). Bill Graham was in advertising. Stan gave up his life as an urban professional and returned to the land--to farm. Bill Graham had visited the Shore once before 1946--during the summer of 1919 when he was 12. His happy childhood memories and a festering discontent with both his marriage and, indeed, with life in general prompts his return(270-73). Bill's father, Andrew, a Toronto based professor of Mathematics, had never returned to the seductions of the Shore. Bill, Andrew thinks, wants to return to the Shore



because he has an illusion about it. Andrew says:

"It seems odd. An odd thing. But I think I know what takes you back. Some sort of illusion. It might be kinder to memory -" he hesitated and went on: "Suppose the illusion lives. Harder, perhaps, to -" Andrew waved a hand. Bill finished the sentence in his mind: harder, perhaps, if you see a kind of rough well-being, to reconcile yourself to the nagging regret, the ice of surface living. (271)

Bill can only visit the Shore again; he cannot remain. He "would never live on the Channel Shore. But it was home"(396). A home he had only visited twice in his thirty-nine years. No matter how great his discontent with modernity, Bill Graham returns to the urban world of modernity after his therapeutic return to the Shore.

Modernity, however, is encroaching on the Shore. Grant and his wife, Renie, "had begun to think about leisurely things: comfortable furniture, hardwood for the fireplace, china and silver for the table"(280). A few years earlier Grant had been worried because he

supposed there must have been quite a bit of talk about useless gadgets--running water, a furnace, a bathroom. In a region where there was little essential change except birth and death and moving away, perhaps it was odd to contrive something new... (190)

Change, however, involves more than new material possessions. Grant's pulp and paper and related forestry activities will produce changes in his wife's gender role activities.

Although Grant is still working close to home, his major economic activities are not centered around the family farm. However, as Grant becomes more successful as a

businessman his wife Renie becomes more tied to a home which is now separated from the production of most of the family income. To understand Renie's economic position we need to briefly look at her family background. Her father was Bob Fraser who owned a fish company at Princeport. After completing school, Renie decided to go to the Truro Normal school to become a teacher. Fraser's response was "Good God, Renie! If you don't like house-keeping, come into business. But school-teaching"(191)! The only work for women mentioned in the novel aside from house-keeping for one's family, or going away to become a maid, were teaching, dress making, stenography and temporary war time jobs.<sup>8</sup> It is not surprising that Grant can hum in all earnestness "the air of "Sleepy Time Gal":

You'll learn--to cook--and to sew--  
What's more--you'll love it--I know... (221)

Renie's life became concentrated on her home and family: "In her earlier years...teaching school had been a job instead of an incidental filling-out of life..."(196) Renie, the young school-teacher had dreamed

Currie Head. I'll remember Currie Head when I've gone on from here and taken a degree. When I'm Miss Irene Fraser, B.A., principal of the High School at Morgan's Harbour, or the Academy at Copeland... (186)

Now, some years later, Renie

cleared away the dishes quickly and washed and dried them with Margaret's help. Her mind never had to bother much with household tasks. Renie's career, though she had never formed the thoughts in this way, was being a person. House-keeping and teaching school were incidental. Easily accomplished and not

unpleasant, but incidental. (219)

Renie left teaching when her children were young, returned for several years, and then finally quit. Renie describes her general activities:

The ability to enjoy doing nothing, between the activities of the house and the farm, was a quality she had always had. Since she had given up school-teaching there was more time to indulge it. She thought: minutes of rest; they're my vice. Her mind ran idle, thinking of brief restful moments between cooking and gardening, sitting alone or with Janet Currie on Stan's porch... (282)

The reader is left with the impression that Renie's life has become very different from the lives of ordinary farm women in a pre-modern community. Even her friend, Janet Currie is not a typical woman in a farming community--her husband Stan was a former professional journalist--her home also has the latest technological conveniences.

Renie's life, and probably Janet's as well, are not as intimately connected to the family economy as were the lives of less privileged women who were not part of the nucleus of a new middle class which was slowly developing on the Shore.

However, Bruce makes it quite clear that even the lives of pre-modern farm women--who had very little leisure time--were changing. Although Bruce does not, unfortunately, explore this in detail, he provides one interesting example:

Years ago hay-making had been a month-long job at which everybody worked, men and boys with hand-scythes and pitchforks, women with forks shaking out the heavy green swaths, turning the spread hay to the sun, raking--after behind the loaded racks. Now horse-drawn mowing machines and rakers were getting common. A farm could be made in a fortnight or less and it was

becoming unusual to see a woman in the field. (55)

With a combination of technological change and the spreading of wage labour it seems obvious that a re-organization of gender roles would gradually occur. Throughout The Channel Shore Bruce provides numerous examples of the gender division of labour in a pre-modern Maritime community. If Renie's life is an indication of a trend then women will become more and more separated from the economic activities of the husband--a major economic and cultural change for the women of the Shore.

In 1946 Anse Gordon, the community outcast and fourth voice in The Channel Shore, returns. When Anse decides to repair his father's old fishing boat, quite a stir is caused along the Shore. When asked why he was doing it, Anse replies "What for? Oh, fun"(318). Using a boat only for leisure is a new thought along the Shore. Anse's love of leisure, and contempt for the local lifestyle doesn't endear him to the local community. In a sense, Anse becomes a spokesperson for unsatisfied desire and the culture of consumerism. The reader is left wondering, however, how long it will be before such leisurely and, I might add, consumerly activities will be commonplace along the Shore.

The Channel Shore, is, in short, a sophisticated historical account of the undermining of a largely non-capitalist rural community. With masterful historical insight, Bruce provides us with a glimpse of the complex

interplay between the major centres of capitalist development and regions on the periphery. That influence is not only economic, but has profound social and cultural consequences.

Anti-modernist sentiments run the gamut of Bruce's poetry and fiction, but they certainly are not peculiar to him alone. The extension of the capitalist marketplace throughout large parts of the Western world in the nineteenth century was responsible for much cultural and psychological dis-ease, including a malaise of memory, a sense of a radical discontinuity with the past. This is not the place to examine anti-modernist thought (something that would include criticism, and even outright rejection of a capitalist modernity) motivated by a conservative rather than a radical response to a broadly based transformation in the pre-modern mode of living in all its diverse manifestations. It should be noted, though, that anti-modernist attitudes are peppered throughout Maritime literature.<sup>9</sup> Writers such as Charles G.D. Roberts, Bliss Carmen, Andrew Macphail, Thomas Raddall, Ernest Buckler, Hugh MacLennan, Alistair Macleod, and David Adams Richards have all offered us critical assessments of modernity.

In this pantheon of regional antimodernism, Bruce stands out for the fundamental reason that he was a literary realist,<sup>10</sup> and unlike so many critics of modernity, rejected any radical discontinuity between past and present:

"yesterday, today, and tomorrow are part of a continuing whole"(243). In this, he was not, of course, minimizing the significance of change in the Western world or, indeed, in the Maritimes. Rather, he was trying to see past historical change as a key for understanding our present.

For Bruce, fiction and poetry seemed to be "resources of hope," vehicles for remembering--a prelude to critical musings--that enabled him to mobilize memory to resolve, on an imaginative level, conflicts and frustrations that seemed impossible of resolution outside the bounds of aesthetic imagination.<sup>11</sup> The transformation of his childhood home, together with his long-term absence from the Maritimes, made him eternally homesick for a way of life which had disappeared. Although Bruce had been a successful journalist and administrator for Canadian Press in Toronto, he thought of his work as part of a rat-race.<sup>12</sup> Because of its almost ruthless inaccessibility, time past becomes, particularly during periods of intense change, a preoccupation of time present. Such phrases in The Channel Shore as "the eternal present," "the timeless land of memory," "the stairs of time," "the precarious present," "time in precarious balance," "the lengthening run of time," and "time had levelled up the years," suggest that Bruce was fascinated and, indeed, preoccupied with a deeply rooted sense of historical transience and estrangement. Alan, searching the past in a loft above Richard McKee's work shed

grasps this sense of "permanent" transience:

His hands roved and probed as his eyes explored the chest. A jumble of worn objects, unrelated to each other, but all linked with some aspect of life on the Channel Shore. Linked, most of them, with ways of doing things that had changed and faded and been replaced by tools and methods of the present. He fingered again the brass-studded palm, and for a brief moment had a curious vision, a sense of knowing the past, when wind in the tanned sails of two-masters had been the Shore's transport, when the road was a track and buggies few and gasoline unheard of. He felt a little sad, not at any sense of old things lost and gone, but at the realization that the present things, the tools they now worked with, the lumber truck, the saw-mill they didn't yet possess, would some time go the way of these mouldy tags of living stowed in the workshop loft. But there was revelation in the feeling, and this submerged the brief sadness. When present things were gone, new ones would take their place. For the first time, he was conscious of glimpsing yesterday, today and tomorrow as part of a continuing whole. It put things in balance, and in a kind of abstract way was comforting when you thought of it. (243)

Such sentiments, common in his poetry are particularly poignant in his long poem The Flowing Summer.<sup>13</sup> In a paean to nostalgia we are told that in Toronto "The task of living was a chase that left/No time for living"(2). The poem's city-harnessed spokesman for time lost, goes on to say:

"The thing I'd like myself... to pack a bag  
And beat it to the River, and work and sleep  
By dark and daylight, and forget the clock;  
Talk to the Woman again, and listen again  
To the old man salting down tomorrow's fish  
Before they're caught: and tell the blasted shop  
I've left Toronto and I'm coming back  
Just when I damn well want to..." (3)

However, Bruce's childhood home, Port Shoreham, became more than a nostalgic reverie for him. Close readings of both The Channel Shore and The Township of Time leave me

with the distinct impression that he used his remembrance of rural community with their strong kinship ties as a stabilizing influence and ideal in the urban world of routine, alienation and class-division. The kinship of blood relations is down-played throughout The Channel Shore, in favour of "new" and broader kinships:

There was now a kind of kinship for all others isolated in their aloneness, stricken by circumstances, caught without an answer to the riddle of living. A new sense of the future, of being one among many who must move and change with time.<sup>14</sup>

It can be argued that Bruce's understanding of this new type of kinship corresponded to the emergence of a new set of economic arrangements both on the Shore and in Canada as a whole. This new pattern of kinship also expresses his need for the emergence of a new type of community. Later, in an unpublished essay, he wrote:

...the poet's business is with insights flashed from his own experience. Insights that may... begin to weave a frail web of human kinship. Is it not where kinship has failed, or never been, that all hostilities come to monstrous flower? Torture, murder, rape, war, and all the malice and indifference and indignity with which mankind corrupts itself?<sup>15</sup>

With all its differences and conflict, the Shore itself could be seen as a miniature nation. Alan Marshall reflecting on Stan Currie's understanding of the Shore ponders Stan's claim "that along the Shore you found all the differences that make up nationality... The Channel Shore-- a little nation"(290-91). However, the vision of nation presented here is one rooted largely in cultural and



individual differences. The new community growing up on the Shore, however, seems to have been a microcosm of Canada in another sense: capitalist social relations were transforming the more transparent community of the past into the opacity of the class-divided world of industrial capitalism.

Bruce's reduction of the complexities and contradictions of the opaque capitalist world to kinship issues, even with his broader conception of kinship, mutes his criticism of capitalist modernity. It is here, I think, that Bruce fails to transcend his nostalgia for time past. Bruce worked for Canadian Press, a major corporate agency and one directly involved in the production of capitalist ideology and the commodification of the word.<sup>16</sup> Such an acquired class position might have exerted "domesticating" pressures on his criticism. Perhaps the defused critique of wage labour in the closing pages of The Channel Shore, combined with his desire for a new kinship of hope, was as far as he could go in his overt discontent with capitalist modernity. It is important, however, to remember that only two voices, Andrew Graham--a minor character who is given only a few lines in the novel--and Anse Gordon can be interpreted as spokespeople for modernity. Neither character can function as role models in Bruce's fictional world.

Beginning in the late twenties, Bruce lived in large urban areas: Halifax, Toronto, New York, and wartime London. He spent his time in urban centres divided by class tension,

poverty, greed, violence and crime. Opaque cities, hubs for leashing and hobbling the victims of the "chase that left/No time for living," in which the individual could easily become isolated and anonymous were perceived to be the very antithesis of the face-to-face transparent rural community: rural areas such as the Channel Shore

gave to the cities bordered with woods and grass  
A few homesick men, walking an alien Street;  
A few women, remembering misty stars  
And the long grumbling sigh of the bay at  
night.<sup>17</sup>

One character in The Channel Shore emphasizes that in "Halifax you could be alone with...aloneness"(287). It's not surprising that Bruce experienced such profound homesickness. Yet, the significance of his criticism is missed if we see his rejection of cities as being independent of their economic organization, based as they were on wage labour. Grant Marshall, reflecting on the values of his closest relatives emphasizes: "But--working for others; it wasn't necessary, except in the ordinary way of exchanging help... Self-sufficient"(133).

Both The Channel Shore and The Township of Time paint a picture of a community that once had little need for capital in transition to one where the large capitalist marketplace is becoming a dominating part of day-to-day life. This is a theme that is continued in the writing of Ernest Buckler.

**Chapter Three**  
**Ernest Buckler and the**  
**Agony of Modernity**

Nova Scotia is no Shangri-La.

Ernest Buckler  
Nova Scotia: Window on the Sea

Ernest Buckler was, as were MacLennan and Bruce, preoccupied with the rift in time that modernity and its marketplace have created. Buckler's aesthetic re-creation of the past was in a fundamental way concerned with the transformation of rural life in the Maritimes. The penetration of the marketplace into the countryside meant that rural Nova Scotia could no longer be truly rural, but there seemed little hope that rural areas would gain any of the advantages of contemporary urban life. Hence modernity for Buckler was a problem of enormous historical importance, and the present was as much his concern as the past. Buckler's three major works--The Mountain and the Valley (1952), The Cruellest Month (1963), and Ox Bells and Fireflies (1968)--are situated in a dialogue between past and present. We are once again confronted with a conflict between two distinct patterns of culture and modes of production. At the very heart of this economic and cultural revolution is the commodity, and the expanding capitalist

marketplace which was responsible for their rapidly intensifying circulation throughout the Maritimes. Buckler remained steadfastly devoted to the pre-modern countryside. He was, however, painfully aware of the devastating incursions of the commodity in its diverse manifestations: the putting of price tags on so much of our "reality," the reduction of so many human relationships to market transactions, and the intensification of this whole process of commodification by the culture of tourism. Buckler approaches the problem of rural transformation by examining its effects on small, largely non-capitalist communities. This perceived crisis of community which MacLennan alleviates through nationalism, and Bruce by extending the parameters of kinship, is experienced by Buckler as incapable of resolution.

Sometimes the major character in a novel may, in the words of Frederic Jameson, act "as the vehicle and recording apparatus for a complex new and as yet unnamed feeling about things..."<sup>1</sup> David Canaan, the pivotal personality in The Mountain and the Valley is such an individual. David is an odd figure in Buckler's fictional community of Entremont. He becomes the stereotype of the artist as outsider: intelligent, introverted, and, profoundly different. Yet, the world of rural Entremont so captures his devotion and aesthetic imagination that he chooses to remain there and make it the centre of his future novels. His precocious

intellect, however, alienates him from the down-to-earth values of the barely literate farming families who have lived in the community for many generations.

David's family name, Canaan, provides the reader with a passport to Entremont. Canaan, the Promised Land of the Hebrews, was a land of fertility and promise. David's Entremont, however, is no paradise; indeed, it is a world undergoing profound and often disturbing transformation. Buckler's Annapolis Valley had begun the transition to modernity in the nineteenth century.<sup>2</sup> This modernization process gained momentum in the years following the First World War. Buckler's three major works, including his less well known Nova Scotia: Window on the Sea,<sup>3</sup> foreground the transformation of the countryside by the gradual infiltration of an urban based industrial capitalism. Throughout his frequently nostalgic attempts to re-create the past in words, Buckler's aesthetic critique of urban/industrial capitalism with its gospel of the commodity finds expression in the lives of fictive Nova Scotians.

Describing land surrounding David's family farm, the narrator of The Mountain and the Valley describes how the area had been transformed when "a big American company had bought these farms solely for their timber. The company had no interest in the houses or the fields. The people had moved to town"(253).<sup>4</sup> Canaan, the Promised Land, was losing its Eden-like qualities, as land became another

commodity for sale in an impersonal market economy.

Capitalism was on the march in Buckler's Entremont. Joseph, David's father, worked occasionally for wages--the selling of labour power being the fundamental commodity in the capitalist marketplace--to supplement the meagre income from the farm. But, unlike so many of the local farm families, they "didn't sell off the land to make ends meet, as some did"(125). Still, an increasing amount of cash was needed to operate a small farm in Entremont--a rural island being rapidly bridged by Buckler's dreaded world of the commodity:

When Joseph came home from the drive there were ten-dollar bills amongst the one's--but those all went for the country rates, the tote-load of flour and feed, things like that. There was often two hundred dollars upstairs ...but that was 'cattle money.' It might be borrowed from but must be repaid, against the time when Joseph bought another pair. (125)

But independence from the marketplace, and the commodities of urban/industrial capitalism, was increasingly difficult to maintain. Most of their purchases--a "set of portieres for Martha. A shotgun for Chris. A book for David. The silk dress for Anna"(125)--believe any semblance of an independent rural life.

Buckler bemoans this new world, one which has lost touch with a supposed history:

neighbours had changed, as the village had changed. The road was paved now. There were cars and radios. A bus line passed the door. There was a railway line along the river. With this grafting from the outside world, the place itself seemed older; as the old who are not remembered are old. (229)

The innocence of a pre-modern youth has been irrevocably lost. It is not only these obvious manifestations of change, however, that Buckler dislikes; he sees a much more profound change in the people of the Valley. He characterizes this change in a way very much like Raymond Williams describes changing social relations in English novels: as transparent and opaque. For Buckler, "the people had lost their wholeness, the valid stamp of the indigenous." No longer an independent and resourceful rural folk, they now bore the expressions of a commodified world made for them:

Their clothes were so accentuate a copy of the clothes outside they proclaimed themselves as copy, except to the wearers. In their speech (freckled with current phrases of jocularity copied from the radio), and finally in themselves, they became dilute. They were not transmuted from the imperfect thing into the real, but veined with the shaly [sic] amalgam of replica.<sup>5</sup>  
(229)

Buckler's critique of modernity with its cult of the commodity is given considerably more prominence in his memoir, Ox Bells and Fireflies.<sup>6</sup> Scattered references to cities--the outstanding symbol of modernity for Buckler--occur throughout this beautifully lyrical collection of memories. Chapter Five, "Chords and Acres," contains Buckler's most sustained non-fictional critique and rejection of the modern commodified world. It is writing such as this that prompted Buckler's long-time friend and literary admirer, Claude Bissell, to remark that it was "as if Buckler were trying to erect Nova Scotia into a barrier

against the modern world he increasingly hated..."<sup>7</sup> His cities are occupied by masses of isolated individuals. Buckler perceives each person as an isolated "island." However, in the fictional community of Norstead--the Entremont of Ox Bells and Fireflies--"islands" are a more positive metaphor. The communal Kinship of this rural world is referred to as "the greenest island of all," and there are other "island[s] of fraternity." However, there "is another kind of island that waits for most people." But for the most part, Buckler uses the island as a metaphor for isolation. The vision of Buckler's urban residents is reified--people "moving no less blindly than things." With a rather dream-like (perhaps we should say nightmare) quality, Buckler sees the isolated islands of city dwellers as the centres of some sort of cosmic disenchantment. An urban alchemy transformed the world and changed it to lifeless stone (stonestruck). A lifeless human vision is cut off from any meaningful contact with either other people, or the cosmos as a whole. There is no experience of kinship with the natural world--"There is no brother look in any of it toward your chill at its strangeness." In cities we find only "the flat dead light of drilling is-ness..." In cities people are not only denied kinship with nature and other people, they have also lost any inward experience of kinship with themselves: "You look inside yourself and you see no brother besiding self there either. Only the chalk-



face of dismay..."(83). In cities "Silence tortures. It is the loudness of yourself alone"(84).

Buckler carries this prolonged and despairing preoccupation with modernity even further when he compares the effigies (manikins) in store windows, and the tide of people flowing through the street. Not only the effigies in store windows, but the people in the streets belong to a rapidly commodifying world. Finding an apparent refuge in the city, these seekers after modernity become, according to Buckler, dehumanized. And Buckler makes it obvious that this dehumanization--this despairing alienation--springs from the social, economic and cultural organization of the modern city. This is the city of commodities, and the centre for their dispersal to his rural havens. Buckler's imagined origin for commodities is the city of capitalist development.

The "effigies" in the shop displays smile their wax smiles ceaselessly against plate glass"(85). In the following sentence, Buckler apparently continues his description of the effigies: "Each face has its window to itself walled up, each with the small world behind it running like clockwork wound up and forgotten"(85). However, with the following sentence, "They jostle each other....," we promptly realize that this forgotten deistic world is not the window display surrounding the effigies, but the everyday world of people in city streets. Buckler

made a rapid transition from the effigies to urban street life. This, I think, was a deliberately constructed effort to disorient the reader. The men and women in the streets are, indeed, effigies of "real" people--unlike the people of Norstead. The people, perhaps we should say actors, in the street scene--rather like the non-thinking effigies in the window scene--are then described as "Headless subjects and predicates..."(85). These human subjects and predicates have lost control of their fate. Modernity has become their cage. The transformation of urban crowds into effigies--one could say puppets--is reinforced when Buckler describes the commodification of faces: "There are fashions in city faces." And he goes on to say that "Each face looks as if it had been bought off the racks in a shop that stocked only the prevalent masks"(87). Faces that were the current fashion in the commodified milieux of the city. In Norstead

Eyes drove no bargain with themselves or with the eyes of anyone else. When you walked down the road and talked to each other you made each other solid as places. (87)

Self-identity in Norstead was "solid"; the self was never "bargained" in the daily life of Buckler's rural community. A marketplace for interpersonal relations had not emerged in Norstead. But neither has the economic marketplace which dominates Buckler's cage-like cities.

Perhaps the most surreal, and certainly the most disturbing line in Buckler's description of a commodified urban reality, combines a sense of the religious with neon

glare--another form of "soulless light"--that is reflected from the various and disquietingly transient surfaces that dominate Buckler's spiritually arid urban wasteland. Raymond Williams' urban "opacity"--the difficulty of penetrating below the surface of urban "reality"--seems particularly applicable to Buckler's understanding of urban life where the "uncreated breaks from its grave at the core of objects and glitteringly prevails..."(85). This rather striking line may be emphasizing that behind all "reality," even the "reality" of urban-produced commodities, there is a natural uncreated essence which is found at the core (the grave) of all things. However, in a metaphysically blighted--how can there be a metaphysics with the primacy of the surface?--city, even this remnant of nature manifests itself and "glitteringly prevails." Nature takes on the corrupted facade of modernity. So says Buckler.

But in "The Chords and Acres" section of Ox Bells and Fireflies we also learn that "You burn with homesickness, the only flame that smokes its chimney white." "In Norstead," Buckler consolingly tells us, "it was not like that"(85). The first half of "The Chords and Acres" section focuses on the distance between the mode of living in Norstead, and the daily routine of the market organized cities of modernity. With the devotion of a Sir Andrew Macphail, Buckler romanticizes his rural childhood.<sup>8</sup> Music becomes a major trope in this sentimentalization of our

rural past. We learn that

Even the old were not shunted aside. The sound of their lives had been so long a keynote in the family chord that it never ceased to resound.<sup>9</sup>

We are also told that "Your dialogues with the field chimed below the surface of your mind like the tune of health."<sup>10</sup>

Music in the city, however, merely foregrounds the dissonance of modernity:

Music tortures. It holds out to you the leap beyond yourself to where it promises to fuse all things, but lands you there to find nothing but its orchestration of your singleness. (84)

Even music--an aesthetic creation--cannot ease the sense of isolation--the loss of community with its network of kinship--in a blighted urban landscape. Music in a commodified urban world of transient fashion brings only an experience of "singleness."

Buckler's critique and ultimate rejection of modernity with its culture of the commodity is an interpretive option that has been largely forgotten in Maritime literary studies.<sup>11</sup> His affirmation of a "common sense" standing outside the world of the commodity and his passionate advocacy of a rural economy with only limited connections to an impersonal marketplace is easily dismissed in a world that is far too quickly becoming a global shopping centre. Buckler's rural frolics, pie sales, local bartering and voluntary offering of labour--without the class relations engendered by the capitalist labour process--linger on in our nostalgic fantasies about a simpler and more "natural"

past.<sup>12</sup> (And if our class position permits, we can purchase in the tourist marketplace<sup>13</sup>, commodified images of a largely fictionalized rural past).

The Cruellest Month, unlike The Mountain and the Valley and Ox Bells and Fireflies, introduces a countryside that has been "modernized." This novel can be read, in part, as a sustained and sceptical gaze at modernity, and at the culture of tourism generated by a "modernism of underdevelopment."<sup>14</sup> Buckler does not explore the complex reasons for the emergence of a distinctive Maritime modernity. But the narrator of The Mountain and the Valley suggests that people in rural areas were becoming increasingly involved with urban produced commodities--a habit that could not be sustained by most farming families. In Ox Bells and Fireflies, Buckler emphasizes that rural communities close to large towns and cities were the first rural regions to experience the transformation to modernity. Indeed, all of chapter nineteen--"Like Spaces, Other Cases"--is devoted to a rural community, Claymore, whose inhabitants have taken on the emotional, intellectual, and "spiritual" characteristics of Buckler's urban population.

The Cruellest Month has--like The Mountain and the Valley and Ox Bells and Fireflies--the Annapolis Valley for its primary setting. Unlike the other two books, however, we have significant excursions to the world of urban modernity. Buckler's preoccupation with time past and time

present continues in The Cruellest Month, though now the rural/urban dichotomy is less conspicuous than it was in The Mountain and the Valley and Ox Bells and Fireflies. The social, economic and cultural organization of cities was steadily penetrating further into the countryside. The traditional non-capitalist culture is being replaced by a new cultural dominant associated with the emergent capitalist marketplace.

Describing how Paul Creed, the major character in The Cruellest Month, came in possession of a farm which he turned into a tourist inn, the narrator informs us that

A farmer Mansfield had owned it then. The Brewster Lumber Mills had made a clean sweep buying up the other farms along the road, but he'd held out for a stiffer price. Then the company had gone bankrupt.<sup>15</sup>

The farm Paul bought turned out to be "the last house on the road. The lumber company had promptly demolished the other farms as fire hazards"(11).

Buckler produces throughout the novel an atmosphere of economic underdevelopment, and, although, Buckler would never agree, tourism for an increasing number of people becomes an economy of necessity. Indeed, given the emphasis on tourism, and the images of a rural but modernized countryside, he is confronting us with a portrait of a region which has lost the sense of community at the core of both The Mountain and the Valley and Ox Bells and Fireflies. However, this loss of community was not accompanied by industrial development. Instead, Buckler brings in focus

what Ian McKay has referred to as a "culture of consolation"--although such a tourist oriented culture would not, needless-to-say, have provided consolation for Buckler's staunch antimodernism.<sup>16</sup>

We are left with the distinct impression, after reading The Cruellest Month, that countless people from outside the Maritimes see us as a haven for tourists, sports fishermen and hunters. A number of times in the novel, the rural Maritimes are desired for their potential therapeutic value. We learn that Sheila Giorno--another of the main characters and a thoroughly modern woman--is hoping to take her husband for a vacation:

And all at once she had this rash and fierce wish that she could take him off some place where nothing or no one could ever close in on him again. Some island. Some simple, innocent spot. Just the two of them. Some wide, free, country place. Like Nova Scotia...  
(52)

Nova Scotia is a Shangri-Lai

Morse Halliday continues this apology for the therapeutic value of rural (pre-modern) life:

You drive from Yarmouth to Granfort through disembodied villages, with the man walking from the porch to the well looking like a man in a primitive painting walking from the porch to the well. I've never seen a place quite like Granfort. It washes you clean of whatever your chronic mood. This is the very soil where settlers from the Old World first set foot on the New. You really feel it. An ancient rampart mounds graveyard-green from the horseshoe harbour. Shell-coloured buildings pocketed in the living green above it still catch the light from another time. You look out over this historical water, eternally cryptic with the sheen of the sun, to the narrow gap where it joins the sea and you know exactly how it felt to stand there and watch for a friendly or an enemy sail.<sup>17</sup>

Clearly Nova Scotia is perceived as a therapeutic haven, a primitive "Graceland"--a place to regain the necessary psychological equilibrium that will permit re-entry to a harsh competitive urban world.

It is important, I think, to stress conversely Bruce Mansfield's ridiculing commentary on tourist culture. He is one of the two main characters in the novel who came from the Annapolis Valley. His parents had previously owned the farm prior to its conversion to an inn. When Sheila informed Bruce that they were late arriving at the inn because "they lost time behind a parade of some kind," he responds with disgust:

They were crowning a fool Mayflower Queen. The Mayflower's our provincial emblem. And the funny thing is that, as a crowd, nobody could see the least thing foolish about it. It's like I say. In groups, we're a mess. But take any one of that group by himself and he'd be all for having a Pied Piper lead the whole fool procession right down to the wharf and into the river.  
(98)

It was probably an advertisement for this Mayflower Festival--obviously playing on the all too familiar Apple Blossom Festival--that brought Paul Creed to Granfort: he tells us that "One day I happened to see this picture of Granfort in a government travel folder"(11). Commenting on tourists now, rather than tourism, Bruce Mansfield continues his critical thrust:

It's those cameras, of course. You carry them around like an extra sense. We have them, too, but we don't use them to glain everything we point them at, the way you do. You know the picture. The convertible hardtop specimen pulls up alongside the old turnip farmer and



gives him the old teeth and tells him to hold it... hold it, Pop... till he gets him in the range-finder. It'd really do my heart good just once to see the old farmer slap his manure-spreader into high gear and let this baby have the whole contents right smack in the sun glasses. (99)<sup>18</sup>

Sheila responds by suggesting that Bruce was afraid that she "was going to barge right in and photograph your insides?" Bruce angrily retorts: "We don't like strangers barging around sight-seeing inside us." It seems evident that there is in The Cruellest Month an anti-tourism message. This, I think, is part of the antimodernist thrust central to Buckler's vision of the good life. And, tied to this, is the anti-therapeutic position that emerges from Buckler's critique of tourism.<sup>19</sup>

The antimodernist position developed in The Cruellest Month is, however, extended well beyond a critique of tourism. Bruce Mansfield, a spokesman for some aspects of Buckler's philosophy, reminisces about a vanished Golden Age:

'Right here. Working with my hands. I'm right back where I started from. Where I belong.' In the last few days he had really come home. He had breathed again, as if he were standing in a breeze of it, the spirit of how it used to be here. When no one was more important than anyone else. No one gaining height by standing on someone else's face. When one man's trouble was everyone's, like the weather. (135)

Bruce's critique of a class based society has both antimodernist and progressive implications. Claude Bissell's fascinating study of Buckler provides interesting insights into his intellectual formation.<sup>20</sup> In 1930

Buckler completed the requirements for an M.A. in philosophy at the University of Toronto. Buckler, at this time, translates his mature antimodernist concern for a "classless" society of small producers into a desire for a socialist transformation of existing social arrangements.<sup>21</sup> In an unpublished essay, "Greek and Christian Views of the State," written during his M.A. year, Buckler writes:

If Christianity may be said to have an economic policy explicit or implicit it might be socialism. The Christian problem regarding riches disappears. The difficulty is not that man is "rich" but that man is "richer than." There is no objection to the goods of the world if they are shared. There is plenty for all and instead of man being rich, in socialism all will be equally poor and the needle's eye will have stretched and the camel shrunk so that a passage is possible. Socialism may seem contrary to the apparent extreme individualism of Christianity but the kingdom of God on earth is really what Kant calls a Kingdom of ends wherein the highest individuality is reconciled with social interdependence and where service is more or less perfect freedom.<sup>22</sup>

Bissell unfortunately doesn't pursue this line of thought.<sup>23</sup> Bruce Mansfield's nostalgia for a simpler egalitarian past suggests that Buckler may not entirely have lost sight of his earlier socialist vision. There is, however, an element of a therapeutic modernity in Bruce's romanticized memory of the past. The therapeutic function of the cult of tourism infiltrates Bruce's classless rural haven. The lifestyle of rural small producers becomes a form of psychological therapy for the "stressed out" victim of modernity.

The narrator examines Bruce's thoughts in some detail:

All work but this left its own particular tarnish on your hands. This was the only place you could come back to with whatever little you had left and be able to feel sound and whole again, with no questions asked. It put no poultices on you, but you didn't fester. And while you worked you could lay down your wounds, like your lunch pail, somewhere in the shade beside you and the ground sat by them and took care of them. You must still pick them up again when the work was done; but you found them clean, not clogged with dust and grime. It was the only place where exhaustion made you feel cleaner at night, not dirtier. Because you'd been putting your muscles to the use they were meant for. No other workers felt tired that same clean way. (135-36)

These lines could quite easily have been said by Stan Currie or Bill Graham in The Channel Shore. Buckler lived in Toronto from 1929-1936. After completing his M.A. in philosophy, he worked from 1930-36 for Manufacturer's Life-- which he referred to as "Manufacturer's Life penitentiary"-- as an actuary.<sup>24</sup> In 1936, Buckler returned home to West Dalhousie in the Annapolis Valley. He apparently suffered a "breakdown in his health."<sup>25</sup> He combined farming with writing for the rest of his life. Buckler's return to the "valley" was a form of therapy similar to Bruce Mansfield's therapeutic consciousness. This is even more interesting when we know that Bruce Mansfield, before he returned as a casual labourer at Endlaw, had been training as a doctor in Halifax. At the end of the novel Mansfield, after receiving the therapy of Endlaw, discovers that he is "whole" enough to return to the city. Unlike Buckler's permanent return to the Valley (except for a few short trips away to publicize his writing) Mansfield channels his antimodern sentiments

into a form of therapy, a brief respite from the rigours of a Halifax medical school--akin to the therapy provided by the culture of tourism.<sup>26</sup> The narrator, continuing the exploration of Mansfield's mind, informs us that:

This was the only work that made you feel you were plugged into life's main artery. That you were not just one of those... air plants... with no roots in any basic soil. You collaborated with the sun and the rain. Growing the stuff for your own tissues, chopping your own heat. You felt like a tree... (136)

These lines are strikingly similar to a quotation from Marx--"all that is solid melts into air"--that has been so successfully appropriated by Marshall Berman.<sup>27</sup> Berman writes: "To be modern is to be part of a universe in which, as Marx said, "all that is solid melts into air."<sup>28</sup> Modernity produced people who were "just one of those...air plants... with no roots..." This feeling of weightlessness and rootlessness emphasized by Buckler, as well as Marx and Berman, is further developed in Buckler's preoccupation with the fragmented self.

In Buckler's conception of the pre-modern and transparent rural community "you can see both yourself defined for everyone and your self reflected out into all things."<sup>29</sup> He then emphasizes the lack of cultural diversity in pre-modern communities--not the cultural pluralism of modernist cities. We learn in Ox Bells and Fireflies that "Each face was written and readable in the same language as its neighbours'"(84). The apparent cultural unity of Buckler's rural, small and face-to-face

community finds a parallel in the unity of the psyche, a wholeness of self fundamentally different than the fragmented self of urban modernity.<sup>30</sup> Kate Fennison, an "unfulfilled" forty year old intellectual--one of Buckler's most modern women--from Halifax, provides one of The Cruellest Month's numerous allusions to the fragmented self:

"my self's not continuous, like yours. You've never been alone enough to understand that. How, the minute you are alone this door inside you opens and you see your self standing there, waiting. That's the only self I ever see. The minute there's the hum of being with someone else it vanishes. That's the only self I can talk about: to myself, alone." (154-155)

Kate's understanding of her "self" foregrounds its incapacity to remain present; it lacks solidity. It is a self that seems "unreal" when contrasted with the integrated and wholly present women of Norstead or Entremont. The narrator describes Rex Giorno's (Sheila's husband) sense of self:

And one self to which the other's likewise assign a buttressing compactness has nothing of the kind. One is only aware of it as a kind of filament, a "field," stretched out over the contours of whatever one's eyes look at and vulnerable at every point. (82)

Again we have this sense of airiness and unreality. This lack of solidity and wholeness of self is according to Paul Creed--the very personification of isolation--quite inevitable. The narrator describes Paul's views:

Each person is a twosome. Himself and the overriding concern with which he's in such constant dialogue that it becomes personified inside him. (110)

Paul Creed is, of course, merely offering an ideology of

psychological fragmentation and individual isolation. This becomes a justification for his life of "freedom"--a life severed from a commitment outside of himself. Paul's life has avoided any sense of common purpose with either a community or even another individual. He becomes almost the stereotype of an extreme existentialist. Paul's philosophy of isolation is emphasized throughout the novel.<sup>31</sup> The Cruellest Month, however, can be read as a dialogue between the "forces" of modernity thrusting people into apparent isolation, and the integrating communal ethos of the pre-modern community. Paul Creed in the latter part of the novel, however, becomes increasingly preoccupied with escaping his separateness. We are told by the narrator that Paul had always accepted this philosophy of insulation:

To be by himself had always given him an insulation impenetrable. Now, for the first time in his life, he knew the unspeakable nakedness of having the stillness at the heart of all things stare at the stillness inside him right through the wall of being alone. (197)

In both Norstead and Entremont "the stillness at the heart of all things" is absent. The sense of community, and the simple Christian religious beliefs of the people, form a nexus of meaning.

This foundation of meaning is, for Buckler, absent in the world's various centers of modernity. Paul, for instance, sends everyone away from the Inn to avoid the possibility that they might discover his incurable heart disorder. We learn that Paul became obsessed "that no one

must discover what his final secret was, invade his wholeness with the look they gave the doomed"(199). Paul not only confuses his fragmented psyche for "wholeness," but unknowingly rekindles his quest for isolation. His new need for belonging is deflected from "community" to "home":

An then, once more, he summoned up the thoughts of home--the one image which never failed to start the nuts that were seized on their bolts in his imagination. Home, the one blessed wall this staring could not penetrate. The one blessed spot where all the hushes of absolute familiarity would blot this stillness out completely... (197)

The narrator of The Cruellest Month is obviously describing the "home" as a site for therapy. Borrowing Christopher Lasch's apt phrase, Buckler seems to be suggesting here that Paul is opting for a "haven in a heartless world."<sup>32</sup> We might even suggest that Paul's "heart trouble" is rooted in the psyche, and not merely the body. Buckler, I think, is making it quite clear that the search for a replacement for isolation has been short circuited by a consciousness that is so thoroughly modernized that real alternatives to isolation are impossible to find. By the end of the novel, it is evident that spiritual rebirth has not been found by Paul or, indeed, any of the characters in the novel. The potential for April as "the cruellest month" has not been realized.<sup>33</sup>

The isolation of the individual and the experience of psychic fragmentation is revealed in a particularly interesting manner in the erotic relationship between Bruce

and Sheila. After "making love" to Sheila, the narrator describes Bruce's "mystical" and apparently "redemptive" experience:

He gripped her tight and gave her one great fixed staring kiss. For a moment each somehow became the other, in what's the one supreme holiday from self. (194)

The "supreme holiday from self" surely must recall to mind the therapeutic function of tourism in The Cruellest Month. The redemptive power of community and church in Buckler's rural Eden is replaced by an act of sublimation--the union with the communal and universal Other is sublimated to a sexual union that encompasses only two isolated individuals who will, after the brief respite of sexual engagement, re-experience their separateness. The novel's narrator stresses the temporary nature of this momentary sense of relief from a fragmented self:

They were on the brink of that one redeeming moment in man's life: when, just for that one moment, and by just a gift of his nature in no way subject to luck or skill or fortune, he can be as great as anyone or anything. The pulses of love and sense become identical and spilled out that content which is of all things the least to be configured while the catch stays unsprung... They could suffer no wait, to bare themselves, except where these pulses clamoured. (209)

Buckler's understanding of modernity, however, is not grounded in either the home as a "haven in a heartless world," or in sexual experience as psychic therapy. Nor does this sense of estrangement find its roots in the fragmented psyche. Community breakdown and the resulting "confusion" in language forms the foundation of Buckler's



dilemma.<sup>34</sup> When Sheila, in The Cruellest Month uses her urban consciousness to convince Bruce to give up longing for his rural roots, the narrator tells us that Bruce "had never seen a face so multilingual in every feature"(212). This line forms a beautiful contrast with a similar reference in Ox Bells and Fireflies: describing the faces of the inhabitants of Norstead, Buckler emphasizes that "Each face was written and readable in the same language as its neighbours."<sup>35</sup> Sheila's urban sophistication creates a radical separation between her and Buckler's pre-modern rural women. Sheila's metaphorical multilingualism is a part of the fragmentation that is, for Buckler, the inevitable result of the breakdown of pre-modern communities. However, it also contributes to the further fragmentation of the communities in which it has developed.

In The Mountain and the Valley, David Canaan's preoccupation with language is connected to his extreme self-consciousness, and with his isolation from the community in which he has lived all his life. We find out that David "inside was nothing but one great white naked eye of self-consciousness, with only its own looking to look at"(281). When David is walking up the mountain road, we find out that "It's perfect here"(286). Why? Because "Now he was absolutely alone"(286). David's feeling of isolation, of an intense separateness from Norstead, is present throughout the epilogue. Early in the epilogue

David is contrasted with Steve, a local farmer, who is on his way home with a load of wood. Buckler emphasizes that Steve represented "health": "Health was in him like a cadence"(282-85). There was absolutely no self-consciousness present in Steve. We find out that "Steve's half-thoughts made a cadence only slightly louder than the unattended cadence of his flesh"(282). David is, however, not healthy. He has recurring headaches, and serious heart problems. Psychologically David is simply not "together." David's self-consciousness, his alienation from Entremont, which he nourishes, and his ability to misrepresent himself are perceived by Buckler as character flaws: "David's mind deliberately suspended its own nature. It assumed the cast of Steve's"(283). In Ox Bells and Fireflies these personality features are all identified with city people, and not with the residents of Norstead. Buckler does not, as is common with many modernist writers, glorify the outsider. It can, in fact, be argued that David is an example of the fragmented self that is completely alien to Buckler's conception of the ideal personality. David "even in his isolation...was not islanded from the true spirit of the changing times. It was as if a kind of extra sense kept him parallel with it, without dependence upon participation"(229). David's psychological dis-ease and modern sensibility are, in the epilogue to The Mountain and the Valley, related to his language crisis and, indeed, to a

crisis in aesthetic realism.

David, in one way or another, is preoccupied with the inability of language to reliably re-present a complex ("swarming") reality to the mind. How many residents of one of Buckler's rural Promised Lands would raise this question?

And 'hand' is a word, and what is a word?... And 'n' is a letter in a word, shaped exactly that way, and sounded by exactly that movement of the tongue, and in exactly how many other words? (296)

Again David resembles urban intellectuals more than rural farmers. He discovers that "Shape and colour reached out to him like voices"(286-87). He then realizes that there "seemed to be a thread of similarity running through the whole world"(287). However, we become rather confused when David makes the quantum leap to a "shape could be like a sound; a feeling like a shape; a smell like a shadow of a touch"(287). And finally his "sense seemed to run together"(287). What are we to make of this? Objects outside of David's consciousness project voices which will be processed by his mind. David seems to be experiencing "voices" as representations of reality. These voices, however, "swarm"(291,296). The "voices" of past and present fragment and become infinite in number(292). Can language, David asks, represent them "exactly": "exactly" being repeated on many occasions in the epilogue. Memory cannot even with the most careful use of language re-present the past(288). David's only possibility to recover the past is through a mystical experience, an experience that is not

tied to language, that transforms time:

It was as if time were not a movement now, but flat. Like space. Things past or future were not downstream or upstream on a one-way river, but in rooms. They were all on the same level. You could walk from room to room and look at them, without ascent or descent. It was as if the slope of time had levelled off at this moment. It didn't go by while you were reaching out to touch it. It was waiting for you. It waited for you to straighten things out before it moved on. (287-88)

This peculiar experience of time produced "a breaker of exaltation"(289). Such an experience, we are told, "comes only once or twice ever, without a hint or warning. It was a complete translation to another time."<sup>36</sup> Sounding profoundly religious, we find out that "There is no other shock so sweet, no transfiguration so utter"(289). This experience beyond language is then described in detail:

It is not a memory of that time: there is no echo quality to it. It is something that deliberate memory (with the changed perspective of the years between changing the very object it lights) cannot achieve at all. It is not a returning: you are there for the first time immediately. No one has been away, nothing has changed--the time or the place or the faces. The years between have been shed. There is an original glow on the faces like on the objects of home. It is like a flash of immortality: nothing behind you is sealed, you can live it again. You can begin again... (289)

When the epilogue is finished, we are left with the impression that language can never adequately re-capture memory, or even experiences that are thought to be grounded in the present. Buckler appears to be suggesting that David represents a changing sensibility that becomes increasingly common as modernity disrupts our pre-modern havens. Confidence in language, and widely accepted truths about

life are merely social conventions--historical constructions. As the certainties of pre-modern rural communities become unsuitable for life in a society dominated by a marketplace and capitalist commodities, both linguistic and aesthetic realism as a way of knowing and experiencing the world is replaced by uncertainty.

Buckler's second novel, The Cruellest Month, is concerned with a crisis of cultural meaning in a world where there is a babel of tongues. In Nova Scotia: Window on the Sea, Buckler asserts that " 'progress,' the advance spy of Babel and steel, has already begun to infiltrate and infest the land..."<sup>37</sup> The modernist plurality of voices is, in Buckler's social theory, a symptom of decay. This crisis in both language and meaning is foregrounded in The Cruellest Month which can be read as a critique and rejection of writing--an obviously ironic position for a professional writer to assume. How can this be? The answer is found in Buckler's association of writing with his much detested modernity. Buckler identifies the widespread and specialized use of writing with a period of historical development in which the organic and transparent rural community of face-to-face relationships had been replaced by a cultural stage interconnected with an impersonal marketplace, and a corresponding set of social relations.<sup>38</sup> Such a transformation was most developed in Buckler's dreaded cities--that is, in the very center of modern mass

society. On the one hand, writing is connected with the fragmented self, alienation, a competitive impersonality, social inequality and entrenched hierarchies. On the other hand, we have speech which is related to the small rural community, the immediate presence of other people, authenticity, integrated personalities, community solidarity, and social equality.<sup>39</sup>

Two dominant positions concerning writing occur in The Cruellest Month. Morse Halliday, a published novelist who is in the creative doldrums, describes writing in rather bizarre ways. Kate Fennison, one of the three significant women in The Cruellest Month, reads Morse an interview which he had recently given:

Asked why he had no new book lately, he replied: 'It was a nasty habit. Haven't you boys ever heard that it can drive you crazy, or blind?'

About the present literary scene he had this to say: 'There's a notion abroad that the first thing writers must do is make an exact count of the flyspecks on the light bulb. Convince the reader that you've seen inside the man's room--or the Men's Room--and he'll believe you've seen inside the man. It's the biggest hoax since Piltdown. Then we have the psychology boys with their tissue slides. They use fifty times as many words as Christ took for the Sermon on the Mount to show why our hero still picks his nose at forty-three. You know, when I was a kid in Minnesota, there was a thing I used to watch the farmers do with a pig's bowel's after the slaughter. There's a film of fat over the bowel exactly like Valenciennes lace. The farmer's had a wonderful knack of stripping this off, hand over hand. They called it "riddling the guts." Almost any modern novel I can think of should have its guts riddled like that.' (54-55)

Comparing writing to masturbation<sup>40</sup>, an isolated act like writing itself, to revealing the inside of the men's

washroom, and to removing fat from a pig's bowel's, suggests that novels don't have any real cultural value. Now Morse is indeed being sarcastic. However, in the context of other remarks about writing--especially but not exclusively the writing of fiction--these comments take on added significance. Morse also refers to writing novels as a criminal act, as vomiting, and as something which left a "sour taste" in his mouth(149,277).

Morse's criticism of writing eventually takes a form remarkably similar to David Canaan's position in The Mountain and the Valley. Morse questions the very act of writing--especially writing which imagines itself realistic:

Writing was a mug's game. What hope in hell did you have of trapping thoughts and feelings in a net as coarse as words? It was like the ancients trying to enclose the bird with a wall... A writer needed ten lives. And he had only one. To do it right you'd have to experience all things first, then learn how to tell them, then tell them. But there was no time for that. You had to keep the three operations all going at once. Tolstoi thought the only thing he'd missed out on was a yacht race. My God, how foolish could you get?... How fast could anyone speak or type? Say a hundred words a minute. Never mind the hours spent writing it in and rubbing it out in his brain, or the long white days when not one word would come--just say he had it right at his fingertips. If he typed, or spoke, without a second's break, for seventy years, he couldn't physically get more than a grain of the whole truth down...

Can't you see? One man, one little hen scratch. It's so impossibly hopeless." (149)

It is evident in this passage that Morse Halliday, as well as David Canaan in The Mountain and the Valley, rejects the possibility of writing being faithful to the complexity of either past or "present" reality. Morse continues this

critique of realism: "What good was a bloody relief map if half the truth was a blade of grass? When every dam thing in the world was sui generis?" And "What good was an outline of the heart if the infinite subdivisions of human feeling defied the microscope even"(150)?

Paul Creed also rejects the possibility of writing being faithful to the complexity of life. Paul actually goes so far as to destroy his writing, both his notebooks and his sketch for a novel, because "lines themselves were merely the pencil drawings of thoughts with their eyes left out"(273). Paul realizes they "brought back no shadow of the moment of which they had been the sole content at the time he had set them down." Paul, however, carries his criticism of writing further than either David Canaan or Morse Halliday. Paul targets books in general as well as sophisticated speech--both associated by Buckler with an encroaching modernity:

He didn't want books. He didn't want talk. The talk he'd been used to. That was forever on its toes, twisting and interlocking knowledgeable allusion; that was forever a tiring octave higher than the key speech was written in, as if it were always talk to be overheard, like the talk in books. He had a sudden disrelish almost to loathing--for books and that kind of talk. (294)

It is not difficult to connect Paul's thought with Bruce Mansfield's nostalgia for a lost Promised Land; that was a time when "There were no specialized and worldly knowledges to put one man ahead of the other"(266). "And life then had no long, complicated words in it at all..."(267).



The ending of The Cruellest Month, however, is no more optimistic than the epilogue to The Mountain and the Valley. To understand the depth of Buckler's cultural pessimism, we need only look at Letty Spence, Paul's housekeeper, the representative of pre-modern women and culture in The Cruellest Month.<sup>41</sup> Buckler's ideal of the pre-modern woman is Martha, David's mother in The Mountain and the Valley. For Martha, as for Letty, the "kitchen was the perimeter" of her entire life.<sup>42</sup> A strict division of gender roles governed the lives of these rural pre-modern folk. Letty, however, unlike Martha, has been thoroughly exposed to the world of rural modernity--a road that always, for Buckler, leads away from Eden. Letty can only read the simplest of writing--a personal letter, for instance--and then only with the greatest of difficulty. Her speech is uncomplicated and still contains the older dialect of the region. However, at the end of the novel, Letty decides to impress Paul by learning to speak the "proper" way, the way tourists spoke. One wonders how far Letty will model herself on the modern women she has encountered. Modernity has once again extended its parameters.

Buckler offers the reader a vision of reality that questions fundamental assumptions, usually seen as common sense, about modernity. Unfortunately Buckler's version of historical truth is all too easily dismissed by both modern and postmodern intellectuals who have, all too frequently,

lost a sense of the historical grounding of memory, and tend to see the past as an earlier and out dated dialect of the present.

## Conclusion

History has had and continues to have her say.

Warren Tallman  
"Wolf in the Snow"

In his classic essay, "Wolf in the Snow," Warren Tallman writes:<sup>1</sup>

sensibility, that active sum of the artist's self, never does exist in relation to itself alone. It exists in relation to what is--actual persons, an actual city, actual lives. When the impact of accomplished history imposes distinctions upon that actuality, sensibility must adjust itself to the distortions. The story of these adjustments is, I think, the most significant feature of North American fiction in our time. (77)

Tallman's prophetic assertion--sounding remarkably like a statement by Raymond Williams in The Country and the City--of the inseparable relation between artist, art, and history was published in 1960 when the New Criticism was in its heyday and firmly entrenched in Canadian academia. Although the New Critics frequently pay homage to history, their actual critical practise subverts a significant historical engagement with the text. Tallman's endorsement of history, however, is a trenchant criticism of the many New Critics who assumed that aesthetic texts must be read as if they were historically uncontaminated. A critical methodology emerging from such an extreme version of the New Criticism implies an underlying assumption that the aesthetic text must be isolated from its connection with the world in which

it was both created and read. What is, I think, so remarkable about Tallman's historical awareness is his conceptual inability to put into practice such an emphatic claim.

Tallman views David Canaan's growing isolation and alienation as a failure to develop nourishing personal relationships. David is odd man out. When The Mountain and the Valley joins epilogue with prologue, David's only surviving relationship in Entremont is with his grandmother Ellen. Tallman's analysis is limited because the various strands of David's artistic sensibility have been separated from the larger historical fabric. It is not surprising that Tallman also fails to explore the historical foundations of Buckler's aesthetic sensibility. Tallman's New Critical approach which treats David as an historically isolated individual also validates the isolated aesthetic text. It is important to keep in mind that the aesthetic text is not the only historical construction present in literary studies. Both the principles for reading and critiquing literature, as well as the institutional mode of production of these interpretive strategies are historically constituted.

Tallman begins "Wolf in the Snow" in a most imaginative way: "To enter the fictional house... novels form is to take up place in rooms where windows open up on scenes..." He then goes on to say that "it is best to enter the fictional

house at once and move across rooms where the windows open out."<sup>2</sup> Tallman doesn't seem to realize that looking through a window always involves a vision limited in one way or another. The prison-house of the New Criticism has many bars on its metaphorical windows. Tallman's historical insight seems to have removed few, if any, bars from the window through which he gazes. His historical assertion coming as it does at the end of the essay--rather than informing its beginning--suddenly presents itself, perhaps, as an afterthought. It is, however, too much to expect Tallman in 1960 to walk outside the house of his conceptual captivity.

Tallman's historical consciousness is as valid today as it was when he wrote "Wolf in the Snow." The connection of all human subjectivities and their diverse sensibilities, and not just those of the artist, with their historical experience has provided the informing principle for my analyses of MacLennan, Bruce, and Buckler.

It has been my contention throughout this study that the psychological approach to fictive individuals must be broadened to include an examination of the "history" that exists within any work of art. Historical analysis has in the present study overshadowed the biographical and psychological aspects of the novel's fictional inhabitants. This strong historical emphasis was a deliberate reaction against the historical amnesia present in so much Maritime

literary criticism. Hopefully future research will be able to combine an historically oriented reading with a more developed psychological understanding of the characters' lives. Such an approach broadens the New Critical concentration on an analysis of the text itself but does not ultimately challenge it. Indeed this approach must be carried even further to include a research strategy that--unlike the New Criticism--is willing to re-connect both aesthetic texts and their "authors" to their historical context. This position is frequently referred to as the New Historicism or Cultural Materialism.

Charles Bruce, Hugh MacLennan and Ernest Buckler each developed a distinctive social philosophy and corresponding literary form to express their profound concerns about the breakdown of pre-modern rural communities, and the rapid transition to a modernity dominated by industrial capitalism. Bruce in The Channel Shore articulates an ambiguity in his dialogue between past and present. He conveys a social vision of an expanded kinship network to confront the inevitable tensions of a rapidly urbanizing capitalist modernity. He uses the realist novel to explore but does not attempt to resolve the dialogical confrontation between the voices of the past and those of the present. Mikhail Bakhtin, in his study of Dostoevsky,<sup>3</sup> outlines the theory of the dialogical or polyphonic novel:

Dostoevsky... creates not voiceless slaves... but free people, capable of standing alongside their creator,

capable of not agreeing with him and even of rebelling against him.

A plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousnesses, a genuine polyphony of fully valid voices is in fact the chief characteristic of Dostoevsky's novels. What unfolds in his works is not a multitude of characters and fates in a single authorial consciousness; rather a plurality of consciousnesses, with equal rights and each with its own world, combine but are not merged in the unity of the event. Dostoevsky's major heroes are, by the very nature of his creative design, not only objects of authorial discourse but also subjects of their own directly signifying discourse. In no way, then, can a character's discourse be exhausted by the usual functions of characterization and plot development, nor does it serve as a vehicle for the author's own ideological position... The consciousness of a character is given as someone else's consciousness, another consciousness, yet at the same time it is not turned into an object, is not closed, does not become a simple object of the author's consciousness.<sup>4</sup>

Bakhtin's heteroglossia provides a useful conceptual framework for reading The Channel Shore. Bruce does not attempt to ideologically dominate the novel's diverse voices. He is able because of the openendedness of his aesthetic vision to permit a polyphony of voices to engage in a dialogue about an emerging Maritime modernity. This provides, I think, an opportunity for Bruce to put into aesthetic practise the tolerance implied by his belief in the necessity for an expanded kinship network. Bruce uses the realist novel to explore, but not dominate, the innumerable voices of Maritime women and men who for the last century have struggled in a variety of ways to live in (and come to terms with) an almost overwhelming experience of historical transformation.

MacLennan develops a deterministic social philosophy,

and extends it to include the naturalist form of the novel in Barometer Rising. His solution to the dilemma of modernity was a nationalism, one with obvious religious overtones, that would resolve the social, economic and cultural dislocations resulting from the expansion of capitalist social relations and the marketplace. The various voices in Barometer Rising are submerged in MacLennan's paean to nationalism and his middle-class ideological agenda. Bruce was able to avoid a single dominant ideology in The Channel Shore because of his own internal debate, his own lived experience of a variety of voices speaking in his own consciousness. MacLennan seems to have suffered no such internal debate and becomes the spokesperson for a particular vision of modernity.

Barometer Rising dominated by MacLennan's voice--which includes his vision of history and development--becomes an example of Bakhtin's monologic novel.

Buckler in both The Mountain and the Valley and The Cruellest Month offers little hope for capitalist modernity--or, indeed, for modernity in any of its forms. He rejects both the literary realism and naturalism of Bruce and MacLennan, and suggests that human social and psychological realities are far too complex to understand and to communicate in a written text. Buckler's anti-modernist ideological vision dominates his monologic novels, and is also foregrounded in both his childhood memoir, Ox Balls and



Fireflies and Nova Scotia: Window on the Sea.

Although there are undoubtedly many Maritime novels that engage the transformation of our pre-modern world, two are worth mentioning here. Frederick William Wallace's, Blue Water: A Tale of the Deep Sea Fisherman (1920)<sup>5</sup> and Will R. Bird's So Much to Record (1951)<sup>6</sup> provide an interesting counterpoint to the novels of MacLennan, Bruce and Buckler. Wallace does not focus on a rural urban split in his novel; instead we have, at least in the first part of the novel, an opposition between the land and the sea. However, the romanticized story of deepsea fishing is replaced by a narrative of modernization. A small transparent Gemeinschaft community becomes a company town centered around the capitalist development of a fishing fleet to service a processing plant owned by a former fisherman turned capitalist. Blue Water proclaims the virtues of capitalist modernization in the countryside--and is therefore related to, but not identical with Barometer Rising and The Channel Shore--and seems to imply that the opposition between land and sea can be overcome with the appropriate forms of capitalist development. Will R. Bird's novel So Much to Record ignores the possibility of real development in the rural Maritimes, and has his Nova Scotian village of Carrsboro respond to economic stagnation by promoting tourism. It is interesting to note that Bird joined the staff of the Nova Scotia Government information

Bureau--an earlier version of the Nova Scotia Department of Tourism--and went on to become an official government writer.<sup>7</sup> Bird's novel is fundamentally different from the novels of MacLennan, Bruce, and Buckler.<sup>8</sup>

It seems likely that many Maritime novelists and poets conveyed their visions of historical transformation and economic development in their aesthetic productions. MacLennan, Buckler and Bruce represent three quite different positions: MacLennan favours capitalist development, Bruce never seems to overcome a profound ambiguity surrounding the whole modernization process, and Buckler embraces a complete rejection of modernity in all of its guises. Will Bird's culture of tourism provides a fourth possibility and another vision of the Maritime experience.

Exploring such diverse reactions to the emergence of a Maritime modernity could do much to enhance the understanding of our regional literature, and begin the first stage in exploring the possibility of a social history of Maritime aesthetic productions. A more complex stage of this research would involve linking our literature to the social positions of our regional writers in the complex historical transformation of which they were a part.

Hopefully this study of MacLennan, Bruce, and Buckler has contributed to our understanding of their novels. Without, however, an historically oriented and interdisciplinary approach the interpretations defended here

could not have been developed.

## ENDNOTES

### Introduction

1. This research will be the first part of a long-term project concentrating on the social history of the Atlantic Canadian novel. Douglas Lochhead suggested such an approach to our regional literature in "The Literary Heritage: The Place, The Past, The Prospect," in Atlantic Provinces Literature Colloquium Papers, Saint John: Atlantic Canada Institute, 1977; 3-9.
2. The term modernization will be used throughout this paper. A useful definition of modernization is found in Marshall Berman, All That Is Solid Melts Into Air, New York: Penguin Books, 1982; 16. Berman writes:

The maelstrom of modern life has been fed from many sources: great discoveries in the physical sciences, changing our images of the universe and our place in it; the industrialization of production, which transforms scientific knowledge into technology, creates new human environments and destroys old ones, speeds up the whole tempo of life, generates new forms of corporate power and class struggle; immense demographic upheavals, severing millions of people from their ancestral habitats, hurtling them halfway across the world into new lives; rapid and often cataclysmic urban growth; systems of mass communication, dynamic in their development, enveloping and binding together the most diverse people and societies; increasingly powerful national states, bureaucratically structured and operated, constantly striving to expand their powers; mass social movements of people, and peoples, challenging their political and economic rulers, striving to gain some control over their lives; finally bearing and driving all these people and institutions along, an ever-expanding, drastically fluctuating capitalist world market. In the twentieth century, the social processes that bring this maelstrom into being, and keep it in a state of perpetual becoming, have come to be called "modernization." (16)

The terms modernism and modernist occur frequently in twentieth century literary analysis. Modernism and being a modernist--one who practices modernism--refers

to literary writing which is very different from traditional forms of writing. Modernist writing tends to silence history, and focuses on such issues as perception and alienation. Individualism is stressed rather than social conformity. It can be and frequently is as critical of the modern world as it is of pre-modern societies. What must be kept in mind is that a modernist writer can be an anti-modernist. Such an anti-modernism involves the rejection of much or even all of the modernization process.

3. Max Weber and Emile Durkheim were two of the outstanding sociologists who were interested in the undermining of pre-modern forms of social organization. Russell Berman writes that "Weber describes an empty English countryside; the enclosure acts, urban industrialization, and capitalist modernization have led to the erosion of rural society..." Berman goes on to say that Weber's "contention that the capitalist transformation of Prussian agriculture would undermine traditional social structures seemed to be confirmed by the underpopulation he encountered in England." See "The Routinization of Charismatic Modernism and the Problem of Post-modernity," Cultural Critique, no.5, Winter 1986-87; 52-53.
4. Ferdinand Tonnies, Community and Society (Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft) translated and edited by Charles P. Loomis, East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1957.
5. Raymond Williams' use of the term Cultural Materialism should not be confused with Marvin Harris' appropriation of the same term to describe his determinist theory of cultural evolution. Williams emphasizes the importance of mind and perception in his approach, Harris' positivist paradigm largely ignores the importance of mental and perceptual factors in historical transformation. For a detailed examination of Williams' theoretical strategy see his Culture, London: Fontana, 1981. For Harris's formulation see his Cultural Materialism: The Struggle for a Science of Culture, New York: Vintage Books, 1980. Williams outlines a Cultural Materialist theory of writing and reading in Marxism and Literature, London: Oxford University Press, 1977. Many literary theorists refer to this approach as one variety of what is termed the New Historicism. In literary studies the New Historicism is a broadly based strategy that treats all textual productions as historical.

6. Raymond Williams, The Country and the City, London: Chatto and Windus, 1973. The edition used here was published by The Hogarth Press, London, 1985.
7. Ibid., 165.
8. Ibid., 165.
9. Ibid., 165.
10. Ibid., 149.
11. Ibid., 165.
12. In this paper postmodernism will refer to a period in Western culture coinciding with the development advanced multi-national capitalism. Fredric Jameson provide, I think, the most useful conceptualization of postmodernism. He writes in "Postmodernism, or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism," (New Left Review no.146, July-August, 1984;) that there is a

whole historically original consumers' appetite for a world transformed into sheer images of itself and for pseudo-events and 'spectacles'... It is for such objects that we may reserve Plato's conception of the 'simulacrum'--the identical copy for which no original has ever existed. Appropriately enough, the culture of the simulacrum comes to life in a society where exchange-value has been generalized to the point at which the very memory of use-value is effaced, a society of which Guy Debord has observed, in an extraordinary phrase, that in it 'the image has become the final form of commodity reification' (The Society of the Spectacle). (66)

This is the culture period Jameson refers to as postmodern. From pre-modern societies which had limited production for exchange value, and maximum production for use value, we have passed through modernity with the rapid development of exchange value, to the intensification of exchange value to the point where it dominates our cultural lives as well as our economic activities. Jameson's conceptualization of postmodernism has been used in Maritime history by Ian McKay in "Twilight at Peggy's Cove: Towards a Genealogy of 'Maritimicity' in Nova Scotia," Border/Lines, no.12, Summer, 1988.

13. Ibid., 151.

14. Ibid., 165.
15. Ibid., 165.
16. Janice Kulyk Keefer, Under Eastern Eyes: A Critical Reading of Maritime fiction, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987.
17. Ibid., 7-9.
18. Raymond Williams, The Country and the City, 165-166.
19. Ibid., 8.
20. Post-structuralism is not an easy term to define. It is a broadly based philosophical school, as well as an approach to literary criticism, that began in France during the mid 1960s. Post-structuralism began its career in open revolt against structuralism which saw the organization of language as the basic conceptual framework or paradigm for all cultural structures. Post-structuralism emphasizes the difference between words and what they signify. Language always refers to absences; what language attempts to express about the world external to the mind is always beyond the linguistic sign. Hence post-structuralism stresses ambiguities, rather than certainties. Interpretation becomes a laboured epistemological task; reality is always escaping interpretation. A useful article which attempts to define post-structuralism is J. V. Harari's "Critical Factions/Critical Fictions" in J. V. Harari's Textual Strategies: Perspectives in Post-Structuralist Criticism, Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1979; 17-72; see in particular pages 27-29. Richard Rorty in "The contingency of language" argues that "We need to make a distinction between the claim that the world is out there and the claim that truth is out there." He develops this line of thought further:

Truth cannot be out there--cannot exist independently of the human mind--because sentences cannot so exist, or be out there. The world is out there, but descriptions of the world are not. Only descriptions of the world can be true or false. The world on its own--unaided by the describing activities of human beings--cannot. The suggestion that truth, as well as the world, is out there is a legacy of an age in which the world was seen as the creation of a being who had a language of his own. (From Contingency, irony, and solidarity, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989; 4-5.)

Putting it more succinctly, Rorty tells us that "The world does not speak. Only we do." (6) Language for the post-structuralist--as well as those influenced by them--is not stable. This produces uncertainty of meaning. For traditional theories of meaning, language functioned to "reflect inward experiences or objects in the real world, to 'make present' one's thoughts and feelings or to describe how reality was." (Terry Eagleton, Literary Theory: An Introduction, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983; 29.) For a reasonably clear outline of post-structuralist literary theory see chapter four, pages 127-150.

21. Ibid., 8.
22. Ibid., 8-9.
23. Ibid., 9.
24. Ibid., 9.
25. Ibid., 6. "Realism is, in the broadest sense, simply fidelity to actuality in its representation in literature..." (C. Hugh Holman and William Harmon, A Handbook to Literature, fifth edition, New York: Macmillan, 1985; 412.) Raymond Williams explains that realist "art or literature is seen as simply one convention among others, a set of formal representations, in a particular medium to which we have become accustomed. The object is not really lifelike but by convention and repetition has been made to appear so." (Raymond Williams, Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society, London: Fontana Paperbacks, 1983 edition.)
26. Ibid., 7.
27. Keefer's interpretation of Buckler's The Mountain and the Valley subverts her theoretical self-understanding. She centers her analysis on Buckler's epistemological probings, but ignores historical analysis. Her reading of The Mountain and the Valley is neither transparent nor historical. It is clearly a variety of opaque/post-structuralist criticism; the approach to interpretation which she rejects for her readings of Maritime novels. For Keefer's analysis of The Mountain and the Valley see Under Eastern Eyes, 224-31.
28. For a critical evaluation of Keefer's approach to history see Erik Kristiansen, "Keefer and the Search for an Ideal Community," New Maritimes,



September/October 1988, 29-33; and "Crisis of Rural Community," New Maritimes, November/December 1988, 29-34.

29. The New Criticism is not really new, but the name remains with us. Beginning in the middle 1930s in the United States--but also having a parallel in England--the New Criticism focuses on literary writing as an object in itself. Literary scholars influenced by this movement silence historical and ideological questions. Literature is seen as a special discipline that must avoid the approaches of other disciplines such as philosophy, history, political theory, political economy and so on.
30. Mikhail Bakhtin, referring to the "human sciences" in general, elaborates on such an intertextual and interdisciplinary approach:

The advantages are these: our study will move in the liminal spheres, that is, on the borders of all the aforementioned disciplines, at their junctures and points of intersection.

The text (written and oral) is the primary given of all these disciplines and of all thought in the human sciences and philosophy in general (including theological and philosophical thought at their sources). The text is the unmediated reality (reality of thought and experience), the only one from which these disciplines and thought can emerge. Where there is no text, there is no object of study, and no object of thought either.

The "implied" text: if the word "text" is understood in the broad sense--as any coherent complex of signs--then even the study of art (the study of music, the theory and history of fine arts) deals with texts (works of art). Thoughts about thoughts, experiences of experiences, words about words, and texts about texts. Herein lies the basic distinction between our disciplines (human sciences) and the natural ones (about nature), although there are no absolute, impenetrable boundaries here either. Thought about the human sciences originates as thought about others' thoughts, wills, manifestations, expressions, and signs, behind which stand manifest gods (revelations) or people (the laws of rulers, the precepts of ancestors, anonymous sayings, riddles, and so forth). A scientifically precise, as it were, authentication of the texts and criticism of texts come later (in thought in the human sciences, they represent a complete

about-face, the origin of skepticism). Initially, belief required only understanding interpretation. This belief was brought to bear on profane texts (the study of languages and so forth). We do not intend to delve into the history of the human sciences, and certainly not into philology or linguistics. We are interested rather in the specific nature of thought in the human sciences that is directed toward other thoughts, ideas, meanings, and so forth, which are realized and made available to the researcher only in the form of a text, the only possible point of departure is the text.

See "The Problem of the Text in Linguistics, Philology, and the Human Sciences: An Experiment in Philosophical Analysis," Speech Genres and Other Late Essays, Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986; 103-104.

31. George Woodcock, "A Nation's Odyssey: The Novels of Hugh MacLennan," Canadian Literature, 10, 1961; 7-18.
32. Hugh MacLennan, "Postscript on Odysseus," Canadian Literature, 13, 1962, 86-87.
33. George Woodcock, Hugh MacLennan's "Barometer Rising," Toronto: General Paperbacks, 1989; 43-50. For a critique of the Odysseus reading of Barometer Rising see Alec Lucas, Hugh MacLennan, Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1970; 47.
34. Ibid., 71.
35. Ibid., 79.
36. Ibid., 72.
37. Ibid., 72.
38. Ibid., 79.
39. Ibid., 74.
40. Ibid., 87-98.
41. Ibid., 88.
42. Ibid., 90.
43. T.D. MacLulich, "Oedipus and Eve: The Novels of Hugh MacLennan," Dalhousie Review, 59, no.3, Autumn 1979; 500-518.

44. George Woodcock, Hugh MacLennan's Barometer Rising, 50-57. The Oedipal interpretation was developed earlier in Woodcock's Hugh MacLennan, Toronto: Copp Clark, 1969; 111-118.
45. T.D. MacLulich, "Oedipus and Eve: The novels of Hugh MacLennan," 502.
46. Elspeth Cameron, Hugh MacLennan: A Writer's Life, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981; 131-163.
47. Ibid., 145, 158.
48. Robin Mathews, "Hugh MacLennan: The Nationalist Dilemma," Gail Dexter(ed.), Canadian Literature: Surrender or Revolution, Toronto: Steel Rail Educational Publishing, 1978; 75.
49. See pages 76, 78, 80, and 85.
50. Ibid., 77.
51. Ibid., 75.
52. J.K. Keefer, Under Eastern Eyes, 139.
53. During the course of my analysis of Barometer Rising--in the early months of 1986--I arrived at a similar conclusion quite independent of Keefer's research which was published in Under Eastern Eyes in 1987.
54. Naturalism refers specifically to a literary movement which emerged in Europe and the United States during the closing decades of the nineteenth century. It was influenced by a renewed interest in both the mechanical "vision" of Newtonian physics, and the rapidly achieved popularity of Darwinian evolutionary theory. History in general, as well as personality and physical constitution were explained in the framework of a mechanistic determinism. Environment and heredity were thought, either separately or together, to eliminate the possibility of meaningful human activity. Naturalism differs from realism, not in its "accuracy" of representation, but in its very specific way of selecting and organizing the materials of aesthetic production. Naturalist novels advocate a determinism that effects both human social and psychological reality.
55. John Moss, "The Double Hook and The Channel Shore," in Patterns of Isolation, Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974; 181.

56. Ibid., 182. Moss uses an especially interesting quotation from Renie who is Married To Grant Marshall. Renie reflects that

If a person could be given the eye to see... One day out of each year would be enough, back to the beginning.... The Holiday or a Sunday service or a church supper around the Christmas time. Given that sort of clairvoyance you could see the story of the Shore. And yet, what differed, across a hundred and fifty years? Horses and saddles, once; buggies later, and now flivvers, jalopies. Hand-made leather boots and homespun, then. Tweed now, from the mail-order houses. And always faces. Faces that didn't change, really, though worn by different people in different generations...(184-85).

Moss argues that this awareness of history "provides the informing principle of Bruce's other novel, The Township of Time"(185). He goes on to say that "In The Channel Shore, however, it is not the structural basis but, rather its effect"(185). History is the effect of the novel and not its informing principle. One can only wonder why, if Moss were correct, historical transformation is so thoroughly developed in the novel?

57. Andrew Wainwright, "Day of Future Past:...", Studies in Canadian Literature, 8, 1983; 238-47.
58. Ibid., 238.
59. Ibid., 246.
60. Ibid., 246.
61. Andrew Wainwright, World Enough and Time, Charles Bruce: A Literary Biography, Halifax: Formac Pub. Co., 1988.
62. For a detailed critique of Wainwright's biography of Bruce see Erik Kristiansen, "Memory, Time and Rural Transformation," New Maritimes, March/April, 1990; 22-27.
63. Andrew Seaman, "Visions of Fulfilment in Ernest Buckler and Charles Bruce," Essays on Canadian Writing, no.31, 1985; 159.
64. J.K. Keefer, Under Eastern Eyes, 56.
65. Ibid., 55.

66. Ibid., 231.
67. Ibid., 232.
68. Gerald Noonan, "Egoism and Style in The Mountain and the Valley," Atlantic Provinces Literature Colloquium, Saint John: Atlantic Canada Institute, 1977; 68-78.
69. Ibid., 68.
70. Ibid., 68.
71. Ibid., 77.
72. Andrew Wainwright, "Fern Hill Revisited: Isolation and Death in The Mountain and the Valley," Studies in Canadian Literature, 7, no.1, 1982; 63-89.
73. Ibid., 79.
74. Ibid., 89.
75. Andrew Seaman, "Visions of Fulfilment in Ernest Buckler and Charles Bruce," 168.
76. Ibid., 171.
77. Ibid., 171.
78. D.O. Spettigue, "The Way It Was," Canadian Literature, 32, Spring, 1967, 40-56. Spettigue's article is reprinted in Gregory M. Cook(ed.), Ernest Buckler, Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson Ltd., 1972; 95-115.
79. Ibid., 100.
80. Ibid., 102.
81. Ibid., 104.
82. Ibid., 105.
83. Ibid., 96.
84. Ibid., 107.
85. Ibid., 107.
86. Ibid., 107.
87. Ibid., 108.

88. Ibid., 108.
89. Ibid., 114.
90. Ibid., 114.
91. Ibid., 114.
92. Claude Bissell, Ernest Buckler Remembered, Toronto: University of Toronto Press; 1989.
93. Ibid., 125.
94. Ibid., 63.
95. Ibid., 63.
96. Ibid., 63
97. Ibid., 62.
98. For a detailed critique of Bissell's interpretation of The Mountain and the Valley see Erik Kristiansen, "The Chalk-face of Dismay," New Maritimes, November/December, 1990; 23-32.
99. Ibid., 125.
100. J.K. Keefer, Under Eastern Eyes, 224-31.
101. Ibid., 226-27.
102. Ibid., 230.
103. Ibid., 228.
104. Ibid., 54.
105. Ibid., 79-84.
106. Alan Young, Ernest Buckler, Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1976; 30.
107. Ibid., 31.
108. Ibid., 31-32. The rural/urban split so obvious in Buckler's fiction has not been explored in the depth that it deserves. One other study mentions this rural/urban division but has little to offer Buckler's interpreters. See Robert D. Chambers, Sinclair Ross and Ernest Buckler, Montreal: McGill-Queen's, 1975.

109. Ibid., 33.
110. Ibid., 33.
111. Ibid., 42.
112. Ibid., 40.

### Chapter One

1. Hugh MacLennan, "Where is my Potted Palm", Thirty and Three, Toronto: MacMillan Co., 1954; 49-54.
2. MacLennan's emphasis on providing historical and sociological background that would appeal to "outsiders" supports an important point raised by Ian McKay in his study of a new kind of Nova Scotian history that developed between 1935 and 1964. See Ian McKay's "In My Small Field Of Things Historical": Tourism, Will R. Bird, and a New Kind of Nova Scotian History, 1935-1964," unpublished manuscript, 1989; 3.
3. Ibid., 53.
4. Ibid., 52.
5. MacLennan's dissertation, Oxyrhynchus: An Economic and Social Study, was published in 1935 by Princeton University Press. It was re-issued in 1968 by A.M. Hakkert, a Dutch publishing company, and in the United States (1968) by Argonaut, Chicago. For "Roman History and Today" see Dalhousie Review, Vol. 15, 1935-36; 67-78.
6. Hugh MacLennan, "Roman History and Today," 70.
7. Ibid., 70-71.
8. See Hugh MacLennan, "Do we Gag Our Writers?," MacLean's, March 1, 1947; 54.
9. See Hugh MacLennan, "The Future Trend in the Novel," Canadian Author and Bookman, Vol.4, No. 3, September, 1948; and "Changing Values in Fiction," The Canadian Author and Bookman Vol. 5, No. 3, September, 1949.
10. Hugh MacLennan, "Future Trend in the Novel," 4. George Woodcock almost sees beyond his designation of Barometer Rising as a realist or romantic realist

novel. He argues that Halifax is presented in the novel in such a way

that there is an overbearing presence of the environment that seems excessive for an ordinary realist novel, and shows how far, at his best MacLennan moves toward the Romantic... (Hugh MacLennan's Barometer Rising, 62.)

Woodcock moves MacLennan's supposed realism to romanticism. He does not see Barometer Rising as a naturalist novel, yet he had the possibility here of grasping at least some aspects of MacLennan's naturalism.

11. Hugh MacLennan, "Roman History and Today," 71.
12. Ibid., 67. Capitalism can be defined in a variety of ways. In this paper, I will use a traditional historical materialist understanding of capitalism as a specific mode of production that is characterized by the existence of two structurally distinct but dialectically related classes: capitalist and wage labour. Although more than two distinct classes appear to exist in capitalist relations of production, they can be viewed theoretically as contradictory class locations rather than distinct classes. It must also be kept in mind that a specific social formation can consist of more than one mode of production. Capitalism is, however, usually, but not always, based on the necessity of capital to have a supply of "free" labour at its disposal to engage in the production of surplus value. Without this supply of wage labour, supplemented by slave and other forms of labour, capitalism could not exist. Unlike MacLennan who conceptualizes capitalism as "private enterprise," the historical materialist would interpret capitalism as a specific historical manifestation of private enterprise. Conflating private enterprise with capitalism would transform subsistence and/or small commodity production to capitalism. MacLennan doesn't seem to be aware of the implications which follow from this position. In short, such a broad definition of capitalism weakens its usefulness as an analytic concept.
13. Hugh MacLennan, "Roman History and Today," 78.
14. See Elspeth Cameron, Hugh MacLennan: A Writer's Life, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981; 116-119.



15. Subsequent references to Barometer Rising(1941) will be to the New Canadian Library edition first published in 1982. Each Man's Son was first published in 1951 by Macmillan of Canada. Subsequent paperback editions are photo reprints of the original 1951 edition. The ideological thrust of both novels is distinctly anti-socialist. The dialogue between Neil Macrae and Alec MacKenzie on pages 139-140 is an obvious critique of both socialism and organized class resistance to capitalist exploitation. However, if this dialogue is isolated from the novel's ideological individualism the significance of this exchange between Neil and Alec could remain unseen. For a penetrating analysis of the rejection of radical socialism in Barometer Rising see Janice Kulyk Keefer, Under Eastern Eyes: a critical reading of Maritime fiction, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987; 138-142. The anti-socialist thrust and the celebration of an extreme individualism is even more conspicuous in Each Man's Son. See Keefer's ideological analysis in Under Eastern Eyes 142-151.
  
16. The birth of a "new age" is mentioned either directly or indirectly on the following pages of Barometer Rising: 66, 93, 124, 126, 129, 139, and 207-208.
  
17. Ibid., 19.
  
18. The estrangement of the urban industrial centres from a "natural" world is even more vividly developed in the works of Ernest Buckler which will be carefully analyzed later in this dissertation. This sense of the artificial nature of urban modernity was also common in the United States during the 1880-1920 period of intensive urbanization and industrialization. See T.J. Jackson Lears, No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture 1880-1920, New York: Pantheon Books, 1981.
  
19. It is significant that Neil Macrae, a middle-class professional, is attempting to extricate himself from the belief that chance was the predominant force governing human existence. MacLennan doesn't incorporate his earlier stress on determinism in the following description of Neil's intellectual self-examination. Is this a sign that MacLennan's middle-class protagonist cannot be confined to a thoroughly passive role in his search for significance in a rapidly developing capitalist/industrial world? The narrator describes Neil's thoughts:

...Neil found himself trying to resist the conviction that chance and preposterous accident had complete control of a man's life. It had been an accident that Alec had given him the message in the first place, an accident that the shell had blown up the dugout where Wain had confined him, an accident that at the very moment he had first tried to contact Alec the big man was supposed to be a prisoner of war. The final chance had occurred a month ago when he had stepped into the lobby of the Regent Palace Hotel in London to avoid a shower of rain, and had run into the soldier on leave who told him that Alec was not only alive but back in Canada.

And yet not even this evidence was able to convince him that his life's continuance was as problematic as a fly's. Rather it seemed the final degradation of war that it could make a man's life appear so. (134)

20. See pages 10, 13, 25, 111, 145, 193-194, and 199.
21. Although a rigid distinction between mental and manual labour cannot be maintained, the distinction is useful for analysis. MacLennan does make this distinction explicit in a number of places in Barometer Rising. See especially page 123. This position is reinforced in his essay on "Roman Society and Today," Especially interesting is page 77 where MacLennan contrasts Aristotle's distinction between "superior" and "inferior" men.
22. For the utopian moment in MacLennan's early thought see "Roman History and Today," 77-78.
23. MacLennan's contrast between craft production and industrial/assembly line production is reminiscent of Marx's theory of alienation in the Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844. See David McLellan, Karl Marx: Selected Writings, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977; 75-111.
24. Ian McKay pointed out to me the significance of nationalism as a contributing force in the undermining of pre-modern rural communities.  
MacLennan's nationalism takes on a rather utopian dimension. See 217-218 Barometer Rising. The discovery of a new form of meaning in Canadian nationalism is certainly evident on these pages. In an essay originally published in MacLean's ("Help Thou Mine Unbelief," March 15, 1949) MacLennan writes:

Nationalism, Fascism, and Communism, as everybody should know by this time, are fundamentally neither political nor economic movements. They are, in their appeal to the masses and even to intellectuals, aberrations of the religious impulse. They are religious in their appeal because they provide materialistic-minded people with an easily recognizable master whom they can serve, an easily recognizable purpose which seems to make sense out of the mystery of human existence.

See Hugh MacLennan, Cross-Country, Toronto: Wm. Collins sons & Co., 1949; 141. One wonders if MacLennan is aware of the religious overtones in his paean to Canadian nationalism found in the last two pages of Barometer Rising.

## Chapter Two

1. Class organization in fishing and/or farming communities varied with time and place. Single-class communities consisting only of subsistence producers completely detached from an external marketplace are an ideal type useful for heuristic reasons, but would only describe the pre-contact communities of aboriginal North Americans. However, a combination of subsistence production, barter and exchange in the marketplace would have been widespread prior to the twentieth century. Indeed, this mode of living survived, for many Maritimers, well into this century. In this paper, subsistence producer refers not to the ideal type, but rather to a mixture of subsistence and small commodity production with subsistence production and barter forming the dominant component. Small commodity production will refer to situations dominated by production for exchange in the marketplace. For discussion of a five stage framework for conceptualizing class distinctions ranging from pure subsistence production to small scale capitalism see Martha MacDonald and M. Patricia Connelly, "Class and Gender in Fishing Communities in Nova Scotia," Studies in Political Economy, 30, Autumn, 1989; 63.
2. Charles Bruce, The Channel Shore, Toronto: MacMillan of Canada, 1956. All subsequent references to the text of The Channel Shore will be to the 1954 MacMillan edition. The New Canadian library edition(1984) and the Formac Press edition(1988) are photo reprints of the original MacMillan edition. The Township of Time,

Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd., 1959. The New Canadian library edition of The Township of Time was published in 1986.

3. Charles Bruce, The Channel Shore, 34.
4. Under the influence of M.M. Bakhtin, I find it useful to think of aesthetic texts as dialogues or conversations about fundamentally important issues concerning the period in which the text was produced. See, for instance, pages 5-46 in Bakhtin's Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics, edited and translated by Caryl Emerson, Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press; 1984. Chapter One, 5-46, provides an excellent introduction to Bakhtin's monologic/polyphonic typology of the novel which provides the conceptual framework for understanding historically significant aesthetic dialogues.
5. Charles Bruce, The Channel Shore, 395. The reference to Stan Currie as a professional journalist is found on page 217.
6. The word "memory" occurs even more frequently than "time," however, "time" and "memory" are woven together to make The Channel Shore a beautifully textured historical fabric. "Memory" is mentioned at least one or more times on the following pages: 29, 50, 61, 74, 77, 85, 86, 131, 145, 148, 157, 158, 162, 167, 176, 177, 178, 185, 193, 196, 201, 202, 211, 217, 241, 242, 243, 247, 248, 250, 252, 257, 271, 278, 279, 281, 299, 303, 316, 317, 320, 339, 343, 344, 361, 371, 373, 382, 394, 396, and 397. Many other references to "memory" have probably escaped my attention. These references do not include the equally numerous references to "remember," "remembered," and "remembering." When you include the many references to "time," as well as the other ways, both direct and indirect, that Bruce refers to the past, his preoccupation with historical transience is clearly foregrounded in the novel. The title of his collection of short stories, The Township of Time, set in the same Port Shoreham area, also foregrounds this emphasis on transience. Richard C. Davis writing about Bruce's poetry suggests that

it is time's flowing continuity that Bruce captures most winningly. When he looks at the present, he is immensely aware of the past; this consciousness of history arises frequently in his verse as well as in the mainstream of Maritime poetry.

In an endnote Davis tells us to "See the poetry of Alfred G. Bailey, Elizabeth Brewster, Robert Cockburn, Fred Cogswell, and Alden Nowlan for a few examples of the attention that is given to past time--both public and private--in modern Maritime verse. See "Tradition and the Individual Talent of Charles Bruce," Dalhousie Review, 59, no.3, 1979; 444 and 450.

7. Andrew Wainwright in Charles Bruce: A Literary Biography points out that Bruce was a heavy drinker during the time he was working on his unpublished first novel Currie Head(95). Wainwright also emphasizes the close links between the fictional life of Stan Currie in Currie's Head and Bruce's personal life. Both Currie and Bruce were dissatisfied with their lives. Stan eventually returns to the Shore--as does the later Stan Currie of The Channel Shore--to escape the drudgery of his work as a journalist. Wainwright argues that Bruce was drinking heavily during the writing of Currie Head (sometime between early 1941 to early 1944)(86). He wasn't happy with either his career as a journalist or with his life in Toronto(85-101). In fact Wainwright suggests that the writing of Currie Head was "very much an attempt by CB to come to terms with who he was(and is, at the time of the writing) and where he came from"(87). Bruce's non-commodified writing--as opposed to his commodified writing as a journalist--may have served the same psychological function during the writing of The Channel Shore.
8. Ibid., 69, 114, 191, and 287.
9. For an interesting account of anti-modernism in Maritime poetry see Gwendolyn Davies, "The Song Fishermen: A Regional Poetry Celebration," in Larry McCann(ed.), People and Place: Studies of Small Town Life in the Maritimes, Fredericton, New Brunswick: Acadiensis Press, 1987; 137-150.
10. Andrew Wainwright in Charles Bruce: A Literary Biography emphasizes Bruce's realism:

there were details of fact that CB wanted just right--the date for a moonlit night in the novel in 1946 had to correspond with the information in the Canadian Almanac; the news stories that Adam Falt [a character in The Channel Shore] peruses as he delivers his mail on Tuesday, July 16, 1919 in the novel are those stories that were in the actual Halifax Herald on that date. (154)

For other comments on Bruce's realism see pages 154-55 in Wainwright's biography of Bruce.

11. The phrase "resources of hope" is used as the title of a recent collection of essays by the late Raymond Williams. See Resources of Hope: Culture, Democracy, Socialism, London: Verso Press, 1989.
12. Bruce's experience of homesickness and his identification of urban modernity with a rat-race is found especially well-developed in one of his long poems which expresses this sentiment in a particularly virulent form, The Flowing Summer, Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1947. Bruce's nostalgia for the lost home of his childhood is found interconnected with his rat-race conception of modernity in Wainwright's biography: see pages 95, 212, 213, 221 and 238.
13. Charles Bruce, The Flowing Summer, Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1947.
14. Charles Bruce, The Channel Shore, 124.
15. Andrew Wainwright, Charles Bruce: A Literary Biography, 73.
16. Ian McKay brought to my attention the significance of the commodification of the word in Bruce's professional career as a journalist. See Bruce's News and the Southams (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1968.) for an interesting but uncritical account of the Southam family and the development of Canadian Press.
17. Thanks to Ken MacKinnon for pointing out these lines from Bruce's poem "Words are Never Enough." This poem in its entirety can be found in Wainwright's Charles Bruce: A Literary Biography, 70-71. It was originally published in The Mulgrave Road, 1951. It is also found in The Mulgrave Road: Selected Poems of Charles Bruce, edited by Andrew Wainwright and Lesley Choyce, Porters Lake, Nova Scotia: Pottersfield Press, 1985; 50-52.

### Chapter Three

1. Fred Jameson, "History and Class Consciousness as an Unfinished Project," in Rethinking Marxism, Spring 1988; 54.

2. See Ian McKay, Twilight at the Cove: Notes for a Genealogy of the Picturesque in Nova Scotia, unpublished manuscript, 1986.
3. Text by Ernest Buckler, photographs by Hans Weber, Nova Scotia: Window on the Sea, Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1973.
4. Originally published by McClelland and Stewart, Toronto, 1952. All subsequent references will refer to the New Canadian Library edition of The Mountain and the Valley, Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd., 1982.
5. Emphasis added.
6. Ernest Buckler, Ox Bells and Fireflies, Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1968. All references are made to the New Canadian Library edition, McClelland and Stewart, 1974.
7. Claude Bissell, Ernest Buckler Remembered, 130.
8. See Sir Andrew Macphail's The Master's Wife, Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1977 (originally published in 1939); also worth reading is Ian Ross Robertson, "Sir Andrew Macphail and Orwell," The Island Magazine, Fall/Winter 1976.
9. Ernest Buckler, Ox Bells and Fireflies, 87.
10. Ibid., 86.
11. The most notable exception to this is the recent study by Claude Bissell, Ernest Buckler Remembered, 1989.
12. See Ian McKay, "Twilight at Peggy's Cove: Towards a Genealogy of 'Maritimicity' in Nova Scotia", in Border/Lines, 12, Summer, 1988.
13. The history of tourism has only recently began in the Maritimes. See James H. Morrison, "American Tourism in Nova Scotia, 1871-1940," Nova Scotia Historical Review, 2, no.2, 1982; 40-51; and Ian McKay, "Twilight at Peggy's Cove: Notes for a Genealogy of the Picturesque in Nova Scotia," unpublished manuscript, 1986.
14. The phrase "modernism of underdevelopment" is used by Marshall Berman in All That is Solid Melts Into Air: the Experience of Modernity, New York: Penguin Books, 1982; 173-286. It refers to an area which has been penetrated in various way by the culture of modernity, but has remained economically underdeveloped.

15. Ernest Buckler, The Cruellest Month, Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1963; 10. All references are made to the New Canadian Library edition, 1977.
16. This phrase appears in Ian McKay's "Twilight at Peggy's Cove: Tourism and the Politics of Culture in a Dependent Canadian Region, 1880-1960," unpublished manuscript, no date.
17. Ernest Buckler, The Cruellest Month, 11. Elsewhere Buckler writes: "Nova Scotia is no Shangri-La. As far from that as trials from their answers." See Buckler, Nova Scotia: Window on the Sea, Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1973; 111.
18. This debate on pages 98-99 between Bruce Mansfield and Sheila clearly articulates much of what Buckler thought about the culture of tourism and American tourists.
19. For a fascinating account of the linking of anti-therapeutic thinking and antimodernism see T.J. Jackson Lears, No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture 1880-1920.
20. Claude Bissell, Ernest Buckler Remembered, 1989.
21. Ibid., 36-37.
22. Ibid., 36-37.
23. There are many significant issues that Bissell doesn't pursue in his study of Buckler. The most glaring one is his assertion in the introductory paragraph to chapter six --"Man of Letters"--that "The Mountain and the Valley is about a paradisaal rural society to which the passage of time brings change and decay"(125). This train of thought was contradicted by Bissell's actual analysis of The Mountain and the Valley in chapter three--"Promise Fulfilled: The Mountain and the Valley." See especially pages 62-63 in Bissell's study. For a detailed critique of Bissell's study of Buckler see Erik Kristiansen, "The Chalk-Face of Dismay: Ernest Buckler and the Agony of Modernity," New Maritimes, November/December 1990.
24. Claude Bissell, Ernest Buckler Remembered, 38.
25. Ibid., 41.



26. Bruce Mansfield's antimodern sentiments--his return to the rural countryside of his childhood--function to enable him to return to the urban world of modernity. This is similar to the role tourism plays for Sheila Giorno and Morse Halliday in The Cruellest Month. This is also identical to the analysis of tourism by Ian McKay. See McKay's "Twilight at Peggy's Cove: Towards a Genealogy of 'Maritimicity' in Nova Scotia," in Border/Lines 12, Summer 1988 and Twilight at the Cove: Notes for a Genealogy of the Picturesque in Nova Scotia, unpublished manuscript, 1986. It is interesting to note that Buckler also associates "recreational" sex with a therapeutic consciousness. In The Cruellest Month, Paul Creed reflects on therapeutic sex: "Casual therapeutic sex. That kind of sex (and it was abundant hereabouts) had never threatened control of his own boundaries in the least." This type of sexuality only reinforced Paul's isolation from others, and from a sense of commitment and community. This type of sexual "relationship" is associated with modernity. This is another example of Buckler's antimodernism. See The Cruellest Month, 59.
27. Marshall Berman, All That is Solid Melts Into Air: The Experience of Modernity, New York: Penguin Books, 1982.
28. Ibid., 15.
29. Ernest Buckler, Ox Bells and Fireflies, 84.
30. The apparent homogeneity of Buckler's pre-modern Norstead and Entremont contrasts with the cultural pluralism in Charles Bruce's The Channel Shore. For an interesting description of a "multivoiced" Shore see The Channel Shore, 290-91.
31. The topic of isolation is woven throughout the fabric of The Cruellest Month. Some particularly interesting examples can be found on pages 58, 59, 76, 138, 197, and 297.
32. For an examination of this topic, one that combines social and intellectual history with a strong Freudian point of view, see Christopher Lasch's Haven in a Heartless World, New York: Basic Books, 1977.  
 There is a similar conception of the home, although the kitchen is emphasized, in The Mountain and the Valley. When Martha, David Canaan's mother, was outside the kitchen "she felt strange." Her husband Joseph found the kitchen "though he never thought of it consciously... like an anchor: the one small corner safe from the sweat of the fields and the fret of the

seasons"(23). "The kitchen's heart would seem to beat with a great peace then"(23). However, the kitchen in the Canaan home is not a place of escape from a world of isolation and alienation. In *Entrement* work was meaningful, and made you feel a part of nature. For an interesting description of this idealized rural labour see The Cruellest Month, 136.

33. This is an obvious reference--one noted by all Buckler scholars--to T.S. Eliot's poem The Waste Land (1923). The opening line of the poem begins with "April is the cruellest month...." Claude Bissell, however, in his recent Ernest Buckler Remembered tells us that Buckler "had once suggested that his characters could be matched in 'The Burial of the Dead' section of The Waste Land, a suggestion that I found puzzling." (102) Buckler's reference to The Waste Land seems fairly obvious to me. Rebirth does not occur to the characters in The Cruellest Month any more than it does to the people in Eliot's poem. Buckler even more than Eliot sees the modern condition as hopeless. Modernity produced people who were spiritually dead. Their may be some exceptions to this, but, on the whole, the victims of a continually expanding modernity were the living dead.
34. Buckler's interest in the separation between language and the "reality" which it suggests is foregrounded in both The Mountain and the Valley and The Cruellest Month. In Ernest Buckler Remembered Bissell tells us that Buckler read serious philosophical works throughout his life. See the Preface (vii) to Ernest Buckler Remembered. It is more than likely that Buckler would have encountered "language philosophy" in his reading, and, perhaps, even earlier in his graduate work, in philosophy, at Toronto.
35. Ernest Buckler, Ox Bells and Fireflies, 84. For an alternative interpretation of language and self-consciousness in The Mountain and the Valley see Gerald Noonan, "Egoism and Style in The Mountain and the Valley" in Atlantic Provinces Literature Colloquium Papers, Saint John: Atlantic Canada Institute, 1977; 68-78. Although Noonan is aware that language is foregrounded in the novel, he misses its connection with the philosophy of language. He unfortunately sees Buckler's concentration on language as an aesthetic flaw. My thanks to Ken MacKinnon for pointing out this article to me.

Andrew Wainwright and Janice Kulyk Keefer also explore the significance of language in The Mountain and the Valley; see Wainwright's "Fern Hill Revisited:

Isolation and Death in The Mountain and the Valley," Studies in Canadian Literature, 7, no. 1, 1982; 63-89; and Janice Kulyk Keefer, Under Eastern Eyes, 224-31.

36. Ibid., 289. It is interesting to note that not only Buckler, but Charles Bruce had a somewhat similar mystical sense of time. The frequent references to time in The Channel Shore sometimes verge on the mystical.
37. Ibid., 125. For parallel comments concerning the relationship between language and social, economic and cultural transformation see Michel Foucault, The Order of Things: an Archaeology of the Human Sciences, London: Tavistock/Routledge, 1970. Foucault insists that

In its original form, when it was given to men by God himself, language was an absolutely certain and transparent sign for things, because it resembled them. The names of things were lodged in the things they designated, just as strength is written in the body of the lion, regality in the eye of the eagle, just as the influence of the planets is marked upon the brows of men: by the form of similitude. This transparency was destroyed at Babel as a punishment for men. Languages become separated and incompatible with one another only in so far as they had previously lost this original resemblance to the things that had been the prime reason for the existence of language. All the languages known to us are now spoken only against the background of this lost similitude. (36)

38. It is interesting to note similarities between Buckler's association of writing with modernity and Jean Jacques Rousseau's understanding of the relationship between writing and historical development. See Rousseau's "Essay on the Origin of Languages" in John H. Moran and Alexander Gode(eds), On the Origin of Language, New York: Frederick Ungar Pub. Co., 1966. For a deconstruction of Rousseau's "Essay on the Origin of Languages" see Jacques Derrida, Of Grammatology, (Trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak), Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976; 165-268. For an illuminating commentary on Derrida's essay see Christopher Norris, Derrida, London: Fontana Press, 1987; 97-127. Norris spells out quite clearly Rousseau's articulation of the differences between speaking and writing and the form of social organization each is associated with(97-98). These

differences can obviously be related to both Williams' transparent and opaque and to Tonnies' *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* forms of social organization.

39. Ernest Buckler, The Cruellest Month, 97-98.
40. Jacques Derrida, it is interesting to note, argues that a careful reading of Rousseau makes it possible to see a close connection between his analysis of writing in On the Origin of Language and his comments on masturbation in his Confessions. Derrida understands Rousseau to mean that they are both "supplements;" they both deal with representations of reality--images--rather than reality itself. Speech for Rousseau, however, directly encounters reality just as hetero-eroticism directly encounters another human body. See Derrida's Of Grammatology 144-157 and 165-167.
41. There was apparently a brief period of optimism in Buckler's understanding of social change and modernity. In the early 1970s Buckler was impressed by some of the beliefs and values of "hippies" and "back to the landers." In Nova Scotia Window on the Sea he writes:

Faith (and where else can faith for the future be placed?) must look too to the young. Here as elsewhere they are often labelled slovenly, rootless, nothing but destructive... all that. But the best of them (who are by far the greater majority) have seen through the trinkets of material success, have with their acute ear) heard the rattle of dry bones in the sepulchral vaults where 'familiar' of the megamachine reside, and are not prepared to buy with their lives the fat and fictions of the plush-lined occupation. In growing numbers they are searching for work that will fulfil not the pocket but the exercise of what a man among men is. Or should be. Not many will go back to the plough, for sure; and yet their stand is not to implausible an echo of the ploughman's whose touchstone is the candid and the candid only(126-127).

42. Ernest Buckler, The Mountain and the Valley, 23.

### Conclusion

1. Warren Tallman, "Wolf in the Snow," Canadian Literature, 5, Summer, 1960; 7-20; and Canadian Literature, 6, Autumn, 1960; 41-48. Tallman's essay is

also available in Gregory M. Cook, Ernest Buckler, Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson Ltd., 1972; 55-79.

2. Ibid., 55.
3. Mikhail Bakhtin, Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics, translated by Caryl Emerson, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984. See chapter one, 5-46.
5. Frederick William Wallace, Blue Water: A Tale of the Deep Sea Fishermen, Toronto: Musson Book Co., 1920.
6. Will R. Bird, So Much to Record, Toronto: Ryerson, 1951.
7. For an historical analysis of Bird's social and historical vision see Ian McKay, " 'In My Small Field Of Things Historical': Tourism, Will R. Bird, and a New Kind of Nova Scotia History. 1935-1964," unpublished manuscript, 1989.
8. Will Bird's So Much to Record conveys the position that a significant amount of wage labour existed in the Carrsboro area--the fictional centre of the novel--from its first settlement in the late eighteenth-century. Bruce and Buckler convey in their fiction the more recent emergence of a significant degree of wage labour in the rural areas described in their novels. Detailed historical studies are needed to resolve this issue. It is probably safe to say that there was an unequal development of wage labour in Nova Scotia. Wage labour, capitalism and hence social classes would have developed earlier in some areas of the province than in others. Steven Maynard in a recent paper argued that Hopewell, in Pictou County, Nova Scotia, remained essentially a pre-capitalist community until the early 1890s, see Maynard's On the Market's Edge: The Productive Household and the Capitalist Transformation of the Maritime Countryside, Hopewell, Nova Scotia, 1800-1890; unpublished manuscript, 1990. Rusty Bitterman presents a different picture of the Northeastern Maritimes in his Farm Households and Wage Labour in the Northeastern Maritimes in the Early Nineteenth-Century, unpublished manuscript, 1990. Bitterman argues that wage labour provided a significant amount of income for many rural small commodity producers as far back as the early years of the nineteenth-century.

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