

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

THE IMAGE OF THE TEACHER AS REFLECTED IN SELECTED
NOVELS OF THE PRAIRIE PROVINCES

by



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ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this study was to analyse a selection of prairie novels which were published between 1924 and 1970 to determine what was said of, and to, teachers in order to establish the image that was created of teachers. To accomplish this, it was felt that it was necessary, first of all, to describe Western Canadian society as it appears in the novels, the types of people and their values in regard to such things as their motivations, their activities, and their views of life in general.

The main problem that was investigated was this: What was the image of the schoolteacher that was reflected in selected novels of the prairie provinces? The main problem was approached through several sub-problems which included:

1. What were the characteristic attitudes of persons in the novels and what were their values and beliefs, in general, about life?
2. How did adults regard schooling?
3. How did children regard schooling?
4. How did adults regard teachers?
5. How did children regard teachers?

The attitudes and opinions of both adults and children toward schooling and teachers as indicated by direct and indirect statements by the characters in the novels was presented because the aim of this research was to describe the image of teachers by considering what others had to say about teachers and not to create an image based on teachers' self-perceptions.

The analysis of the eighteen novels included in the sample, revealed that there were many different opinions about the merits of schooling as well as the virtues and importance of teachers. While there were a number of individual teachers who were liked and respected by both adults and children, it was felt that teachers, generally, were not highly regarded nor were they or their work considered to be of great importance in the communities of the west.

While this unflattering image may have changed in relatively recent times, it must be noted that most of the novels in this sampling of prairie literature spoke of a rural society with settings ranging in time from about 1900 to about 1950.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the Study

When one surveys the historical or biographical literature of the development of the prairie provinces one is struck by the number of references made to individuals in various occupational groups. Much is said of the pioneering exploits of hardy farmers, ranchers, lumbermen, or miners who built personal empires with little more than their vitality and endurance as their physical capital. Others frequently referred to are the courageous women who became the wives of these men and who often worked shoulder to shoulder with their husbands in their enterprises. The literature also abounds with the traditional stories of endurance of doctors during such crises as the Great 'Flu Epidemic of 1918, or the fortitude of the small--business men during the Depression of the Hungry Thirties. A considerable amount of documentation is evident of the successes of soldiers back from the Front; from Dunkirk and Hong Kong, or from Seoul. Still other accounts give recognition to prairie people who gained national and international prominence in the fields of politics or economics: Aberhart, Diefenbaker, Douglas, Manning, Michener, and Ronning are a few such names.

The interesting fact is the lack of recognition, in an historical sense, that is given to educators in general, and to teachers, in particular. Whether this is so because of the type of individual which characterized the teaching profession or whether this was because of the relative importance which communities placed upon the role of education and educators in the prairies is a matter upon which one can only speculate.

Individuals involved in education have long been concerned about teacher roles and images. It was the aim of this study to analyse the image that was ascribed to teachers by investigating what a number of selected novels had to say about them. The prime concern was to interpret what novels had to say about teachers and not with what teachers have had to say about themselves.

Farrell says,

Our images make us seem important rather than be important. Occasionally . . . something jolts us into looking at the reality behind the image
The image we fancy ourselves projecting is, usually, a flattering one¹

As Farrell has pointed out, teachers usually esteem themselves quite highly; the motto of the Alberta Teachers Association, for example, is "Magistri neque servi" which translates as, "Masters, not servants." One needs only

¹J. Farrell, "The Teacher Image in Fact and Fiction" (paper read at the Canadian Association of Professors of Education convention, May, 1970, Winnipeg, Manitoba).

to read such accounts as Cashman's The Edmonton Story² and More Edmonton Stories³ or various community histories such as Golden Memoirs⁴ or Harvest of Memories⁵ to realize that historically, teachers have seldom been involved in the power structures of communities and have had little influence in policy or decision-making.

Methodology

Upon the completion of the rather difficult task of selection of novels, an approach to their reading was adopted to standardize the method of analysis. The approach was as follows:

1. A "quick" reading for the purpose of familiarizing this writer with the novels.
2. A more careful reading involving the making of notes according to the following categories:
 - a. Quotations about community values, beliefs, and the general outlook on life held by the characters in the novels.
 - b. Quotations about what adults thought about schooling.

^{2,3}Stories, humorous and otherwise, of the exploits of some of the characters in Edmonton's early years as a settlement.

^{4,5}Regional histories of the Bindloss, Alberta and Majestic-Farrell Lake, Alberta, areas respectively. Many similar community histories were done as Centennial Projects in Canada's Centennial Year, 1967.

c. Quotations about what children thought about schooling.

d. Quotations about what adults thought about teachers.

e. Quotations about what children thought about teachers.

3. A third re-reading to serve as a review and a check for possible omissions of relevant details.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Main Problem

Much research has been carried out concerning the roles of teachers, teachers' role perceptions, and professional images; however, these have usually been done by such data gathering devices as questionnaires, interviews, surveys, and other formal data-collecting techniques. The approach that this study took varied considerably from the above in that it outlines general views about teachers by analysing what was said about them in selected novels about the prairies in which teachers played at least fairly significant roles.

The study did not concern itself with teachers' self-perceptions but with the perceptions that non-teachers had of teachers and schooling.

Succinctly, the problem is: What was the image of the schoolteacher that was reflected in selected novels of

the prairie provinces?

Sub-Problems

To help in the assessment of the teacher's image as found in the novels, as well as to establish a framework of conditions, physically and socially, in which the teacher worked, the main problem was divided into several smaller, more specific problems. These included:

1. What were the characteristic attitudes of persons in the novels and what were their values and beliefs, in general, about life?
2. How did adults regard schooling?
3. How did children regard schooling?
4. How did adults regard teachers?
5. How did children regard teachers?

Need for the Study

A survey of theses and dissertations that have been done in the various faculties and departments of Canadian universities showed that no similar study with the delimitations placed upon it that this study has, had ever been done.

Studies which have come out of the various departments of Faculties of Education and Faculties of Graduate Studies, especially the Department of Educational Administration that dealt with the topic of teacher images, traditionally involved very formal

research designs with accompanying surveys, questionnaires, and statistical analyses. Others which have dealt with the topic of teacher roles or educational influences of earlier eras usually took the form of historical research with accompanying letters, documents, charters, maps, and tables.^{6,7}

Related studies, done in the various Departments of English in Canadian universities, either did not concern themselves directly with the role of teachers, or often took the form of analysing a single element within a particular writer's works.^{8,9}

Various papers, lectures, and short articles written in the past several years have dealt with related areas of concern such as prairie regionalism, the importance of the schoolhouse, and in some instances, teacher images; however, to date no specific, detailed studies of

⁶E. D. Hodgson, "The Nature and Purposes of the Public School in the Northwest Territories (1885-1905) and Alberta (1905-1963)" (unpublished Doctor's dissertation, University of Alberta, 1964).

⁷F. Loewen, "The Status of the Teaching Profession in Canada" (unpublished Master's thesis, University of Alberta, 1949).

⁸D. M. Cameron, "Puritanism in Canadian Prairie Fiction" (unpublished Master's thesis, University of British Columbia, 1966).

⁹G. D. McLeod, "The Primeval Element in the Prairie Novels of Frederick Phillip Grove" (unpublished Master's thesis, University of Manitoba, 1966).

the problem that was outlined earlier, seem to have been done.^{10,11,12,13}

Assumptions

It was necessary to assume a number of conditions that were to serve as a guide, both to the analysis of the literature involved as well as to the reporting of results, in this document.

1. It was assumed that the novels which were chosen were "good" novels; that is, they had been generally accepted by literary critics, and perhaps more important, by the public. The objective of this research was not to criticize the novels as to their strengths or weaknesses or as to their merits as literature, but to deal with certain statements of opinion and descriptions of and by the characters in the novels.

2. It was assumed that recent or present-day authors

¹⁰A. T. Elder, "Some Marks of Regionalism in the Canadian Novels of the Prairies" (paper read at the Canadian Conference of Teachers of English convention, Calgary, August, 1969).

¹¹E. D. Hodgson, (unpublished manuscript, "So Are We All," University of Alberta, Edmonton, February, 1971).

¹²H. Kreisel, "The Prairie: A State of Mind" Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada, Fourth Series, Volume VI, Section 11, 1968, Ottawa, pp. 171-180.

¹³J. Oster, "The Culture-Bearer in Prairie Fiction" (paper read at English 590 seminar, University of Alberta, Edmonton, March, 1971).

who were writing of a much-earlier period of time reflected the genuine values, mores, and beliefs of that earlier time and did not allow their present-day frame of reference to interfere or distort the representations of other eras.

3. Several novels that were included in the sample may have been based on the actual experiences of the authors themselves since, in fact, several of the authors were or are teachers; however, it was assumed that novels in the sample were more genuinely pieces of fiction rather than autobiographical sketches.

4. It was assumed that the novels that were chosen presented teachers and other characters in a realistic way and that it was reasonably safe to draw the conclusions that were drawn as to how the teachers were regarded by their contemporaries, and as to their roles in the societies that were described in the novels.

5. It was assumed that the methods of analysis and the results as reported were valid; that is, they did not emphasize only the favorable aspects in which teachers were represented while de-emphasizing the negative or placing more emphasis on the latter while diminishing the importance of the former.

6. It was assumed that by making general statements about the image of teachers as this image was developed in many novels was a more realistic approach than trying

to account for or describe the image of every individual teacher that was mentioned.

Delimitations of the Study

A study which was so wide in scope had to have some rather severe delimitations placed upon it to keep it within manageable proportions.

1. The literature reviewed was limited to a survey of novels published between 1924 and 1970. To have analysed and summarized all that has been written about teachers in biographies, autobiographies, essays, professional magazines, short stories, newspaper articles, editorials, and even poetry, is a task which could have lasted for years or even a lifetime and which, at that, would have been subject to errors or omissions.

2. The literature reviewed was limited to a survey of selected novels. While there have been scores of novels written which have included a schoolteacher in some aspect of the story, only a sample in which the teacher plays a reasonably significant role was selected.

3. The literature reviewed was limited to a survey of selected novels of the prairie provinces. It was felt that the similarities which are identifiable in such areas as history, settlement, climate, economics, politics, industries, and types of individuals who settled the prairies are great enough to allow the three provinces to be categorized into a single group. The similarities

which exist between the prairie provinces and the Maritimes, Central Canada, or even British Columbia, are assumed to be not nearly as great; hence the exclusion of the literature from these geographical regions.

4. While it was necessary to consider the values, beliefs, and ways of life of the community in order to establish a framework within which the teacher appeared, reference was made primarily to teachers and not to such related areas as the teacherage or the schoolhouse. In spite of Elder's contention that, "No prairie novel worth its salt is without a dramatic scene in the district school,"¹⁴ and in spite of the importance of the school in the social life of the community, the school was not an integral area of concern.

Limitations of the Study

1. Since this project involved the analysis of works of fiction only, it cannot be assumed that similar conclusions could be reached were works of a more factual nature analysed. However, it is quite possible that there would be no great dissimilarity of findings were factual literature subjected to the same scrutiny.

2. The conclusions that were drawn from this study applied only to teachers and cannot be projected to include clergymen, Sunday School teachers, public health

¹⁴Elder, op. cit., p. 2.

nurses, or others who engaged in educationally related functions.

3. The findings of this study had relevance only insofar as the novels of the region known as the prairie provinces of Western Canada are concerned. It is quite conceivable that other provinces of Canada and many of the Mid-Western States of the United States of America have literature and therefore teacher images not dissimilar to those of the prairie provinces. These other geographical regions were, however, beyond the scope of this study.

The Sample

The major criterion that was required of a prairie novel to be included in the sample was that it had to contain a schoolteacher whose character was more than just incidental to the story. The second and less important criterion was that the book had to have enjoyed popular acclaim or have received some favorable reception from the critics.

Peel's Bibliography of the Prairie Provinces to 1953 and the Supplement to that Bibliography plus several bibliographies to various English courses taught at the University of Alberta were the major sources of information as to what existed in the field of prairie literature. The task of selecting books with the necessary

prerequisites was made much more tolerable through the kind assistance of the thesis advisor, Dr. E. Hodgson and also Professor R. Harrison of the English Department of the University of Alberta, both of whom have extensive knowledge of the literature of the prairies. In the course of the selection process many novels which were thought to have been eligible were read.

While several of the books were totally unsuitable for the needs of this study, others tended to give similar impressions as novels in the sample and thus helped to vindicate the selection of books. The eighteen novels which comprised the final sample constituted approximately 4600 pages of narrative.

The following list of novels with the dates of their initial printing was the sample which was finally selected.

R. Stead	Smoking Flax	1924
M. Ostenso	Wild Geese	1925
L. Salverson	Viking Heart	1925
R. Stead	Grain	1926
F. Grove	Yoke of Life	1930
F. Grove	Fruits of the Earth	1933
S. Ross	As For Me and My House	1941
E. McCourt	Music at the Close	1947
W. Mitchell	Who Has Seen the Wind	1947
C. van der Mark	In Due Season	1947

G. Roy	Where Nests the Water Hen	1951
V. Lysenko	Yellow Boots	1954
V. Lysenko	Westerly Wild	1956
A. Storey	Prairie Harvest	1959
R. Wiebe	Peace Shall Destroy Many	1962
M. Laurence	Stone Angel	1964
M. Laurence	Jest of God	1966
C. van der Mark	Honey in the Rock	1966

It will be noted that of the thirteen authors listed, six are female, seven are men; of the eighteen books chosen, they are evenly divided, nine apiece, between the two sexes.

Of all the books which could have been chosen, the earliest book that was selected was Stead's Smoking Flax published in 1924. The reason that other books with an earlier date of publication were not chosen was that, generally, these earlier books were of an idealistic, romantic nature with little of the realism which characterized many of the later works. Of the earlier romantic literature Carlyle King of the University of Saskatchewan says,

Nobody ever suffers long or gets really hurt or says "damn". At the worst, people make some dirty faces at one another, but before the end of the book the tears are wiped from every eye and most of the characters live virtuously ever after.¹⁵

¹⁵Martha Ostenso's Wild Geese, ed. Malcolm Ross New Canadian Library Series, Number 18; McClelland and Stewart Limited, Carlyle King, Introduction, p. V 1961.

It is highly unlikely that a very accurate presentation of other occupational groups, let alone teachers, would emerge from such literature.

A further comment on realism in prairie novels is made by Thomas Saunders of the Winnipeg Free Press.

The appearance of Ostenso and Grove as novelists brought a new dimension to Western writing. In their 1925 novels, rural romanticism with a strong tincture of sentimentality was replaced by a more authentic realism . . . it was a genuine attempt to present life as it is (or as it was in a pioneering environment) . . .¹¹

RELATED LITERATURE

The following articles and publications were complementary to the scope of this study.

- Elder, A. T. "Some Marks of Regionalism in the Canadian Novels of the Prairies." Paper read at the Canadian Conference of Teachers of English convention, August, 1969, Calgary, Alberta.
- Farrell, J. "The Teacher Image in Fact and Fiction." Paper read at the Canadian Association of Professors of Education convention, May, 1970, Winnipeg, Manitoba.
- Hodgson, E. Unpublished manuscript, "So Are We All," University of Alberta, February, 1971, Edmonton, Alberta.
- Kreisel, H. "The Prairie: A State of Mind." Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada; Fourth Series, Volume VI, Section 11, 1968, Ottawa, Ontario.
- McCourt, E. Canadian West in Fiction: New Canadian Library Series, McClelland and Stewart, 1970, Toronto, Ontario. (Reprint)

¹¹Robert Stead's Grain, ed. Malcolm Ross New Canadian Library Series, Number 36; McClelland and Stewart Limited; Thomas Saunders, Introduction, p. V 1969

Oster, J. "The Culture-Bearer in Prairie Fiction."
Paper read at an English Seminar, University of
Alberta, March, 1971, Edmonton, Alberta.

Chapter 2

THE LAND AND THE PEOPLE

Even a perfunctory reading of a number of novels written about the prairie provinces soon reveals that prairie literature is almost exclusively a rural literature. It is for this reason that much of what was said of the teacher was said within the context of a rural society or, at best, a small-town society whose economy and interests were dominated by agriculture and agriculturally-related industry and activity.

Another phenomenon about prairie novels must be noted. Even though many of the novels which were included in the sample were written in the 1950's and 1960's, they are invariably set in a period of time which includes either the First World War, the "Roaring Twenties," the "Hungry Thirties," World War Two, or several or all of these eras. These books, then, do not generally reflect the rural society of the 1960's and early 1970's with its problems of wheat-glut, the disappearance of the small farm and the small town, and the centralization of schools; they speak instead of a vastly different agricultural society in which isolation, loneliness and independence, poor farming methods, little mechanization, and in educational matters, the one-room

rural school, were the accepted ways of life.

Since the image of the teacher is so inexorably linked with the nature of the society in which a teacher works, the type of society which was portrayed by the novelists needs to be described before the teachers' image is considered. For this reason it is necessary to describe the physical and social environment as well as the activities of the people of the prairies in order to better account for the image of teachers.

Environment

The image that most often comes to mind when speaking of the prairies is that of an immense, treeless, flat terrain whose borders are restricted only by a distant horizon. While there are, of course, many other types of terrain ranging from gently rolling to very hilly, and vegetation which runs from scrubby brush to heavy woods, it is usually the flat grassland that is referred to in the novels. It seems that Kreisel had this in mind when he wrote, "All discussion of the literature produced in the Canadian west must of necessity begin with the impact of the landscape upon the mind."¹

¹H. Kreisel, "The Prairie: A State of Mind" Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada, Fourth Series, Volume VI, Section 11, 1968, Ottawa, p. 173.

The very first sentence of W. O. Mitchell's novel, Who Has Seen the Wind, seems to bear testimony to the earlier statement; "Here was the least common denominator of nature, the skeleton requirements simply of land and sky--Saskatchewan prairie."² Also, Sinclair Ross's choice of a name for a town, "Horizon", in his novel As for Me and My House³ indicates a quality of openness and vastness that would be total'y unsuitable for any other Canadian geographic region.

If the two elements of the surroundings , sky and land, appear to be simple and easy with which to coexist, then it is an appearance that is extremely deceptive. Either of these two elements, or at the worst, the elements combined, could produce conditions to test the mettle of even the bravest or most optimistic of men. The outspoken and often foul-mouthed but inimitable Sean O'Connell in Mitchell's Who Has Seen the Wind, indicates succinctly what these two elements could conjure up for the prairie farmer, "Yearsa gittin' rusted out an' sawflied out an' cutwormed out an' hopped out an' hailed out an' droughted out an' rusted out . . ."4

²W. O. Mitchell, Who Has Seen the Wind (originally published 1947) Macmillan of Canada, Toronto, 1960. p. 3.

³S. Ross, As for Me and My House, (originally published 1941) New Canadian Library Series, McClelland and Stewart Limited, Toronto, 1969. p. 7.

⁴Mitchell, Who Has Seen the Wind, p. 118.

Nature, for the prairie farmer, was an unfaithful mistress, one moment presenting the hope of an abundant crop and the next savagely destroying the months of expectation through a hailstorm or some other such cataclysm within a few moments of time. To those who have never experienced the savagery of a prairie hailstorm perhaps Grove's description in Yoke of Life seems overly dramatic or exaggerated; to those who have, it falls far short in that it can not describe the bitter helpless and hopelessness that left the farmer unable to blame anyone, not even himself, for the tragedy that had befallen him.

A white terror of light seemed to rend the world asunder and to stab every eye, followed by a fierce, rattling peal which made the hearer tremble by virtue of its diabolical significance.

. . . The world seemed to stand in ruins . . .
Dead chickens were lying about the yard as if they had been killed by lightning. A cow lowed by the side of her calf which had been slain. The sheep bleated in a panic. In the house, not a pane of glass had been left whole.⁵

Nor was the farmer given a reprieve from the follies of nature with the coming of the other seasons of autumn, winter, and spring. What Sean O'Connell failed to mention in his tirade was the constant prospect of a late spring or an early autumn frost, either of which could destroy a crop; nor did he describe the agonies of a

⁵F. P. Grove, The Yoke of Life; The Macmillan Co. of Canada Ltd. Toronto, 1930, pp. 59-60.

prairie blizzard or the seemingly interminable winter with its savagely cold temperatures that sapped the strength of man and beast alike. Wiebe's Peace Shall Destroy Many gives a brief insight into this aspect of prairie life.

One day hung wan, the next howled in whiteness. The blast streamed and eddied round house, barn and bush; men ventured their lives to feed stock in barns and straw sheds; they staggered indoors to thaw their faces . . .

The wind dropped; hoar-frost blistered the tree skeletons. As the mercury huddled to the depths of its bulb, sun-dogs glared doubly through the crystals of the sky At night wolves moaned under the faintly-bloody sprawl of northern lights. On November 29th the mercury stood fifty-three degrees below zero

Every breath drew a knife-wound down the throat The men, dumping hay in mangers and heaping straw under the bellies of their stock, knew that the silent malignancy was far more deadly.⁶

To provide a stunning contrast to the miseries of winter on the prairie, there is the picture of summer on the same prairies during the 1930's as described by Mitchell in Who Has Seen the Wind.

It was another dry year with the crops brown before their time, dust black against the sun sometimes for a week on end. Early in July the town lights had been turned on throughout the entire afternoon. Rain had followed, but it was too late to help the crops. And now in the latter part of July, the hot winds breathed again, rising each evening at the end of still and burning days.⁷

⁶R. Wiebe, Peace Shall Destroy Many; McClelland and Stewart Limited, Toronto, 1962. pp. 166-167.

⁷Mitchell, Who Has Seen the Wind, p. 185.

A statement from Wiebe's Peace Shall Destroy Many is a terse comment and a succinct summary of the most basic fact of life for the resident of the prairies; "Really, the whole cycle of the seasons was an endless battle to retain existence."⁸

*

Character and Nature of the People

Within the novels one finds that life under such adverse conditions developed a generation of people whose fibre was as tough as the conditions under which they lived. Physical, mental, and moral tenacity were qualities which were characteristic of those who stayed on the prairies. These qualities were admired and respected. Weakness, infirmity, and especially shiftlessness were qualities of character which were despised or pitied and which brought scorn or condescension upon anyone unfortunate enough to possess them. Physical strength, especially, was a quality which was almost venerated; it seems more than coincidental that the main characters of several novels, other than teachers, were physically powerful men. Of Mack Colm in Grove's Yoke of Life it

⁸Wiebe, Peace Shall Destroy Many, p. 199.

⁹For further quotations re: environment see Appendix "A".

was said, "The breadth of his shoulders was enormous,"⁹ and later, "The giant's movement was one of despair."¹⁰ Abe Spalding in Grove's Fruits of the Earth is described as, "Physically, Abe was extraordinarily tall, measuring six feet four; Abe was built in proportion to his height, broad-shouldered, and deep-chested,"11 Even the despicable Caleb Gare of Ostenso's Wild Geese is described as having "tremendous shoulders and massive head."¹²

Concerning physical weakness, the matter-of-fact tone in the voice of Mr. Wiens in Wiebe's Peace Shall Destroy Many can almost be heard as he reminisces over the deaths of neighbors (husband and wife) who were both physically weak.

"They both weren't very strong," Wiens said "He died that winter of blood poisoning in his foot--no good handling the axe in the bush She died a few months later--never was strong"13

It seems that the chief reason physical strength was so highly regarded was that this was the means

⁹Grove, Yoke of Life, p. 18

¹⁰Grove, Yoke of Life, p. 57

¹¹F. Grove, Fruits of the Earth, (originally published 1933) New Canadian Library Series, McClelland and Stewart Limited, p. 19

¹²M. Ostenso, Wild Geese, (originally published 1925) New Canadian Library Series, McClelland and Stewart Limited, p. 13.

¹³Wiebe, Peace Shall Destroy Many, p. 113

whereby one could achieve land, property, and goods. An unashamed materialism seems to pervade the thinking of most of the major characters in the novels; a materialism that in most cases could be forgiven, if indeed it was a sin, when one reflects that many of the residents of the prairies spoken of in the novels were immigrants or first-generation Canadians who had escaped from virtual serfdom or tenant-farmer status in the "Old Country", whatever the name of that "Old Country" may have been. Storey's novel, Prairie Harvest, attests to this gross materialism.

. . . one could not but be thrilled to look in any direction and see the black fields broken by the greening poplar bluffs and know they were all owned by this tall greying man and his sons. A lifetime of toil and heartbreak, at last crowned with success."¹⁴

From the same source, "Yet as he [David] looked at his father, he realized that he was blind to all this, [What was the ultimate end in a man's life?] all save the material success of the farm."¹⁵

Of Anton Landash in Lysenko's Yellow Boots, it was said, "Land was the only good that Landash knew, and for him, all progress had to be related to it."¹⁶ Indeed this obsession about land was so great that he was willing

¹⁴A. Storey, Prairie Harvest; The Ryerson Press, Toronto, 1959, p. 140

¹⁵Ibid

¹⁶V. Lysenko, Yellow Boots; The Ryerson Press, Toronto, 1954, p. 200

to trade a daughter whom he did not love, to a clumsy, boorish farmer for a few acres of land.

Abe Spalding of Grove's Fruits of the Earth quite frankly admits that he derives satisfaction from being the biggest and best farmer in the district. When his wife begs him to retire in the fall of the year in which he has just threshed fifty-two thousand bushels of wheat and not counting the oats and barley, he replies, "But before we die, we want to find some satisfaction. You ask me to give up when that satisfaction is within reach."¹⁷

Hay crops, animals, farm produce, and especially a crop of flax because its price was so high, were the sources of great satisfaction to Caleb Gare in Ostenso's Wild Geese. Of the flax crop it was said:

The flax was his pride--his great hope. He had planted twice as much this year as last. Articles on its cultivation had become to him the Word of God. The rye grass would grow abundantly without a thought, and he would sell it well, but the flax was a thing to pray over.¹⁸

The minister's wife, Mrs. Bentley, in Ross's As For Me and My House is as guilty of materialistic goals as are any of the farmers mentioned above. In her drive to save a thousand dollars so that she and her husband can

¹⁷Grove, Fruits of the Earth, p. 111

¹⁸Ostenso, Wild Geese, p. 101

leave the Ministry to buy a bookstore, she quite frankly admits, "It's getting to be an obsession with me, this thousand dollars that I'm trying to save, . . ."19

Another example of the extent to which materialism possessed the prairie farmer is expressed by Old Man Hunter of McCourt's Music at the Close. This old farmer is so happy that the war (World War One) has caused the price of wheat to rise rapidly that he hopes the War will continue for several more years. Of other farmers who did not express this hope orally it was said:

There were many who in their hearts shared Old Man Hunter's hope that the Germans might hang on a year or two longer--long enough to permit the selling of at least two more crops at record prices."20*

Perhaps it was this materialism which deepened the impact of the terrible years of drought and economic depression in the 1930's. The loss of every indicator of success and status, one's material possessions left a void within people which took many individuals years to refill. Henry Torey, of Storey's Prairie Harvest, for example, had left the farm behind and was an old man before he realized that the true harvest for his wife and himself

¹⁹Ross, As For Me and My House, p. 151

²⁰E. McCourt, Music at the Close, The Ryerson Press, Toronto, 1947, p. 34

*The samples given are only a few of the examples of materialism which is evident in the novels. Almost every novel revealed similar forms of materialistic thinking.

was the success and achievement of his children and not a field of grain.

Work

The material successes to which the characters in the novels aspired could only be achieved through tremendous physical exertion in the form of work. Little mechanization, few labor-saving devices, animal muscle as a source of power, and little or no monetary capital reduced work to its most elemental form, the Biblical curse of the "sweat of one's brow". Often, human energy alone was the farm's capital. For the head of the family, the total mobilization of all persons in his family as well as the animals in his yard was the means whereby his dream of success could be achieved. For his wife and his children, engaging in a great deal of work was often the only means to escape boredom or the reality of their poverty and, in many cases, the only means to maintain sanity in the face of isolation and loneliness. Of the Gare household it was said: "Work did not destroy the loneliness; work was only a fog in which they moved so that they might not see the loneliness of each other."²¹ Concerning Marie Torey in a winter of loneliness and isolation it was said: "She shovelled snow even where it was not necessary. She bucked wood until the teepee

²¹Ostenso, Wild Geese, p. 33

became so small that it was in danger of collapsing."²²

Abe's driving power told; for two weeks, work in the fields became an orgy.²³

The farmers in general . . . worked from dawn to dark and were amazed that the days were not longer The winters were given over to things the summers did not allow for, and if there was any spare time it was used in preparing for the next summer.²⁴

When one compares the above statements with the following quotations, it is not difficult to see that often the wives and children of these farmers did not share their dreams of material success but worked hard for other reasons.

Amelia Gare created work for herself about the place; it blunted her feelings and kept her thoughts occupied.²⁵

In order to escape from her boredom she set herself the task of learning to knit and read at the same time.²⁶

"What's there to do if you don't work?" She did not even shrug.²⁷

To describe this unnatural preoccupation with work as being part of a "Protestant work ethic" is an inaccurate assessment of the situation. The cast of characters which is found in the novels reads almost like

²²Storey, Prairie Harvest, p. 48

²³Grove, Fruits of the Earth, p. 101

²⁴Grove, Fruits of the Earth, p. 78

²⁵Ostenso, Wild Geese, p. 214

²⁶Storey, Prairie Harvest, p. 40

²⁷Wiebe, Peace Shall Destroy Many, p. 135

a list of United Nations delegates. While it is true that many of the settlers were of a Protestant persuasion, Catholic families and families who seemingly had no religious frame of reference are to be found; yet it seems that none was immune from the obsession with hard physical labor. In spite of the view that hard work was the way to achieve material success, the fact that hard work was a matter of necessity and not a matter of choice cannot be overlooked. As pointed out earlier, life on the prairies was a demanding and exacting affair and was controlled by the law: those who did not work hard or tried to "cut corners" did not reap any crops, whether of grain, produce, or livestock, and hence could not exist. (In many cases, through misfortune, even those who did work hard did not reap anything either.)

The only two groups of people who did not subscribe to this work ethic and who were seemingly unaffected by the vagaries of nature or poor crops were the Indians and Metis. In the novels in which they are mentioned, they are usually spoken of in a condescending manner. By and large, they were considered to be lazy, shiftless, dirty, and a people to be avoided. An example of this is to be found in Lina Ashley's caustic comment to her daughter Poppy in van der Mark's In Due Season, "The minute you think my head is turned, you're in the arms of

a dirty half-breed."²⁸ Deacon Block's statement in Wiebe's Peace Shall Destroy Many further illustrates this prejudice, "Look at the filth and laziness that Moosomins--or Mackenzies--live in: you can barely stand in the doorway, such a frightful stench pours out at you."²⁹ The fact that these prejudices were usually based on hearsay rather than studied observation is never taken into account. All other ethnic groups and nationalities seemed to subscribe to the ethic of hard work and it was through this medium that the hodge-podge of prairie peoples found a common ground of understanding and cooperation in spite of the multifarious languages and life-styles, even though there were tensions between the various ethnic groups.

Persons who were considered to be "producers" such as farmers or ranchers or those who were involved with auxiliary services to these producers such as merchants, medical doctors, mailmen, policemen, or railway agents were usually quite highly regarded in their communities. Others who were lawyers, clergy, or schoolteachers were often looked down upon by the general population since these people did not produce anything as tangible as crops or livestock and the activities in which they were

²⁸van der Mark, In Due Season, p. 225

²⁹Wiebe, Peace Shall Destroy Many, p. 202.

engaged could scarcely be considered work.

This attitude is shown in Mitchell's Who Has Seen The Wind in which the local physician Dr. Svarich, tells Miss Thompson:

You don't expect to be taken seriously, do you? You're only a school teacher. You're not the mayor--the banker--a business man; you're not the wife even of a property owner. What you should do is pick a man of weight in the town"30

Gander Stake in Stead's Grain reflects this type of thinking, "There were times, it is true, when he found them at work--or at what they called work--Cal dictating and Minnie pounding her typewriter."³¹ Later, in the same conversation with himself he reflects, "He doubted the possibility of any one making a living by writing for magazines." As will be seen later, Gander Stake had little use for either education or the educated. The thought of anyone making a living through any other means than farming was a difficult concept for Gander to accept. In an open confession to Cal and Minnie he says, "Never could understand how you manage to get paid for--words."³²

The same type of intense activity that characterized daily work also characterized the social and recreational aspects of prairie life. Accounts of ball

³⁰Mitchell, Who Has Seen the Wind, p. 163

³¹R. Stead, Grain, (originally published 1926) New Canadian Library Series, McClelland and Stewart Limited, p. 188

³²Stead, Grain, p. 196

games, for example, as described in Peace Shall Destroy Many, Music at the Close, and In Due Season, all speak of the same grim determination to win; winning was the only reason games were played, a loss being a shameful experience that was not forgotten by players and spectators alike for months or even years. Playing ball games just for fun or the camaraderie that such an event could generate were alien concepts to the people in the selected novels.

Social dances, too, more often resembled contests of endurance rather than an occasion to relax, visit, and enjoy oneself; dances were engaged in with a type of grim enthusiasm. These dances were no candlelight and soft-music affairs but instead were loud, toe-stamping events to the music of musicians whose musical abilities and instruments were often of questionable quality. Mounds of sandwiches, gallons of hot coffee, and an equal quantity of liquor, much of which was brewed at home, were consumed to sustain the stamina of the dancers since these affairs usually did not end until the breaking of a new day. "Mrs. Roebuck . . . waddled to the organ and struck up "God Save the King". There were no protests although it was only half-past two, and school dances usually lasted until at least four."³³ The only reason that this dance was ended at such an early hour

³³McCourt, Music at the Close, p. 56

was an unpleasant scene between two men which badly disrupted proceedings!

The idea of doing things "just for fun" does not appear very frequently at all in the prairie novels and when it does appear, it usually takes the form of being fun at the expense of someone else. Perhaps this physical type of fun was just another outlet for pent-up frustrations: "With a quick stiff-armed ram, he sprawled John in the soft drift and trotted down the sleigh-track towards Reimers', his laughter, echoing on the frigid air."³⁴ It seems that in the daily routine of trying to scratch out an existence on the prairie farm there was little time to engage in leisure activities or affairs that were enjoyable, and when time did become available, it seems that there was little inclination to spend time at such "unproductive" activity. "The winters were given over to things the summers did not allow time for, and then if there was any spare time it was used in preparing for the next summer."³⁵

An especially bitter comment on jokes or events that might have been enjoyed appears in Lysenko's Westerly Wild:

She heard the laugh of a woman, and it was a gritty laugh, as though mocking the joke which had been played upon the people, rather than amused at

³⁴Wiebe, Peace Shall Destroy Many, p. 186

³⁵Storey, Prairie Harvest, p. 78

the pleasant little foibles of human nature. Humour was there, humour as arid as the country. It bit and stung but gave off no warmth.³⁶

*

Role of Women

According to the literature, a woman's life on the prairies was probably as difficult, if not more so, than life for her husband. The usual tasks of house-keeping and cooking were all done without the aid of labor-saving devices since profits from the farming operation, when there were any, had to be spent on "more important" things such as better seed, newer farm machinery, a better barn or granaries, or the purchase of better farm animals.

The promise of a new house next year with modern conveniences and some comforts was always a conditional promise, if the crops were good and if the prices were still fairly high. Unfortunately for the farm wife, the usual story was that one or the other of the conditions could not be met and when they were, some other aspect of the farm received priority, e.g. "During the previous fall Abe had built a huge barn and added a room to the shack. . . ." ³⁷

³⁶V. Lysenko, Westerly Wild; The Ryerson Press, Toronto, 1956, p. 59

*For further quotations re: Work see Appendix "B"

³⁷Grove, Fruits of the Earth, p. 35

Since there was little or no knowledge of birth-control methods, the prairie wife often had to perform her tasks while pregnant, with many of these pregnancies ending in miscarriages. Those pregnancies which did go full term often left the mother facing the travails of childbirth without the help of a doctor, a midwife, or even an untrained neighbor to attend her during these crucial hours. A case in point is the use of a pair of long-handled spoons as forceps by her husband when Mrs. Lindal is at the point of death because of her inability to deliver herself of a baby, as recorded in Salverson's Viking Heart.

In addition to the task of keeping house and raising children, a woman's work was often understood to include milking cows, done without the aid of machines, and the care and feeding of other farm livestock. Planting and caring for a large garden was her responsibility too. When Cal Beach and his nephew-son drove into the yard of Jackson Stake, one of his deepest impressions was the condition of Mrs. Stake as she went about her morning duties on the first day of their stay. "Breakfast; the tired woman moving mechanically back and forth as inexorably as the inexorable machine in which she had been caught."³⁸

³⁸R. Stead, Smoking Flax, McClelland and Stewart, Toronto, 1924, p. 68

A facet of farm life however, in which most of the women took a great deal of pride in spite of the drudgery involved, was the ability to cook large, nourishing meals. In Stead's Grain, the comment is made that, "To feed the threshers well was a matter of honor among the farm women."³⁹ The same novel later relates an incident in which the itinerant threshing crew refuses to visit a particular farm despite the fact that that farm was next in the rotation to be "threshed-out". The reason: the farmer's wife could not provide nourishing meals!

Speaking to the undernourished-looking school-teacher, Dan Root, in van der Mark's Honey in the Rock, Florrie says, "You come on over at our place for the holiday. I'll feed you up and get some meat on your bones."⁴⁰

Of Sarah Leniuk in the same novel it was said, "Wherever Sarah went there would be good cooking smells."⁴¹

The resourcefulness of the farm women to provide good meals was often greatly taxed when gardens were destroyed by drought, hail, frost, or insects. In the drought-stricken district in which Julie Lacoste teaches in Lysenko's Westerly Wild several of the farm women are

³⁹Stead, Grain; p. 49

⁴⁰C. van der Mark, Honey in the Rock, McClelland and Stewart, Toronto, 1966, p. 131

⁴¹Ibid, p. 95

deeply apologetic for their inability to provide greens and "something decent" in her visits to various farm families.

In addition to her many duties as outlined earlier, the farmer's wife was also often required to work side by side with her husband at such physically demanding tasks as pitching bundles, forking hay, or shovelling grain. Of these women and their grown daughters it was said, "Hacking a farm out of the wilderness demanded women strong as men"42 A good example of one of these hard-working women comes from McCourt's Music at the Close, "Every fall for many years Aunt Em had gone out to the fields and stoked for ten or twelve hours a day."43

It is little wonder that the farm woman of the prairies was often a woman who was physically unattractive and prematurely old before her time. Speaking of his own mother, Gil Reardon in McCourt's Music at the Close said:

"She isn't much over fifty," he went on, "but she's been old ever since I can remember. From the time she left the city with Dad she's never had a day's fun--just hard work all day and every day, year in and year out . . . and now she's dying. And the most terrible thing is that she's glad."44

⁴²Wiebe, Peace Shall Destroy Many, p. 81

⁴³McCourt, Music at the Close, p. 39

⁴⁴McCourt, Music at the Close, p. 81

The apprenticeship for a life of hard work and drudgery began early in a girl's life. In families in which there were few or no boys the girls were required to do a man's work. Thus it was that the Leniuk girls in van der Mark's Honey in the Rock were not only sought after in terms of domestic help but also as marriage partners because they had all "learned how to work."

Of Judith Gare in Ostenso's Wild Geese it was said, "She worked like a tireless machine from morning till night, and Caleb almost admitted his pleasure in her industry."⁴⁵

The Deacon's daughter, Elizabeth Block, in Wiebe's Peace Shall Destroy Many not only was required to do the work of a man in the fields but was also expected to help her mother with the housework. Thom Wiens, recognizing her plight, comments, "Hardly fair you should work on the crew and in the house too."⁴⁶

Nor are these isolated examples, for nearly every novel contained families in which the daughters learned early in life the meaning of hard physical labor on the farm.

In most cases the role of women on the prairies as related by the novels was little better than that of

⁴⁵Ostenso, Wild Geese, p. 101

⁴⁶Wiebe, Peace Shall Destroy Many, p. 134

a servant. The husband was the undisputed head of the family; he and he alone made the important decisions in regard to the entire farming operation. There is little evidence of mutual planning or cooperative decision-making by both husband and wife. Women's opinions in matters of public as well as private affairs were either not sought after or regarded highly enough to merit serious consideration. Mrs. Abercrombie in Mitchell's Who Has Seen The Wind and Marie Torey in Storey's Prairie Harvest seem to be the only women in all of the novels to hold public office, and then only as school board members. In instances where the husband was dominated by a sharp-tongued wife like Mrs. Abercrombie above or by a driving, domineering woman such as Lina Ashley in van der Mark's In Due Season, one finds that public opinion, instead of rebuking the husband for his timidity or lack of assertiveness, actually extends sympathy to him for the regrettable circumstances in which he finds himself!

Role of Men

In comparison with a woman's role in western society, a man's role was much more to be desired. While most of the men in the novels who were landowners and/or had families were hard workers themselves, their labors were made a little more easy in the fact that they more often had contact with neighbors as they went about their

work, which was frequently in the form of exchange labor. The farm was not nearly as much of a prison in terms of social isolation for the farmer as it was for his wife. In the Gare household, for example, Caleb was the only one who went to town or to church; Amelia and the children were not even permitted to visit or communicate with neighbors, and attendance at a school dance was a privilege which they were allowed to enjoy only at great intervals.

As pointed out above, the husband was in most cases the head of the family. Both in the family and in the community men made the important decisions and operated the enterprises. In Grove's Fruits of the Earth, for example, it is the men of the district who gather in the evening at Nicoll's corner to discuss various topics. In Wiebe's Peace Shall Destroy Many we find that it is the men of the church and only the men who take part in the discussions of Joseph Dueck's censuring in spite of the fact that many women are in attendance at this meeting. In Storey's Prairie Harvest it is Henry Torey's decision to keep James out of school that is heeded in spite of the protests of Mrs. Torey.

While women were often required to help on the farm at various physically demanding tasks during peak work periods such as seeding, haying, or harvesting there is little or no evidence of reciprocal help by the

husband with household duties such as canning, baking, or raising babies. "I never washed a dish or changed a diaper in my life", is Henry Torey's comment in Storey's Prairie Harvest.⁴⁷

Because they reserved for themselves the right to make decisions regarding home and social life for their wives and children, many of the men are seen as brutes or tyrants. The worst of these is, of course, Caleb Gare in Ostenso's Wild Geese but one can also point out tyrannical tendencies in characters such as Anton Landash in Lysenko's Yellow Boots; Abe Spalding in Grove's Fruits of the Earth; Deacon Block in Wiebe's Peace Shall Destroy Many; Jonas Leniuk of van der Mark's Honey in the Rock; Bram Shipley of Laurence's Stone Angel; Mack Colm in Grove's Yoke of Life; Loki Fjalsted in Salverson's Viking Heart; and Sam Corry of Lysenko's Westerly Wild. In only a few of the cases such as that of Jonas Leniuk of van der Mark's Honey in the Rock, do the women and children realize that some of these men had the best interests of their families at heart during their seeming callousness.

Role of Children

According to most of the novels a rural child's lot on the prairies was not to be envied. Little time was allowed the child for the usual activities that one associates with growing up. Games and toys were,

⁴⁷Storey, Prairie Harvest, p. 307

generally, unheard-of luxuries; books, crayons and models could not be afforded, and regular continued attendance at school was often impossible because of distances and weather or was often not given importance by his parents.

In most rural families children at an early age were required to do many chores or other difficult tasks in relation to farm life. Thus it is that we find James Torey handling a team of horses at the age of eight in Storey's Prairie Harvest; Lilli Landash involved with trying to operate a walking plow before she reaches the age of puberty in Lysenko's Yellow Boots; Charlie Spalding hauling grain with a team of horses at the age of thirteen in Grove's Fruits of the Earth; Judith Gare, at seventeen, with a younger brother and sister involved in haying in Ostenso's Wild Geese; Gander Stake operating a binder at the age of ten in Stead's Grain; and Balder Fjalsted caring for his mentally afflicted mother and trying to run a farm while only a young lad in Salverson's Viking Heart.

In a few of the novels, the children are loved and appreciated by their parents and are aware of this feeling. However, in many of the novels, the children are not shown any overt signs of affection, and in fact are made to feel unwanted and unloved.

Many scenes of expressed love are evident in Salverson's Viking Heart between parents and children or

children and adult friends of their parents. "Then meeting his eyes so frank, so boyish, she flung her fond old arms about him.⁴⁸ The "fond old arms" refer not to his mother but to a good friend of the family who boarded Balder during his early training as a musician. One must compare the open affection between unrelated persons above and the very uneasy display of affection between father and son as recorded in Stead's Grain:⁴⁹

Gander's eyes jumped, and he committed one of those rare indiscretions in the Stake household--he gave evidence of affection. He actually put his arms around his father. And Jackson Stake absent-mindedly rested his hand in the boy's tousled hair for a fraction of a moment.

The events which precipitated Jackson's apparent indiscretion was the purchase of a new shot gun by Jackson Stake for his son Gander!

An example of outright dislike for children is that displayed by Lina Ashley in van der Mark's In Due Season. "You're nothing more'n another of Sym Ashley's brats, that's what you are. I can't stand the look of you. Get out of my sight." This outburst was directed to her young son Benny.⁵⁰

In Grove's Fruits of the Earth we are told that Abe did not encourage the childrens' familiarity; "He

⁴⁸L. Salverson, Viking Heart, (originally published 1925) McClelland and Stewart, 1947, p. 286

⁴⁹Stead, Grain, p. 28

⁵⁰van der Mark, In Due Season, p. 362

tolerated them as an adjunct to his life"51

In many instances it seems that children, like the women of the prairies, were seen only as chattels or other farm property and hence were not accorded any significant importance or status.

Sexual Encounters

From the descriptions of the landscape and the weather which the novelists have given as well as the details of activities which are evident it would appear that the novelists have described a life-style which is characterized by frenetic activity and a "violence" which make their characters "larger than life". This intensity of life is also evident in many other areas of the social and domestic affairs of the characters in the novels. One example which serves to illustrate the above is the frequency with which one finds sexual encounters or the tragic results of these illicit affairs in the novels. No less than twelve of the eighteen novels embody as part of the story, descriptions of illicit relations among the characters. This is a startling statistic for a rural society which was basically Puritan in character judging by the attitudes towards sex and illegitimacy which are expressed by various characters.

51Grove, Fruits of the Earth, p. 45

Following the question which was put by Neil to his Aunt as to what was wrong with the Reardons we are told in McCourt's Music at the Close that "Aunt Em got red in the face, 'Gil's sister is a bad woman. That's reason enough.'"⁵²

In the Mennonite community which Wiebe describes in Peace Shall Destroy Many, Herman Paetkau becomes a social outcast when it is discovered that he is living in a commonlaw relationship with an Indian woman. "I haven't had a Mennonite visit me since a good while before Christmas," is his response to Thom Wiens' visit in autumn of the following year.⁵³

The major portion of the plot of Stead's Smoking Flax revolves about the efforts of Cal Beach to keep the illegitimate birth of his dead sister's son from the boy. "At all costs he must save the child. He must find an explanation that would not outrage the righteousness of Plainville: . . ."⁵⁴

In response to Marcus Haugen's explanation that he had merely offered shelter to the badly-beaten Katie Corry, in Lysenko's Westerly Wild, Julie Lacoste replies, "It's all over the country now, and nobody is going to

⁵²McCourt, Music at the Close, p. 36

⁵³Wiebe, Peace Shall Destroy Many, p. 105

⁵⁴Stead, Smoking Flax, p. 104

believe your explanation, even if I do."⁵⁵

It seems more than coincidental that in seven of the twelve novels in which sexual encounters are described these affairs involve children of the main characters of the story.

Ethnic Friction

Another area of social relationships which appears often enough in the novels to merit consideration is the evidence of friction between and among the various ethnic groups. It seems that the most maligned of ethnic or racial groups were the Metis and Indians. Lina Ashley's vituperation in van der Mark's In Due Season sums up the general feelings of "whites" in all the novels toward these people:⁵⁶

Jay Baptiste's just another of them breeds. Got no folks. Nobody knows who he is or where he comes from. Born under a spruce tree more'n likely. Drinks up his money. No more reliable than a hen trotting around without its head. Put him in the hayfield and he'll leave you flat if he happens to smell a moose in the wind. Jay's a mongrel breed.

Deacon Block in Wiebe's Peace Shall Destroy Many held a similar opinion as to the quality of industry in the Indians' character. "There must be about twenty people living in one room; with miles of bush all round. Laziness: it saved them wood-cutting."⁵⁷

⁵⁵Lysenko, Westerly Wild, p. 131

⁵⁶van der Mark, In Due Season, p. 227

⁵⁷Wiebe, Peace Shall Destroy Many, p. 181

Apart from Indians, those who happened to speak a language other than the community language were often the object of mistrust and fear. Hall, speaking to Abe Spalding in Grove's Fruits of the Earth, states rather emphatically:⁵⁸

They've shipped in two car-loads of forriners, Ukarainians, dodgast them. I was thinking of asking fer a job my own self. But the white man don't stand a chancet in this country any longer.

A little later, Nicoll, speaking to Abe as well reveals his prejudices even though he is more afraid of loneliness than of racially-different men. "I'd like to have men of my own color about. But rather than stay alone, let niggers and Chinamen come."⁵⁹

Another display of mistrust for non-English speaking persons is revealed in Storey's Prairie Harvest:⁶⁰

There were not many of these pro-Germans, and they lived in a closely knit community of their own. They feared and shunned the pro-British. They spoke their own language, and their children were cruel to the "white" children when they were in the majority.

Even the likeable Luzina Tousignant of Roy's Where Nests the Water Hen who tries so hard to be friendly to all persons, especially the very-British Miss O'Rorke, betrays a hint of prejudice when she describes Nick Sluzick, the cantankerous old postman as being an

⁵⁸Grove, Fruits of the Earth, p. 33

⁵⁹Ibid, p. 37

⁶⁰Storey, Prairie Harvest, p. 102

"unsociable muzhik."

A silent but forceful reminder of racial prejudice which is brazenly presented to an entire community is a "Help Wanted" sign in a local hotel in McCourt's Music at the Close:⁶¹ "The Palace Hotel, All White Help, stood on the corner opposite . . . "

Rural-Urban Mistrust

In spite of the many differences that arose between the farmers in terms of racial, ethnic, or religious factors, there seems to be one area in which they stood on common ground; the mistrust which they had for anything associated with town or city life. The city especially, was seen as a place of evil for young people; a place that harbored bad men and seductive women; a place of licentious freedom and gross idleness and laziness. These suspicious feelings appear most often in Grove's Fruits of the Earth but rise to the surface in other novels as well.

In describing Ruth Spalding, the wife of Abe who is the major character, Grove says, "She could not rid herself of the conceit of the city-born. She was city-born! In this she was handicapped."⁶²

When the closely-knit Spalding district begins to disintegrate through wild parties and dances in the local

⁶¹McCourt, Music at the Close, p. 76

⁶²Grove, Fruits of the Earth, p. 45

school, the blame is laid upon girls from other districts who come in, "undesirable elements from town and city."⁶³

One of the ways in which Abe Spalding shows his dislike for the small town of Morley is by the hurried way in which he does his necessary business and then leaves again quickly to his farm. Another more overt way in which he displays his urban mistrust is the determined manner in which he tries to prevent the consolidation of the school district which will require the children to be sent to a town school. His fears of consolidation are not assuaged any by the comments of his brother-in-law, Dr. Vanbruick:

I can't say that I like what I see . . . Here are two hundred children coming in from the country, fifty adolescents, a few young men and women: all released from patriarchal homes into comparative freedom. The common objection to all public schools--that, in a moral sense, they level down, not up--takes on the proportions of a menace.⁶⁴

The urban mistrust is also evident in Lysenko's Yellow Boots. When Lilli Landash accepts a ride on a wagon which is going to the city the driver reacts thus:

"You are going to the city and you don't know an address?" The driver was worried. "The city is a very big place" ⁶⁵

⁶³Ibid, p. 212

⁶⁴Ibid, p. 182

⁶⁵V. Lysenko, Yellow Boots, The Ryerson Press, Toronto, 1954, p. 206

The city is also seen as a place that rears "smart-alecks" and smooth-talking "con artists". Caleb Gare's outburst to the city-raised Mark Jordan in Ostenso's Wild Geese illustrates this point: "I can show you, for all your city smartness, that Anton Klavacz might still be beggin' from me . . ."⁶⁶ An example from Stead's Grain, further illustrates this mistrust and suspicion of the city-raised character. In speaking to his son, Jackson Stake warns, "'Course, a fellow should be able to read an' figger even on the farm, or some o' them sharks'll leave him holdin' an emp'y sack at the end o' the year; . . ."⁶⁷ The term "Them sharks" refers to the employees of loan companies and banks as well as to remittance men, all of whom operate from towns and cities.

When Abe Spalding's son decides to leave the farm to become a partner in a garage business in Grove's Fruits of the Earth, we find that Abe still cannot accept the fact that urban life was seen by many young people as a means of self-improvement and an opportunity for a better life than what they could get by staying on the farm. "They've taught you to despise what your father's doing, eh?"⁶⁸

⁶⁶Ostenso, Wild Geese, p. 204

⁶⁷Stead, Grain, p. 60

⁶⁸Grove, Fruits of the Earth, p. 221

Next-Year Concept

A phenomenon amongst the farmers which was almost a sardonic philosophy with them was the "castles in the air" type of daydream involved in the next-year concept. Storey's Prairie Harvest describes this line of thinking very early in the novel.⁶⁹

Somehow the west never let the people of its soil lose faith. Each spring it filled them with new hope, then, as if to test their strength, it dashed these hopes with drought, hail, flood, insect pests, rust, or early frost.

Lysenko's Westerly Wild which speaks of a rural district in the drought-stricken '30's, bears the hope of "next year" out still further. Mr. Johner, one of the impoverished farmers whose children went to school, tells Julie Lacoste, the teacher, "We keep on hoping, we keep on saying, 'Next year will be better'. Next Year country! Next year clouds'll cover the sky."⁷⁰

In spite of their perennial optimism in "next year", there were times when the faith of even the bravest of farmers wavered. Following an early autumn frost which killed a beautiful crop, Uncle Matt in McCourt's Music at the Close despairs,

"Should have made forty bushel easy," he said. "Oh well, mebbe next year things'll be different."

⁶⁹Storey, Prairie Harvest, p. 62

⁷⁰Lysenko, Westerly Wild, p. 4

But his voice carried no conviction. Uncle Matt no longer believed in next year.⁷¹

Not all of the blame for poor crops could be placed upon the vagaries of nature, however. Unscientific farming methods such as overcropping or repeated plowing so that loose soil was exposed to the wind was the demise of many farms. Not until almost irreparable damage had been done to the land did the farmers realize the errors in their methods. One farmer commented to Neil in McCourt's Music at the Close.

"The land around here's getting' wore out. Too much wheat year after year, too many weeds."⁷²

The Toreys in Storey's Prairie Harvest also realized the reason for their failure to achieve the dreams of "next year."

Two consecutive crops of rye left the land so exhausted that it would not even grow rye; so that by the time the Toreys moved to the Macy farm much of this older land was finished--cropped out.⁷³

Financial Management

Another characteristic of rural life which appears quite frequently in the novels is the reluctance of many of the farmers to spend money on "unnecessary" commodities. Even though he was more free with his money

⁷¹McCourt, Music at the Close, p. 41

⁷²McCourt, Music at the Close, p. 178

⁷³Storey, Prairie Harvest, p. 178

in later life, Abe Spalding was very reluctant to part with any money to build a new house, despite the fact that he and his family were living in a shack. "As for the house, he might have built that fall; but he wanted to be sure that he could, next summer, carry on without using his credit at the bank, . . .⁷⁴

Of all the farmers, perhaps the most niggardly was Caleb Gare of Ostenso's Wild Geese who forced his teen-age daughter to do the work of a man. "Judith worked with the men and Martin. Caleb had not hired an extra man."⁷⁵

Mrs. Bentley in Ross' As For Me and My House is required to write many letters, some of which were not very pleasant, to several former parishes in an attempt to retrieve a part of the uncollected salary which was rightfully the Bentley's.

When John Shipley came to meet his mother at the station in Laurence's Stone Angel, she is astonished to find the car hitched behind a horse. John's explanation is simple: "Gas is expensive. We save the truck for emergencies."⁷⁶

⁷⁴Grove, Fruits of the Earth, p. 90

⁷⁵Ostenso, Wild Geese, p. 87

⁷⁶M. Laurence, Stone Angel, (New Canadian Library Series) McClelland and Stewart, Toronto, 1968, p. 169

There were, of course, a number of exceptions to the miserliness of prairie residents; however Stead's Grain makes an acute observation of this quality: "The farmer was usually close in money matters; he was on record of saying of himself that he was so close he would 'bust a rib if he swallowed a flax seed'."⁷⁷

Now that the values and customs of the rural community, as seen by novelists, have been outlined above, we can turn to a consideration in Chapters Three and Four of what children and parents thought of schooling and teachers. That is, now that the background of rural life has been sketched in, we can better understand the views held by parents and pupils.

⁷⁷Stead, Grain, p. 69

Chapter 3

OPINIONS ABOUT SCHOOLING

A few of the views and values of prairie people towards several broad areas of life have been considered. The following is a summary of their opinions toward the more specific topic of education and schooling.

What Adults Thought of Schooling

If there was any consensus concerning such things as work, thrift, and the role of women amongst the settlers of the prairie there surely was a difference of opinion as to the merits of getting an education, either for oneself or for one's children. In Storey's Prairie Harvest, there is a clash of opinion between husband and wife over the value of education for the children and in the end the husband's decision over-ruled that of his wife. "Marie spent more and more sleepless nights, but her hands were tied. She could do nothing, for her husband saw no need of schooling for the children."¹ One of the chief causes for her restlessness was the fact that her eight-year old son was already a school dropout. "James' ability with a team partially explained why he never attended school long enough to learn to read or

¹Storey, Prairie Harvest, p. 127

write,"² and later in the same trend of thought, "James, though only eight, had a team to drive that spring. His schooling was over; . . ."³ So strong were the father's anti-education sentiments that he was able to persuade his children to feel the same, "They joined with their father and the teacher against the mother in a conspiracy to keep them out of school."⁴ The reason the teacher was willing to be party to this conspiracy was, "They are the oldest and the dumbest children in their grade."⁵

In other instances, the elders could see the need of schooling for their children but could see no merits in attempts at self-improvement. A conversation between the local teacher and Anton Landash of Lysenko's Yellow Boots followed these lines;

"What do I need with an education?" roared Anton. "I get all my lessons from nature." . . . "I'm sending my boys to school," he said. "I want them to become real men--not as we elder people, to kiss the hands of the noble, not to bow, not say, 'yes, yes, your honor', but to stand up straight, to look people in the eye and say, 'I'm a free man!'"⁶

Other fathers, however, had no such high ideals for their children. Jackson Stake, the head of the family in Stead's Grain made the following comments to his wife in a discussion about sending their only daughter to school:

²Storey, Prairie Harvest, p. 127

³Storey, p. 122

⁴Storey, p. 104

⁵Storey, p. 104

⁶Lysenko, Yellow Boots, p. 46

"I've noticed that the boys an' girls that goes to school gets themselves eddicated off [italics in the original] the farm. Jackie went pretty steady, an' he's flew his kite. Minnie here is bright at school, an' she'll likely do the same about the time you're figgerin' on havin' a hired girl an' not havin' to pay out no wages for her"7

Later in the same discussion about keeping his twelve-year old son out of school, Jackson continued:

"I want him with me here on the farm, an' maybe when he's my age, he can offer a roof to some o' them eddicated fellows that can't get a job in the city. 'Course, a fellow should be able to read an' figger even on the farm, or some o' them sharks'll leave him holdin' an emp'y sack at the end o' the year; but these pronouns or whatever it is, what does it matter about them?"8

In Stead's other novel, Smoking Flax, with the same characters as in Grain, William Stake, otherwise known as "Gander", who was referred to above, was already an adult when he observed:

"Don't know as what they learn you in the university'll help much. A man on a farm don' need no D.D.'s after his name. What he wants is horsepower an' savvy."9

It seems that one of the chief reasons that many of the residents of the prairies, especially the fathers who were landowners, were opposed to sending their children to school was simply that children were often an important source of manpower and the school was seen as a place where this "help" was being wasted. Schooling in

7Stead, Grain, p. 60

8Stead, Grain, p. 60

9Stead, Smoking Flax, p. 44

these instances was always secondary to work on the farm. When Mr. Crawford, the teacher in Grove's Yoke of Life confronted Mack Colm about sending his step-son, Len, to school, the reply was, "As for the boy, if things go well this fall, I'll send him to school, in winter, when harvest is over."¹⁰ For many prairie children, the school term lasted only from November when the harvesting was finished until February or March when spring work got under way once more. These views were certainly not characteristic of all the adults in the novels.

The old pastor, Sjera (Reverend) Bjarni, in Salverson's Viking Heart, for example, made the following comment in a discussion with Bjorn Lindal about the hardships of early life in the Manitoba swampland:

"It is for us to struggle, to bear all the hardships as best we can in order that our children may have it easier than we. There is but one hope, one liberator for the poor. It is education"¹¹

Many adults could see education as a means to a better life for their children and in many instances, genuine sacrifices were made to see that children got to school. Luzina Tousignant, of Roy's Where Nests the Water Hen, for example, not only was instrumental in getting a school established for her children but promptly set about to having at least one baby per year

¹⁰Grove, Yoke of Life, p. 57

¹¹L. Salverson, The Viking Heart, McClelland and Stewart Limited, Toronto, 1947, p. 111

so that the enrollment requirements might be met! Lina Ashley of van der Mark's In Due Season, also saved money judiciously so that her daughter, Poppy, could be boarded out in town so that she might attend school. Abe Spalding, of Grove's Fruits of the Earth, not only was the driving force in the establishing of a new school district and in the erection of a school building, but personally selected the teacher, Old Mr. Blaine, so that his children might have the best education possible. As his children outgrew the local school, Abe did not hesitate in sending them to town where they boarded out, at considerable expense, so that they might avail themselves of a highschool education. The fact that two of the three children did not benefit greatly from the schooling in no way detracts from the size of his efforts on their behalf. Even though Bjorn Lindal, of Salverson's Viking Heart, could ill afford to do so, he went so far as to sell his farm in order that his son might secure a high school education. "I would like to get a farm near Winnipeg or some town where there is a high school. Thor finishes the eighth grade this fall"12

As the illustrations above indicate, it is difficult to draw generalizations as to any one specific point of view which the adults in prairie novels held about the importance of schooling.

¹²Salverson, Viking Heart, p. 150

If it is safe to draw any generalizations from the above then it must be that schooling was given secondary importance to agriculture, even by those who considered it to have merit for their children. As an institution, especially in such novels as Peace Shall Destroy Many, Yellow Boots, and Honey in the Rock, and to a lesser extent in most of the others, the church and home were far more influential and important than was the school.

What Children Thought of Schooling

Anyone who has worked with children for even a short time, whether as a teacher or in some other capacity, soon realizes that many of the beliefs and ideas which children have are often merely a reflection of the values and beliefs which their parents hold. Such seems to be the case, in many instances, of the opinions which children had of schooling; they simply echoed the sentiments of their parents in this matter. Thus it is that the ten-year old Gander Stake, whose father Jackson was so opposed to education, as mentioned earlier, held a similar point of view:

He knew more than any of his teachers about the profession by which he was going to make his livelihood, and he regarded their book-learning as non-essential and irrelevant--neither of which words would he have understood.¹³

¹³Stead, Grain, p. 40

One year later, the same Gander still had not changed his opinion for it was said of him: "When he saw other boys of his own age going to school he regarded them with pity and contempt. A poor business that, for one who could drive a four-horse team."¹⁴

James Torey too, the eight-year old drop-out in Storey's Prairie Harvest, whose father, Henry, was anti-school, had some unflattering comments to make about his experiences with schooling:

James hated school. Rynold had taught him to smoke; the teacher and the other children had taught him to hate school; this was his education "Saturday and Sunday, and then hell again," he would say each Friday evening.¹⁵

A few of the children in the novels not only didn't like school but actually considered it to be a prison. Of the Young Ben in Mitchell's Who Has Seen the Wind, it was said:

He could not read; he did not write, either in a scribbler at his desk or with chalk at the board. He sat always with his narrow, gray eyes distant, one arm over the back of his seat as he stared out the school window to the prairie stretching from the schoolyard edge.¹⁶

Later, concerning the same boy, was added, "School was an intolerable incarceration for him, made bearable only by flights of freedom which totaled up to almost the same

¹⁴Stead, Grain, p. 40

¹⁵Storey, Prairie Harvest, pp. 119-120

¹⁶Mitchell, Who Has Seen the Wind, p. 88

number as did the days he attended."¹⁷

The concept of school as a prison which was held by a child is also found in McCourt's Music at the Close. Neil Fraser's wandering thoughts as he sat in class were thus described: "A few blue-bottles were buzzing aimlessly against the panes, and he felt for them a certain sense of kinship. They, like him, were prisoners."¹⁸

Nor had Neil's opinions about school changed any by the time he had finished the ninth grade; "So it was natural that when Neil had completed Grade Nine, he was glad to throw away his battered textbooks and count himself among the free."¹⁹

On the more positive side, examples can be found of children who didn't object to going to school or who even enjoyed it, even though this was seldom expressed verbally by them. It seems that then, even as now, for a youngster to openly express a liking for school was akin to expressing delight in hard work or delight in inclement weather during a vacation. You just weren't "normal" if you liked school or at least if you made this fact known to other pupils. The young Charles, for example, in Grove's Fruits of the Earth, when asked by

¹⁷Mitchell, Who Has Seen the Wind, p. 147

¹⁸McCourt, Music at the Close, p. 21

¹⁹McCourt, Music at the Close, p. 70

his father whether he liked going to school had replied in the affirmative, "but it was said without enthusiasm."²⁰

Fortunately, there are means of expressing one's likes and dislikes other than verbal communication; from the behaviour of many of the children in the novels it can be assumed that school was not an unenjoyable affair even if they were loathe to admit it. The children in Julie Lacoste's class as recorded in Lysenko's Westerly Wild, began to find that school could be enjoyed, in spite of their earlier experiences to the contrary.

All over the classroom, life was stirring--here and there quivers of delight, motions of hands and arms, smiles breaking fear, dabs of paint on paper, childrens' eyes brightening, as if absorbing light from the paint boxes.²¹

The children in Little Water Hen School in Roy's Where Nests the Water Hen have also become so excited in the new-found activity called learning that they are afraid to let Mademoiselle Cote out of their sight; "They all watched her, out of the corner of their eyes, ready to block her way. The moment she started to move, they clustered around her."²²

In situations in which parents or children had a low opinion of schooling there is evidence of a lack of

²⁰Grove, Fruits of the Earth, p. 94

²¹Lysenko, Westerly Wild, p. 27

perception by the parents of the changing society in which they lived. Even the more progressive farmers such as Abe Spalding or Henry Torey were unable or unwilling to see the growing need for educated persons in the rapidly industrializing societies of the first half of the twentieth century, even though the farmers were quite willing to avail themselves of the benefits of industrialization. In such families, the children were often the unwitting victims of this lack of foresight. As a result, children from such families tended to have an unfavorable view of schooling.

22G. Roy, Where Nests the Water Hen, (originally published, 1951) New Canadian Library Series, McClelland and Stewart, Toronto, 1970, p. 55

Chapter 4

OPINIONS ABOUT TEACHERS

What Adults Thought of Teachers

Undoubtedly, many of the opinions which adults hold are the residue of events which are experienced in childhood. In spite of what many psychologists say about the remembrance of predominantly pleasant experiences, it seems that in the remembrance of teachers, it is the bad ones, the "Old Lady So-and-So" or "Old Man _____" with a suitable derogatory nickname to fill in the blank, that are recalled. According to Grove, the topic of teachers, whether past or present, was bandied about by prairie residents with great regularity. "As elsewhere in rural districts of the west, the teacher was the most common topic of discussion."¹ One such conversation as recorded in Lysenko's Westerly Wild, reveals a great deal about the way which residents of the town and rural area of Fair Prospect felt towards Julie Lacoste, the new teacher, whose colorful wardrobe and cosmetics provided a stark contrast with the drabness of the town and its people:

Smart city gal.
Yeah.
She won't last.
Give her a month.

¹Grove, Fruits of the Earth, p. 82

Two weeks.
 She'll be scootin' outa here in a week.
 Why couldn't they send us a fellow in overalls?
 Yeah.²

The usually taciturn old bachelor, Charlie Steele, in McCourt's Music at the Close, expresses a particularly bitter comment about the elderly local teacher, Miss Piggott. Whether the source of irritation is only Miss Piggott or whether it is rooted more deeply than with one individual we are never told. His comment is elicited in a conversation with the student, Neil Fraser, in a discussion over the selection of books which Miss Piggott has given Neil:

". . . Miss Piggott, she gave me some books out of the school library, but I guess they were too hard." Steele swore with unexpected ferocity. "Just what the dried-up old hag would choose," he shouted.³

Perhaps Charlie Steele's assessment of Miss Piggott is somewhat justified for later it is said of her:

At school, Miss Piggott continued to preside with unimaginative inflexibility. Had she been gifted with a little more understanding, she might have helped Neil a great deal, but she dismissed him as difficult and a little bit queer.⁴

Of Moira Glenn who replaced Miss Piggott, Aunt Em said, "They say the new teacher's awful pretty, but Mrs. Langley's afraid she's fast. Says she wears her skirt clear to her knees and uses paint."⁵

²Lysenko, Westerly Wild, p. 59

³McCourt, Music at the Close, p. 45

⁴McCourt, Music at the Close, p. 69

⁵McCourt, Music at the Close, p. 77

In spite of the interest of these ladies in the new teacher, there is never a word breathed as to her academic qualifications or her previous teaching experience. It is interesting to note that the same Neil who had quit school with such eagerness at the end of the ninth grade, decided to continue his schooling at the age of twenty-two as a direct result of the influence of the attractive Miss Glenn. Instead of seeking the advice of Andy Kane, the local high school teacher, however, Neil chose to seek the counsel of Mr. Dawlish, the United Church minister:

Logically, Neil should have consulted the High School principal, Andy Kane, who also held an M.A. degree, but he found Kane's gruff manner and loud assertive voice offensive.⁶

In contrast to this rather harsh appraisal of teachers is the much more sympathetic treatment afforded to Armand Dubreuil, the only male teacher amongst three teachers to find employment at Water Hen School in Roy's Where Nests the Water Hen. Since Luzina Tousignant was the only woman to have children in attendance at Water Hen School and since hers was the only place of residence available to the teachers, it is not difficult to understand how she could become fond of any or all of her boarders.

⁶McCourt, Music at the Close, p. 92

She had grown used to mothering him. She had mended his hunting trousers, often torn when he came home from the willow and hazelnut thickets. She had washed and ironed his shirts, kept cleaning his pipe ashes everywhere he went. Neither with Mademoiselle Cote, who was very fastidious, nor with Miss O'Rorke, who was grimly independent, had Luzina enjoyed these small pleasures. Above all it had been the school-master's contentment at living with them which had won him Luzina's heart.⁷

The three female teachers of Prairie Harvest, all of whom were single, did not receive such a warm accord nor did they enjoy such prestige as was given to Mr. Dubreuil. Of the three teachers it was said that the teaching license was "regarded merely as an admission ticket to a community in which there might be an eligible male."⁸

Wiebe's Peace Shall Destroy Many, speaks of two teachers; the first, Joseph Dueck, is significant to the story because of his "liberal" ideas which he spreads to the Mennonite young people. He is viewed with suspicion and fear by the elders of the predominantly Mennonite community. The second teacher, Razia Tantamont, who replaces Joseph Dueck as the teacher, is significant to the story because she is a good teacher and is generally well-liked by the adults even though she is a non-Mennonite. She was so well-liked that at the school Christmas concert, Mr. Block and the other trustees decided to collect a purse of money from the concert-goers as a

⁷Roy, Where Nests the Water Hen, pp. 74-75

⁸Storey, Prairie Harvest, p. 104

special gift to show their appreciation. In his presentation speech, Mr. Block said of her:

"Now our teacher, Miss Tantamont, has also worked very hard. She planned one of the best programs we have ever seen Our teacher is new here, and yet has done a good work among the peculiar people that we are, . . ."9

This is one of the few instances in prairie literature in which the teacher is recognized for having done a good job as a teacher and not for the way she dressed or danced or did a dozen other things not directly related to her performance in the classroom with children. But even at this, Block's assessment of her teaching ability stems entirely from the quality of the Christmas program which she directed and not from any observation of the teaching-learning situations of her classroom.

Mr. Crawford, the teacher in Grove's Yoke of Life who had left a good position teaching in a city highschool to come to an isolated district in Manitoba, was another who was well-liked and respected by the adults. Of Mary Jackson, the adult daughter of Old Man Jackson in whose home Crawford ate his noon meal, it was said:

. . . it was easy to see that she more than admired Mr. Crawford. The shy, flitting glances of her eyes, averted forthwith, betrayed something little short of worship and adoration.¹⁰

This genuine liking for a school teacher by an

⁹Wiebe, Peace Shall Destroy Many, p. 233

¹⁰Grove, Yoke of Life, p. 41

adult resident of a district does not occur with great frequency as reported in the literature except in cases where the teacher happened to become involved with one of the local residents in a romantic way, which is, perhaps, an artificial situation at any rate.

In summary, it seems that the adults of the novels either liked or disliked a teacher for reasons other than the skills and abilities of a teacher as a teacher. At various times we are told by characters in the novels that a teacher is doing a good job; however in none of the novels are we told specifically as to why one teacher was "good" and another was "no good" in terms of performance in the classroom. All that is left, then, is an image and not a genuine analysis of performance.

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What Children Thought of Teachers

Any survey of public opinion about relatively controversial topics results in a range of scores from one extreme to the other. The same was true of the survey of childrens' opinions of teachers as revealed in the novels of the prairies. Again, as in the matter of attitudes toward schooling, much of how children felt towards teachers was simply a reflection of how their parents regarded teachers.

*For further quotations re: adults' thoughts of teachers see Appendix "C".

James Torey, the eight-year-old dropout of Storey's Prairie Harvest, who had such strong feelings about school as reported earlier, had some very strong feelings about his relationship with the teacher as well:

He was a quiet peace-loving boy but his hatred for school and the teacher brought out the worst in him. . . . He hated to waste them [bullets], but it gave him such satisfaction to see his enemy, the teacher, jump when one went off in the school stove that much of his ammunition found its way there.¹¹

It must be remembered that James' father, Henry Torey, had had no liking for schools or teachers either.

Boys such as James and Gander Stake, were perhaps exceptions in creating trouble for the teachers of the novels; however the atmosphere of the novels which are described often was that of the code of the jungle. Fights between children were numerous, even accepted as a part of schooling, though the children were loathe to have the teacher interfere or even have knowledge of them. In Storey's Prairie Harvest we find that the resourceful Robert was usually made "General" of the forces which did battle with the "bohunk" boys who were regarded suspiciously because they spoke German at home. In McCourt's Music at the Close, the new boy, Neil Fraser, finds his place in the pecking order before two days have passed at school. Because the teacher was to have no knowledge of Neil's encounter with Gil Reardon, the fight took place a

¹¹Storey, Prairie Harvest, p. 170

great distance from the school and then only after a sentry had been posted. "Suddenly a voice rose in a shrill scream. 'Hey--break it up! She's comin'!"¹² This was enough to send the combatants and onlookers scurrying to their respective homes.

Gander Stake, the youthful school-hater of Stead's Grain, was another boy who didn't think very highly of teachers or their abilities. When his sister, Minnie, asks him if he knows the difference between a noun and a pronoun, he replies without apologies in the negative. To this rejoinder, Minnie retorts:

"Huh! Teacher'd call you a dunce."
 "Would she?" said Gander. "Well, I know the difference between a Deering an' a Massey-Harris across a fifty-acre field, an' I bet she don't, an' you can tell her that for me."¹³

It seems, generally, that if children liked their teachers or were appreciative of what the teachers had done for them, that they were reluctant to overtly express this appreciation. Perhaps the children feared the derision of their classmates if they did acknowledge such a view. One of the very notable exceptions to this aversion is recorded in Grove's Yoke of Life. Of Len Sterner, the boy who showed so much promise and the chief reason that Mr. Crawford left the city to come to the

¹²McCourt, Music at the Close, p. 37

¹³Stead, Grain, p. 60

isolated Manitoba district, it was said that, "He worshipped Mr. Crawford as a dog worships his master."¹⁴ Later, when he was called a "teacher's pet" by a classmate, it aroused him so much that he became involved in a fist-fight with his antagonist. "It provoked Len's anger, however, not so much on his own account as because it threw an aspersion on the master's impartiality."¹⁵

A similar type of admiration by a student for a teacher is reported in Lysenko's Yellow Boots. Perhaps it was because the teacher, Ian MacTavish had given Lilli Landash a real name or perhaps it was because he was able to lift her eyes to hopes and dreams beyond the drudgery of the farm. On one of his visits to the Landash farm, Lilli was in a state of ecstasy because, "This was her first opportunity to be alone with the teacher, whom she adored."¹⁶

In a discussion between two children, Jay and Poppy, about Miss Hughes, the teacher in van der Mark's In Due Season, it is shown that the teacher was liked and accepted, though not enthusiastically.

"Like the teacher?" the boy asked rattling his pail at Buck's ear.

"Yes, I think so."

"She's good," Jay had a judicious air. "She'll

¹⁴Grove, Yoke of Life, p. 33

¹⁵Ibid, p. 38

¹⁶Lysenko, Yellow Boots, p. 48

step on old Mike. We never had a woman before, but she'll do."¹⁷

It is never revealed whether or not Miss Hughes ever became aware of these sentiments that the children expressed to each other.

To anyone who has associated with children, whether as a parent, a teacher, or in some other capacity, it is common knowledge that a child's simple statement often carries far more meaning and depth of feeling than what the words themselves actually mean. Thus it is that the words, "You're the only one I ever talked to," uttered by Brian O'Connell to Mr. Digby, the principal in Mitchell's Who Has Seen the Wind,¹⁸ say volumes more about the respect and admiration for Mr. Digby which the boy felt than can be interpreted directly from the simple statement.

On the whole, it seems that children were more sympathetic in respect to teachers than were their parents. If it were possible to make a general statement about children's attitudes towards teachers in the novels of the prairie provinces, it would be that, but for a few exceptions, they were either non-committal, neutral, or were favorably disposed toward members of the teaching profession.

¹⁷van der Mark, In Due Season, p. 72

¹⁸Mitchell, Who Has Seen the Wind, p. 296

The following is a general impression as to how the specific teachers were regarded by the children in the various novels:*

*For further quotations re: children's thoughts of teachers, see Appendix "D".

<u>Novel</u>	<u>Teacher</u>	<u>Major or Minor Character</u>	<u>General Impression</u>
Fruits of the Earth	Blaine	Minor	Tolerated
Yoke of Life	Crawford	Minor	Liked
Jest of God	Rachel Cameron	Major	Not well-liked
Westerly Wild	Julie Lacoste Bertha Schnabel	Major Minor	Well-liked Tolerated
Yellow Boots	MacTavish	Minor	Well-liked
Viking Heart	Miss Wake	Minor	Liked
Music at the Close	Miss Piggott Moirra Glenn	Minor Major	Despised Liked
Who Has Seen the Wind	Miss MacDonald Miss Thompson Digby	Minor Minor Minor	Not liked Respected Liked
Peace Shall Destroy Many	Dueck Razia Tantamont	Minor Minor	Regarded suspiciously Well-liked
As For Me and My House	Kirby	Minor	Tolerated
Where Nests the Water Hen	Mademoiselle Cote Miss O'Rorke Dubreuil	Minor Minor Minor	Well-liked Not liked Liked
Wild Geese	Lind Archer	Minor	Liked
Grain Smoking Flax	Annie Frawdick	Minor	Liked
Prairie Harvest	Miss Mill Miss Crabb Miss McIntosh Charles	Minor Minor Minor Minor	Not respected Not respected Not respected Liked
Honey in the Rock	Root	Minor	Well-liked
In Due Season	Miss Hughes Miss Walker	Minor Minor	Well-liked Varied opinions

Chapter 5

CONCLUSION -- THE IMAGE

"And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed" ¹ These words, spoken by our Lord in one of His parables to the disciples, might well have been spoken by many communities to their teachers in the prairie novels. In most cases this "gulf" was established by society with the result that the teacher was placed in the position of an "outsider", a relationship in which the teacher was in the community but not of the community. Much energy was expended by teachers in an effort to bridge this gulf but almost invariably, the attempts met with failure. Perhaps the best-documented account is that reported in Lysenko's Westerly Wild about the teacher, Miss Lacoste:

"You the new schoolmarm?"

"Yes," acknowledged Julie with a smile, making a move as if to continue the conversation, for she was anxious to establish friendly relations, but to her astonishment, all the men, as soon as she had spoken lapsed into a gloomy silence and averted their eyes, so that she was compelled to save face by walking out, but not without hearing the murmurs behind her, putting the mark of the outsider on her,²

Paul Kirby too, the teacher in Ross' As For Me and My House, felt the bitter experience of being an outsider,

¹St. Luke 16:26

²Lysenko, Westerly Wild, pp. 58-59

in the very community in which he had been born and raised. Writing of him, Mrs. Bentley, the minister's wife says, "Himself now, a ranch boy with a little schooling, he fits in nowhere."³

This social and physical separation of the teacher from society was also recognized in Wiebe's Peace Shall Destroy Many. Pete Block, speaking to Thom Wiens about Razia Tantamont the local teacher as they pass the teacherage, reflects: "Must be hard for her--living there all alone in that teacherage and no one ever visiting her, snowed in and all."⁴

Even the location of the teacherage in the town of Mitchell's Who Has Seen the Wind, says a great deal to the incoming teacher, Miss Thompson, about her place in the society of the town:

She crossed the railroad tracks. So her cottage was on the wrong [italics in the original] side of town; it must be, if that sprawl of tar-papered shacks was German Town.⁵

If Miss Thompson had harbored any hopes of being considered an influential citizen in the town, they were cruelly dashed by a friend, Dr. Svarich, after her attempt at obtaining welfare assistance for a needy family had been scorned by the community leaders:

³Ross, As For Me and My House, p. 20

⁴Wiebe, Peace Shall Destroy Many, p. 188

⁵Mitchell, Who Has Seen the Wind, p. 134

"What do you expect? You don't expect to be taken seriously, do you? You're only a school-teacher. You're not the mayor--the banker--a business man; you're not the wife even of a property owner"6

Along with the Indian or the Metis, the teacher was frequently catalogued as being one of the community transients and hence merely another of the sub-classes which didn't fit into the community. This frequent moving about by teachers was sometimes a fault of their own. Of Miss Mill, one of the single, female teachers in Storey's Prairie Harvest, in her search for a husband it was said: "Had she not found one within the year, she would have moved to another school to continue her quest."⁷ More often, however, the frequent moves by teachers were necessitated by the intolerable social and physical situations in which they found themselves. A quotation from Grove's Fruits of the Earth, gives a partial explanation as to why the situations were frequently so intolerable:

As elsewhere in rural districts of the west, the teacher was the most common topic of discussion. The school is the one institution over which the district has immediate and absolute control; and every rate-payer thinks himself entitled to a share in the running of it which is in inverse proportion to his qualifications.⁸

⁶Mitchell, Who Has Seen the Wind, p. 163

⁷Storey, Prairie Harvest, p. 104

⁸Grove, Fruits of the Earth, p. 82

Even though many of the people tried to "run" the school it was usually found that the same persons were reluctant to support the school financially. Since many of the farmers were stingy in situations in which they should have spent money on their own households or the church* it is inconceivable that they would willingly have supported an institution and the individuals involved with it, which they felt to be of minor importance to their lives. When Neil Fraser, the newly-established farmer in McCourt's Music at the Close, apologizes to his new wife, an ex-teacher, about the poor condition of the farmhouse, she replies, "If you'd lived in a teacherage for two years you'd think it was a palace."⁹

A subtle but telling comment about the relationship between a teacher and another of the not-highly-respected, shiftless types is found in van der Mark's In Due Season, "And there was Teacher dancing with a slick travelling salesman."¹⁰

As pointed out earlier, prairie residents tended to respect those individuals who "put down roots" and

*One of the major aspects of the story of Ross' As For Me and My House is the attempt by Rev. and Mrs. Bentley to collect back salary which churches in the small communities they have served, still owe them.

⁹McCourt, Music at the Close, p. 172

¹⁰van der Mark, In Due Season, p. 273

stayed in one community meanwhile holding in disdain those who lived a relatively nomadic life. Teachers, generally, fell into the latter category and hence did not score very highly in terms of social acceptance.

Another important way in which it is revealed that the teacher was considered to be an outsider or an alien is in a thing as simple as considering how the teacher was addressed, either directly or when referred to in conversation by others. Quite frequently, both adults and children did not refer to the teacher directly or indirectly, by their proper names, e.g. Miss Fry, Miss Hughes, etc., but simply by the title "Teacher".

Examples are numerous:

"Teacher, isn't that where the muskeg ought to be?"¹¹

"And there was Teacher dancing with a slick travelling salesman."¹²

"Huh! Teacher'd call you a dunce."¹³

"Good morning, Teacher. How about a new pupil this morning?"¹⁴

Of this phenomenon, which is peculiar to teachers, Hodgson says:

If anyone wants to feel nameless, disembodied and floating away out "there" somewhere, let him or her be addressed as "Teacher". I guarantee a good

¹¹Ostenson, Wild Geese, p. 237

¹²van der Mark, op. cit. p. 273

¹³Stead, Grain, p. 60

¹⁴Stead, Smoking Flax, p. 62

healthy amount of cultural shock. One does not ordinarily go around addressing others as "Merchant", "Banker", "Farmer", "Clerk", "Ticket Agent", or "Insurance Salesman".¹⁵

If a married woman's role in the society of the prairies was not too highly regarded, then one can be sure that the single, adult woman, and especially the single, woman teacher was considered to be even of a lower rank on the social scale. Like the landowner, the married woman was considered to be some sort of "producer"; at least she could bear children, an especially valuable commodity in earlier times, even if her other skills and assets to the farm were limited. The single woman on the other hand, couldn't even produce this commodity, with social approval, and hence was one to be dismissed lightly. The single, woman-teacher's role in this society was not one to be envied. That all but one of the female teachers in the novels were single and that some of them bore the stigma of being an "old maid" is a point of interest which is significant.

The male teachers who are described in the novels, generally do not receive a more sympathetic representation than do their female counterparts. The seventy-seven year old schoolmaster, Mr. Blaine, in Grove's Fruits of the Earth, who is still actively teaching at Spalding

¹⁵E. D. Hodgson, (unpublished manuscript "So Are We All"), University of Alberta, Edmonton, February, 1971.

School, is cruelly described thus:

At last Blaine sat down, skinny, ridged hands clasped about a thin knee, huge head bent forward, trembling on its pedicel, with the long, curly, snow-white beard touching his thighs the ruddy cushions of flesh which formed his cheeks seemed singularly clear-skinned and transparent.¹⁶

On the other extreme, in terms of age, is Dan Root, the youthful teacher in his first school in van der Mark's Honey in the Rock. Amongst other descriptions, Dan is said to be gangly, narrow-shouldered, with snub features. Added to this is, untidy hair, nervous hands, and abused fingernails. Compared to the physical features of an Abe Spalding or a Mack Colm, Dan Root's physique would hardly inspire awe or strike terror into the heart of an opponent.

Paul Kirby, the male teacher in Ross's As For Me and My House, like Dan Root, would never be a winner in an attractiveness contest. He is described by Mrs. Bentley as, "Sandy-haired, blunt-faced, rather small and plain . . . , with slow steady eyes that stay right with you till they're satisfied."¹⁷

The physical characteristics of Armand Dubreuil, the male teacher in Roy's Where Nests the Water Hen, are not described. If he is "normal" in appearance then, to be sure, his behavior and his sartorial tastes are

¹⁶Grove, Fruits of the Earth, p. 149

¹⁷Ross, As For Me and My House, p. 7

eccentric and not in keeping with the expectations for a schoolteacher. On his arrival on the island, Luzina saw:

. . . an odd silhouette topped with a colonial helmet, wearing a red-checked flannel shirt and heavy oiled boots; he was laden with an armory of weapons, rifles large and small. From his shoulder hung a game bag; to his back was attached a blanket roll.¹⁸

In a society which venerated physical strength and disapproved of behavior which in any way did not conform to the norm, the male teachers who are described in the prairie novels, by and large, did not impress their communities either by their physical attributes or their behavior. Respect, then, for a schoolteacher, regardless of sex, was not a virtue commonly found in the prairie novels.

When the teachers' image is held up for further scrutiny in light of the community values as outlined in Chapter Two it can be seen that this image is not at all flattering. Since the woman's role was often that of a mere servant, and that many of the teachers in the novels were women, it can be seen that teachers were not, generally, highly regarded. As for the male teachers that are described, if one recalls that the role of men was usually that of leaders and decision makers in the homes and communities, then the male teachers emerge badly-bested, since they were almost always portrayed as very minor characters.

¹⁸Roy, Where Nests the Water Hen, p. 67

The teacher's image is further tarnished in light of the rural-urban mistrust which was prevalent among prairie residents. In many cases, the best of which perhaps is Joseph Dueck in Wiebe's Peace Shall Destroy Many, the teacher is regarded with mistrust and suspicion since he has been to the university and the city, the latter being regarded as a place of evil.

The mistrust of those who had a different ethnic or racial background appears as well in relation to teachers with obvious overtones for the teacher's image. The very-British Miss O'Rorke in the French school in Roy's Where Nests the Water Hen is perhaps one of the better examples of the mixing of ethnic backgrounds but other examples occur too. Razia Tantamont, the Anglo-Saxon teacher in the German-Mennonite community in Wiebe's Peace Shall Destroy Many; Miss Wake, the Anglo-Saxon teacher in the Icelandic community in Salverson's Viking Heart; and MacTavish, the Scottish teacher in the Slavic community of Lysenko's Yellow Boots, are other examples of ethnic mixing. That this ethnic mistrust was sometimes held by teachers needs to be mentioned too.

Elder makes the point that many of the teachers in the novels "serve principally to supply romantic interest."¹⁹ This is probably an accurate statement and a very

¹⁹A.T. Elder, "Some Marks of Regionalism in the Canadian Novels of the Prairies" (paper read at the Canadian Conference of Teachers of English convention, Calgary, August, 1969)

good point but when these romantic developments are pursued further, a much deeper significance can be interpreted from them. It is true that teachers were often involved in romantic relationships with other characters in the novels; however, an analysis of the end results of these romances reveals that, in most cases, they were rejected by the individuals to whom this love was directed, just as they were rejected by society as a whole. Thus it is that Dan Root does not receive the hand of Fenna Leniuk in van der Mark's Honey in the Rock; Julie Lacoste does not marry Marcus Haugen in Lysenko's Westerly Wild; Annie Frawdick can not attract Cal Beach in Stead's Smoking Flax; Rachel Cameron receives no marriage proposal from Nick Kazlik in Laurence's Jest of God; Ruth Thompson does not wed Dr. Peter Svarich in Mitchell's Who Has Seen the Wind; and Razia Tantamont cannot attract even a single lover in an entire community in Wiebe's Peace Shall Destroy Many.

The only teachers who are successful in their romantic enterprises are Ethel Hughes who marries Sven Jensen after he has been rejected by Lina Ashley in van der Mark's In Due Season, Moira Glenn who marries Neil Fraser in McCourt's Music at the Close, and Lind Archer who leaves the community, and the end of the novel on the shoulder of Mark Jordan, ostensibly gets married in Ostenso's Wild Geese.

Perhaps a Freudian psychologist could find a deeper significance in these statistics; however, on the surface it appears that teachers generally were not accepted by their respective communities, either as teachers or as lovers.

It is always dangerous to draw conclusions, to make inferences, and to state generalizations from a sample which is drawn from a much larger universe. In the matter of the teachers' image as reflected in this sample of prairie novels, the following generalizations could be made even though they obviously do not apply to all of the teachers all of the time nor to all situations:

1. The teacher's life was a lonely life in spite of the fact that he was surrounded by many persons.

2. The teacher's work was not considered to be important; at least not early as important as that of the farmer, the merchant or the grain-elevator operator.

3. The teacher was not accepted as an equal by other adult citizens.

4. The teacher was not highly respected; yet certain higher standards of conduct were expected of him that were not expected of other adults.

5. The teacher's rights and privileges in terms of privacy and personal affairs were not considered of any great importance.

6. The teacher was not allowed autonomy in the

running of his class; nor was there freedom of decision-making in matters usually considered to be of a professional nature.

7. The teacher's working conditions in terms of class loads, parental support, and physical facilities, as well as living accommodations were often intolerable.

The terms "headmaster" or "schoolmaster" may well apply to other teachers in other cultures but they are most inappropriate when applied to the fictional teachers of prairie novels. Most often they were only servants, and servants of the lowest order at that.

Chapter 6

COMMENTS

Teachers of today who teach in large well-built, well-ventilated, well-lighted schools, in communities where they are generally accepted and usually respected, may conclude that the conditions that are described in the novels are exaggerated or over-stated for journalistic purposes. Private conversations, however, with teachers who taught school during the period of time usually referred to in the prairie novels, or discussions with individuals who knew teachers in that period, along with literature of an autobiographical nature reveals that the conditions, attitudes toward teachers, and types of people, that appeared in the novels, were a fairly accurate statement of what actually took place in real life.

The present, respected image of teachers did not come about either quickly or easily but has been the result of the efforts of countless, nameless, teachers who banded themselves together into unions and associations in order that they might more vociferously protest against some of the very conditions that were described in the novels. This, along with public awareness that a teacher's work is important as revealed by economists'

findings* is probably the chief reason for the rise in respectability of the teacher image. The teacher is a producer, after all!

Other factors which probably account for the improved image of teachers include the following:

- a. teachers themselves are better-educated and equipped to do a good job;
- b. the public is better educated and therefore more tolerant;
- c. the legislature has made legal provisions to guard against some of the earlier injustices which were perpetrated against teachers.

But again, these impressions of the improved images of teachers are based on self-perceptions and hence have become victim of the very phenomenon against which Farrell warned earlier, "The image we fancy ourselves projecting is, usually, a flattering one."¹ Perhaps teachers still aren't so well-liked and respected as those within the profession would like to think. The words of the Holy Scriptures might well be kept in mind in any discussion in which teachers look at their own

*See "Education and Growth" by Edward F. Denison in Perspectives on the Economics of Education; Benson, Charles S., Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston: 1963

¹J. Farrell, "The Teacher Image in Fact and Fiction" (paper read at the Canadian Association of Professors of Education convention, May, 1970, Winnipeg, Manitoba)

images, "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."²

Suggestions for Further Research

1. Independent, parallel research using the same sample to verify the validity of the conclusions reached.
2. Research to determine the image of teachers using factual materials such as editorials, historical documents, and government records.
3. Research to determine if teachers' self-perceptions based on autobiographies, biographies, and personal interviews, are in agreement with what novelists had to say about teachers.
4. Research which analyses teacher images using a selection of novels from the Maritimes, or Quebec, or Ontario, or British Columbia, to determine whether the teacher's image as reflected in the novels of those respective regions is similar to that found in this research.
5. Research to analyse the image of the teacher in a selection of prairie novels written prior to 1924.
6. Research to determine to what extent prairie novels involving teachers give an accurate picture of the social conditions of a given period.

21 Corinthians 10:12

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APPENDIX A

FURTHER QUOTATIONS RE: ENVIRONMENT

1. Salverson, The Viking Heart, p. 238. Concerning hail:

So they stood through the long five minutes while the proud, beautiful wheat was ripped and torn and beaten to the ground before them.

2. Laurence, The Stone Angel, pp. 213-214. Concerning wind and heat:

All that long month . . . the heat haze hovered like a mirage of water over the yellowed bluffs, and the devil's breath of a wind charred the sparse grass and blew the fields away

3. Ross, As For Me and My House, p. 113. Concerning heat:

It's hard to sleep these nights, the heat so dense and sickly, and never a breath of wind.

4. Grove, Fruits of the Earth, p. 224. Concerning rain:

The rains continued through the whole of June. Two, three sunny days were at once followed by devastating thunderstorms which spared no corner.

5. Ostenso, Wild Geese, p. 130. Concerning a thunderstorm:

The rain came in colossal gusts. Now the outer world was black, except for the livid flares of lightning. The thunder was almost incessant, shattering.

6. Storey, Prairie Harvest, p. 59. Concerning a blizzard:

The howling winds banked the snow in mountains
. . . . Train service was brought to a standstill and the
west waited and shivered at the mercy of the howling storms.

7. van der Mark, In Due Season, p. 113. Concerning a
horseback ride at night, in winter:

But before she had gone four miles from home,
. . . . the bitter winter night was almost upon her.
The paralysing cold seemed to close in with the
darkness.

Fine snow sifted down, and it seemed to Lina that
her face was being frozen into a stiff mould, eyes
shut, lips drawn back from her teeth in a leer.

APPENDIX B

FURTHER QUOTATIONS RE: WORK

1. Laurence, The Stone Angel, p. 13. Father speaking to his child.

"You'll never get anywhere in the world unless you work harder than others."

2. Laurence, The Stone Angel, p. 113. Farm wife reminiscing:

"Most of the farmers in the district worked their fingers to the bone."

3. McCourt, Music at the Close, p. 47. Concerning spring work on the farm:

On the farm the bustle of activity was only slightly less than in the fall. Uncle Matt was up long before daylight "chorin' round", and out in the fields at break of day. He stopped work only as a concession to the weakness of horseflesh.

4. van der Mark, C., In Due Season, p. 37. Concerning Lina Ashley as she clears a homestead:

"With Jack, she worked like a machine, scarcely stopping to straighten up or to rest."

APPENDIX C

FURTHER QUOTATIONS RE: ADULT OPINIONS OF TEACHERS

1. Grove, Fruits of the Earth, p. 57. Concerning teachers:

"Westerners hold experience and expertness in small esteem; they prefer the young girl who will dance and gad about."

2. Grove, Fruits of the Earth, p. 57. Concerning teachers:

"These teachers are invariably young girls; and he doubted their ability to handle a school."

3. Lysenko, Westerly Wild, p. 32. Concerning former teachers:

"Our last three teachers were a rather undernourished and shabby lot."

4. Mitchell, Who Has Seen the Wind, p. 284. Concerning school board chairman's remarks to school principal:

"The--kids aren't educated just inside the school-room. We feel that their spiritual life--you should be taking more interest in the church, and we figure it wouldn't hurt if you was to take a Sunday School class each Sunday."

5. Roy, Where Nests the Water Hen, p. 59. Concerning Hippolyte's remarks to his wife, Luzina Tousignant, about Miss O'Rourke's unreasonable requests:

"That old fool of yours imagines that we're going

to build a thousand feet of fence and travel the length of the island twice a day just to satisfy her little fancies."

6. Ross, As For Me and My House, p. 35. Concerning a teacher:

"Paul never smiles or laughs, but his seriousness is the kind you can relax against."

7. Salverson, The Viking Heart, p. 138. Concerning a teacher, Miss Wake:

". . . after a few weeks was loved by the whole settlement and became quite at home, fond of her bright scholars and amused at the dull ones."

8. Wiebe, Peace Shall Destroy Many, p. 179. Concerning Deacon Block's thoughts of the teacher, Razia Tantamont:

"Despite her worldliness, her teaching was excellent."

9. Mitchell, Who Has Seen the Wind, p. 97. Concerning Maggie O'Connell's comments to the teacher, Miss MacDonald:

. . . "if you were to have a child you might be happier and a better teacher."

10. Lysenko, Westerly Wild, p. 36. Concerning one teacher's comments to another:

"Railway section men are earning more now than the teachers hereabouts, for there isn't one who can afford to buy books or subscribe to newspapers."

APPENDIX D

FURTHER QUOTATIONS RE: CHILDREN'S OPINIONS OF TEACHERS

1. Wiebe, Peace Shall Destroy Many, p. 119. Concerning the appearance of the teacher, Miss Tantamont:

" . . . she was the most beautiful lady they had ever seen."

2. Mitchell, Who Has Seen the Wind, p. 140. concerning a new teacher:

"Miss Thompson's children found her refreshing after Miss MacDonald."

3. Grove, Fruits of the Earth, p. 94. Concerning a father's questions to his son about an old, male teacher:

"Do all the children like him?"
"Some do; some don't. Some say he's too strict."
. . . "The Hartley kids have been to school elsewhere. They say it's nicer to have a lady teacher."

4. Storey, Prairie Harvest, p. 237. Concerning two girls' opinions of a teacher:

"Teacher's nice too," Olga breathed rapturously.

"I don't like her."

5. van der Mark, C. In Due Season, p. 307. Concerning a boy's comments to his older sister about a teacher:

"Heck, at school we can't look at books. Miss Featherstone, she gets mad and throws chalk."