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TOWARD A MARXIST ANALYSIS OF F.P. GROVE:  
MAURERMEISTER IHLES HAUS AND THE MASTER OF THE MILL

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TOWARD A MARXIST ANALYSIS OF F. P. GROVE:  
MAURERMEISTER IHLES HAUS AND  
THE MASTER OF THE MILL

by



KATHERINE ANNE WOODWARD

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.....  
and The Master of the Mill  
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Date *August 27, 1980*.....

## DEDICATION

To those who struggle, in the spirit of Marx, to be self-conscious and critical:

Marlene Kadar, who helped shape the first chapter and helped revolutionize my consciousness:

Bob MacDiarmid, who affirmed and re-affirmed the poverty and the necessity of theory:

Bohdan Sumchynski, who introduced me to Althusser:

Greg Pickering, who kept the candle burning:

fellow travellers of the Fourth International:

my family:

this thesis is dedicated.

## ABSTRACT

The recent discovery by Douglas Spettigue that Felix Paul Greve is in fact Frederick Philip Grove has generated interesting analyses of his later English works in light of his earlier life in Germany. The discovery has also provided additions to the Grove oeuvre since at least two novels and other writings in German are known to be by Grove. One of these additions, Maurermeister Ihles Haus, published in Germany in 1906, is a much less successful literary effort than The Master of the Mill, published in Canada in 1944. Maurermeister is important and interesting however, due to its position in Grove's oeuvre.

The Marxist perspective adopted for literary criticism in this thesis insists on a fundamental unity between form and content, and therefore seeks to establish a relationship between the formal, structural principles of the two novels, and their ideas. The discussion moves from an elaboration of Marxist methodology to a detailed examination of the form and content of Maurermeister Ihles Haus and The Master of the Mill. The thesis concludes with a summary of certain similarities and differences between the two novels and begins an evaluation of one of Canada's important English novelists as craftsman and as ideologue.

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## Chapter I

### THE MARXIST MODEL

The truth is the whole. The whole, however, is merely the essential nature reaching its completeness through the process of its own development.

George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel  
Preface to The Phenomenology of  
Mind c.1807

Literature as a societal phenomenon belongs to the realm of the social superstructure, and with the mention of "superstructure" an entire problem appears. One of the twentieth century's most prominent exponents of cultural superstructure, Raymond Williams, points out that

in the transition from Marx to Marxism, and in the development of mainstream Marxism itself, the proposition of the determining base and the determined superstructure has been commonly held to be the key to Marxist cultural analysis.<sup>1</sup>

Williams' pursuit of the origins of these terms in Marx's and Engels' own writing, and in those of his followers such as Plekhanov and Kehrung, demonstrates that these terms have more than one meaning and, hence, applicability as analytical tools. It is possible however, to make a general statement about what constitutes the superstructure as a point of departure for the discussion at hand.

Firstly, the superstructure contains those "legal and political forms which express real relations of production,"<sup>2</sup>

which are represented by institutions like the church and the various apparatuses of government that service society's needs. Secondly, "forms of consciousness which express a particular class view of the world"<sup>3</sup> belong in the category of the superstructure. One cannot "see" this construct called "the superstructure" but rather its concrete manifestations, each of which is in interaction with each other. Literature, as well as cultural activities represented by art, sculpture, music and film--to name only a few--can be thought of as end-products of cultural production that express a particular class view of the world. In this light, literary texts are microcosms of ideology that bear a specific historical stamp and a specific artistic technique.

As a specific form within the cultural sphere of the superstructure literature interacts not only with other cultural phenomena but with the social economic base. The contemporary situation of Western Europe and North America is referred to as "capitalism," a system of economics that is marked by an inherent contradiction between labour and capital, or between the working class and the capitalist class.<sup>4</sup> "Class struggle" refers to this fundamental contradiction and can be recognized in a given situation by events like strikes and lock-outs, to name only the most visible confrontations. To return to the more general "base" and "superstructure," most Marxists insist on a dynamic process between the two elements; they recognize

that the superstructure both acts on and is acted upon by the economic base. As part of the superstructure literature too, has a relationship to class and class struggle: it acts with and is affected by various changes and upheavals between the component classes of capitalism.

The most important factors to keep in mind about the base and the superstructure are firstly, that they exist simultaneously and secondly, that the relationship between them is not a simple one--the superstructure is not directly "caused" by the base nor is any cultural endeavour a result of solely economic considerations at a given historical moment. Like music, art, film, literature has its own laws, it has its own history, it has its own autonomous place in society that renders it unique. Attempts at literary criticism without taking the autonomy of literature into account only jeopardize that which is under scrutiny--the literary text itself. In a letter to Philip Rahv, the editor of the only left-leaning cultural journal to survive to this day, Leon Trotsky expresses the function of criticism in the following manner:

If there is at present in America a young and promising movement in art the Partisan Review can to a certain degree tie its fate to this movement. It is possible however that there is no such vital movement . . . no one has yet been successful in artificially manufacturing such an art current. "Marxist aesthetics" has no recipes and prescriptions for this--and cannot have them. Marxism was the first to show what place technique occupies in the development

of mankind; however, this does not mean that a Marxist magazine can substitute for a Patent Bureau in technical inventions. The new generations of poets, artists, and so forth can expect from the Partisan Review not a ready-made esthetic recipe but a clearing of the paths for new art forms through a struggle against routine, false authorities, ossified formulas, and first of all against convention and falsehood. . . . It is necessary to give new tendencies an opportunity to appear. Likewise it is impossible to ignore purely formal quests and experiments. Here breadth of approach and pedagogical flexibility upon a stable basic historical conception is very important.<sup>5</sup>

Literary criticism must deal with the nature of literature itself: a summation of interaction between an author, his society and the literary tools at his disposal--generic conventions, symbology or themes and motifs, for example. Literary texts cannot be understood without taking into account each of these elements and their relationship to one another. A study of themes and motifs are important for the Marxist literary critic, since they can indicate the philosophical preoccupations of humankind that have stretched over decades and centuries, and at the same time they can indicate the unique treatment of a theme by an author at a specific historical instance. Even certain methods or styles of argumentation in a literary text can be addressed fruitfully, since they can signal patterns of thought that have significance for understanding the theme itself. An insistence on the need for analysis of literature's component parts acknowledges both literature's inherent historicity--how certain themes differ from their ancestors, for example--and the specificities of a particular

text and a specific author. Important studies highlight the critical literature of this century: Fredric Jameson's *Monograph on Wyndham Lewis, "The Fascist as Modernist,"*<sup>6</sup> and Pierre Macherey's analysis of Jules Verne's narrative<sup>7</sup> are two such endeavours.

In the preface to his Verne analysis, Macherey outlines his theoretic position and proposes that literary criticism needs reorienting, that

la critique littéraire, ne se contentant plus de décrire le produit achevé, le préparant ainsi à être transmis, c'est-à-dire consommé, déplace son intérêt, et se propose comme objet (à expliquer, et non plus seulement à décrire) l'élaboration de ce produit. Par rapport à toutes les tendances effectivement réalisées de la critique littéraire, ceci suppose une conversion radicale, par la constitution d'une question critique nouvelle: quelles sont les lois de la production littéraire? On voit quel prix il faudra payer pour réintroduire la critique dans la sphère de rationalité: il faudra lui donner un nouvel objet. Si la critique ne procède pas à cet échange, ne rompt pas définitivement avec son passé, elle se condamne à n'être qu'une forme plus ou moins élaborée du goût public: c'est-à-dire à n'être qu'un art. Une connaissance rationnelle se propose, comme on sait, d'établir des lois (universelles et nécessaires, dans les limites que définissent les conditions de leur formulation).

Macherey succeeds in his own criticism of Jules Verne's narrative by elucidating its (historical) "laws of production," and by acknowledging the hand of the author as a guiding force. Thus it is not a surprise that Macherey appends his analysis of the narrative of Verne with an analysis of Robinson Crusoe, since these earlier themes and their motifs constitute part of the tools of literary production.

Even though thematic patternings can be treated historically, an analysis ending here is not sufficient. One must deal with the specificity of the author's hand: how and to what end he or she arranges the formal conventions of literature to express these themes or an entire ideology.<sup>9</sup> For while Flaubert and Balzac are both "realists" and share the same historical circumstances they are both separate and distinct authors. At this point the question of stylistics becomes relevant, and as Fredric Jameson asserts,

any concrete description of a literary or philosophical phenomenon--if it is to be really complete--has an ultimate obligation to come to terms with the shape of the individual sentences themselves, to give an account of their origin and formation.<sup>10</sup>

His own criticism, however, does not "push that far."

Besides stylistics, the formal conventions that make a genre are important to analyze since they often have profound ideological motivations and their specific appearances can signal new territory in literary endeavours. As Jameson explains:

It is a forgotten truism to say that forms such as the epic, the costume tragedy, the epistolary novel are inherently dependent on possibilities in their content, or in other words on the structure of the social experience which they use as raw material and from which they spring as artifacts.<sup>11</sup>

Structures of social experience however, are becoming more and more complex. Three or four decades have brought about an increasing obscurity of the class model and its inherent antagonisms, and as Jameson so succinctly expresses it,

the development of postindustrial monopoly capitalism has brought with it an increasing occultation of the class structure through techniques of mystification practiced by the media and particularly by advertising in its enormous expansion since the onset of the Cold War.<sup>12</sup>

The high visibility of class struggle in the thirties and forties, with Fascism gaining a stranglehold in Italy, Germany and Spain, with an imperialist war that sought new markets and sent millions to die in this search, is a sharp profile that no longer exists. A more complex form of capitalism brings about a more sophisticated base and superstructure; therefore cultural phenomena are becoming more complex. Thus we need a more comprehensive tradition in Marxist literary criticism, where Trotsky's call for a "breadth of approach" and Macherey's appeal for a vigorous and scientific criticism are the informing spirits of this criticism. More attention needs to be focussed on the text itself--the smallest unit of the superstructure with which the critic must deal.

One response to this need for a reorientation of Marxist literary criticism is the kind posited by Fredric Jameson, in his concluding essay from Marxism and Form: Twentieth Century Dialectical Theories of Literature entitled "Towards Dialectical Criticism." Jameson states that,

For a genuinely dialectical criticism, indeed, there can be no preestablished categories of analysis; to the degree that each work is the end result of a kind of inner logic or development in its own content,

it evolves its own categories and dictates the specific terms of its own interpretation. Thus dialectical criticism is at the other extreme from all single-shot or univalent aesthetic theories which seek the same structure in all works of art and prescribe for them a single type of interpretive technique or a single mode of explanation.<sup>13</sup>

The dialectical method in the hands of critics can recover that relationship which is continually being obscured by capitalist ideology: class divisions and class struggle. In the hands of literary critics the dialectic method can expose the complex and contradictory character of a literary work; the relationship between a complex of ideas and their formal arrangement. The dialectical method overcomes the juxtaposition of literary form to literary content by insisting on a logical relationship between the two that continually affirms the totality of the text and its relationship to the world around it. In short, this method can recapture literature's constitutive processes so that once more the place of literature in the living, breathing, dynamic world of men and women is reclaimed.

Dialectical literary criticism must begin with the component parts of literature, form and content, and their relationship to each other. To speak of the "logic of form" is not to speak of it in Aristotelian terms, where form is an initial construct or mold as Jameson contends,<sup>14</sup> but rather to intend form as the finished product, the completed construct, "the final articulation of the deeper logic of the content itself."<sup>15</sup> The form of a literary text

is the text itself; how it is arranged, how it stands as a cultural artifact. The component parts of the form, the generic conventions, for example, can be filtered out and discussed, but have meaning only when put back together into a whole.

If form is defined as "the final articulation of the deeper logic of content itself, how is content defined? Content deals with ideas; with themes and ideologies and their workings in the text. The relationship between form and content is "determined"; put another way, problems of form can be "dissolved" into those of content. As Jameson says, in recapitulating part of Hegel's Aesthetics:

The insufficiency of a work of art is not at all to be seen as the result of individual clumsiness . . . rather, the insufficiency of the form derives from the insufficiency of the content.<sup>16</sup>

Insisting on this relationship between form and content does not deny their respective significance, but explains their logic, where they come from and why. When Sartre rails against Mauriac, for example, in being so presumptuous as to choose a third person narrator, it is not because there is anything intrinsically presumptuous in third person narrator. Rather he rails against Mauriac's assumption that he, Mauriac, can be omniscient and omnipotent, a kind of ultimate creator--as if this was possible at all, never mind possible to render in fiction. All of which is not to deny the importance of formal conventions, but only to

explain their logic, where they come from and why. This "dissolving" of form into content is part of the essence of dialectical thought, which Jameson describes as a

leap-frogging affair in time, in which the drawbacks of a given historical situation turn out in reality to be its secret advantages, in which what looked like built-in superiorities suddenly prove to set the most iron clad limits on its future development.<sup>17</sup>

According to Jameson, dialectics for Hegel is a thought process wherein essential movements or patterns occur by contradiction and its resolution. The dissolution of form into content in the literary critical process occurs when the logic of form resolves into the logic of content. Form becomes content at the moment form turns back on itself; when behind the convention one can intuit the idea; when third person narrator is not the use of the pronouns "he" and "she" but is part of a distinct ideological stance.

Ideology is a function of one's place in the world, of one's ultimate position in class society. Jameson explains it thusly:

The original relationship between thought and its object was not an external but an internal one, and the best dialectical analyses show not so much that external social reality causes a particular type of thought, as that it imposes basic inner limitations upon it, in an almost a priori fashion. This was, of course, the thesis of Lukacs' History and Class Consciousness on a very abstract level: that the social situation of the bourgeoisie set a priori limits to its speculative thought, or, to use our own terminology, that the forms of middle-class thought are dependent on the deep inner logic of the content of middle-class life.<sup>18</sup>

The logic of content, the rules of its formation and its

weaknesses and strengths arise from the concrete, material world of men and women and their lived experiences. It is no trite truism to say that men and women cannot render in fiction what is not part of the life process in one way or another.

In general terms, then,

the essential movement of all dialectical criticism is to reconcile the inner and the outer, the intrinsic and the extrinsic, the existential and the historical, to allow us to feel our way within a single determinate form or moment of history at the same time that we stand outside of it, in judgment on it as well, transcending that sterile and static opposition between formalism and a sociological or historical use of literature between which we have so often been asked to choose.<sup>19</sup>

It is true that literature "mirrors" or reflects part of social reality in its themes or ideology, but this is not to confuse one with the other nor reduce ideology to a stagnant, inflexible or simple idea. Ideology or class ideology is in the end contradictory and complex as well; as a weapon in class struggle it can both maintain the norm and oppress the abnormal. It is reductivism of the worst kind to reveal or explain one group of ideas and not another. To return once more to the social base and superstructure, their relationship is a complex and mediated one where a one-to-one correspondence does not exist. As a form in the superstructure, literature has both a dependent and an autonomous position in the world. It rides on the shirt tail of economics at the same time that it forges

ahead with experimentation and innovation in its own realm. The autonomy of literature becomes of vital importance in the critical process and what this process raises: the question of value.

In dealing with a juxtaposition of form and content in the critical process Jameson speaks of the "adequation" of content in form or the degree to which the two are harmonized.<sup>20</sup> One cannot deny the aesthetic essence of all cultural objects: literature and art not only force people to perceive and think, but also to laugh and cry, to feel, to revel in the beauty of the line and the sensuality of texture. At the same time that the aesthetic of literature asserts itself so does the world of human experience: how and why are these particular forms an expression of specific human beings? It cannot be denied that literature and art are ideological and social; but the relationship between aesthetic judgments and ideological judgments, of how the two act together in articulating a Marxist understanding of literature value, has yet to be adequately explored.<sup>21</sup> Perfect art can only come about as the mainstream when it has been concretely realized in the world, although spontaneous representations of this perfection exist and signal "some deeper corresponding social and historical configuration which it is the task of criticism to explore."<sup>22</sup>

We have not yet arrived at a time, at least in the modern world, when perfect art is the mainstream, nor can we assert that the subject of the following criticism, Frederick Philip Grove, succeeds in adequating form to content. It is true,

however, that his novels are significant in the English-Canadian literary tradition, and for this reason alone are worthy of close scrutiny.

The two novels under discussion, Maurermeister Ihles Haus and The Master of the Mill, were born from different cultural parents, the former being published in Germany in 1907 and the latter in Canada in 1944. These two worlds never appear to have synthesized for Grove. Whether due to political considerations or due to a psychological disposition to lie, Grove consciously denied his German origin and constructed a Swedish heritage in its place. The alienation that Grove must have experienced was perhaps heightened or prolonged by this denial and even heightened by the geographical isolation of a rural Manitoban community. This estrangement in part may explain the desperation he exhibited to become a success in Canada, and the elation he experienced in giving a lecture tour in the late twenties. Perhaps in Grove's mind the identity of "the artist" was one where ethnic origin and other consequences of the real world could be transcended. He was wrong, of course. Outrage at the explicit sexual references of one of his prairie novels soon reminded him of the politics of artistic behaviour. To what extent he "compromised" or expurgated his later novels, as he did his autobiography, is not known at this time. But these psychological and biographical factors taken together must somehow reveal themselves in his ideology, which in turn marks his literature. But how? What does his literature speak of and why? Content for Grove is marked by its absences rather than

its presences, and as he elided events from the life in his "autobiography" he elides his narratives too. But we are getting ahead of ourselves. We must begin chronologically with Maurermeister Ihles Haus.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>Raymond Williams, Marxism and Literature (Oxford: Oxford University), 75.

<sup>2</sup>Williams, 76.

<sup>3</sup>Williams, 76-77.

<sup>4</sup>See Karl Marx, Capital, Vol. I (New York: Random House, 1977).

<sup>5</sup>Leon Trotsky, Unpublished letter to Philip Rahv, 21 March 1928, in Marlene Kadar, "Cultural Politics in the 1930s in the Newly Opened Section of Leon Trotsky's Archives at Harvard." Diss. in progress, University of Alberta, 1980.

<sup>6</sup>Fredric Jameson, Fables of Aggression: Wyndham Lewis, The Modernist as Fascist (Berkeley and Los Angeles and London: University of California, 1979).

<sup>7</sup>In Pierre Macherey, Pour une théorie de la production littéraire (Paris: Maspéro, 1966), 181-254.

<sup>8</sup>Macherey, 21.

<sup>9</sup>Macherey is careful to point out the difference between theme and ideology, in moving from one to the other in "Le point de départ: le projet idéologique." Briefly, a theme is what a work is about, so that "man's relationship to nature," for example, can be classified as a theme. Ideology, according to Raymond Williams, can mean "a set of ideas which arise from a given set of material interests"

and is a critically neutral term. See "Ideology: in Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society, 126-30.

<sup>10</sup>Fredric Jameson, Marxism and Form: Twentieth Century Dialectical Theories of Literature (Princeton: Princeton University, 1971), p. xii.

<sup>11</sup>Jameson, 352.

<sup>12</sup>Jameson, xvii.

<sup>13</sup>Jameson, 333.

<sup>14</sup>Jameson, 328-29.

<sup>15</sup>Jameson, 329.

<sup>16</sup>Jameson, 329.

<sup>17</sup>Jameson, 309.

<sup>18</sup>Jameson, 346.

<sup>19</sup>Jameson, 330-31.

<sup>20</sup>Jameson, 329.

<sup>21</sup>For an initial attempt, in the wake of Althusserian Structuralism, see "Marxism and Aesthetic Value," Criticism and Ideology: A Study in Marxist Literary Theory (London: New Left Books, 1976), 162-187.

<sup>22</sup>Jameson, 331.

## Chapter II

### MAURERMEISTER IHLES HAUS

Während der vier Jahre meiner Ehe schrieb ich zwei Romane und eine Komödie. Ich habe die Absicht, in den nächsten Jahren ein paar Werke zu schreiben, die ich für wichtiger halte, als alles, was ich bisher geschrieben habe, abgesehen auch in ihnen allerlei Beachtenswertes stecken dürfte.

Felix Paul Greve  
Letter to Franz Brummer  
March 6, 1907

Now that much of the haze has been cleared from the biographical ashes of Felix Paul Greve, due to the exhaustive investigative work by Professors Riley and Spettigue,<sup>1</sup> we are indeed much closer to the man who has made a major impact on the Canadian literary scene in the twentieth century. Here is an author whose oeuvre spans forty years and straddles two continents; here is a man whose letters reveal a fierce determination to leave a mark on the world of literature in whatever way possible. This determination to be a fiction writer, continually thwarted by financial difficulties and his desire for a style of living that exacted tremendous personal cost, was to fuel him all his life. His early literary endeavours, aside from the monumental number of translations he produced to sustain himself financially, found fruition in one volume of lyric poetry that was primarily influenced by Stefan George and his circle. As Peter Stenberg says, "Contemporary taste

is probably repelled by several aspects of these lines, not only the seemingly forced poetic devices of rhyme, alliteration, and assonance ("schlürfet kühl"), but also the arrogant, superhuman position given by the poet to himself in the wake of Nietzsche."<sup>2</sup> These lyric verses of the early Grove were not the only side to be committed to paper. There is a less self-indulgent side to this rather desperate young man, in which writing is less hysterical and more contemplative. This aspect of Grove bore fruit in at least two novels, including the one under discussion, Maurermeister Ihles Haus.

We know very little to this point about the gestation period of the second novel of Grove, first published in 1907 and reissued two years later in a second edition.<sup>3</sup> Grove was released from prison in the early summer of 1904 and probably spent the next year and a half travelling through France and Switzerland with a lover. He must have returned to Berlin early in 1907 to have this manuscript read for publication, among other things. What we do know is that this novel reflects Grove's early life as a child and an adolescent much more than his travels through Europe, since it is set in northeast Germany, in Pomerania, at the close of the nineteenth century, and brings to life a family which in all probability is modelled after Grove's own. Despite the fact that the novel warranted a second edition, it is not an artistic success; at the time of its publication

Grove was 27 years old, and much of the awkwardness and confusion is in all probability due to his inexperience as a fiction writer.

It is hardly surprising, given the twenty-five year time span between Maurermeister Ihles Haus and The Master of the Mill, and given the difference in scope and length, that the former is much more simple and straightforward than the latter. In the earlier narrative Grove does not manipulate the order of events nor their frequency; the progression is linear--and chronological--and the texture is homophonic--a single perspective--rather than polyphonic. This does not imply that it is any more successful, for it is not; in fact it is much less so. Its weaknesses can be discovered by looking firstly at absences in the text itself, or what Gérard Genette refers to in Figures III as ellipses.

Ellipses are understood in terms of the duration of a narrative; "duration" in turn presupposes measurements of time in the narrative that are simply impossible to make other than in reference to the framework or the "time" of the narrative itself. Phrases like "several months," "several years" or even "seven days" are indicators of large or small units of time passing, and in the end have no meaningful relationship between the text and the "real" world of reading or even writing. One can, however, speak of constancy of speed (constance de vitesse) of a text by

establishing a relationship between time and space:

On entend par vitesse le rapport entre une mesure temporelle et une mesure spatiale (tant de mètres à la seconde, tant de secondes par mètre): la vitesse du récit se définira par le rapport entre une durée, celle de l'histoire, mesurée en secondes, minutes, heures, jours, mois et années, et une longueur: celle du texte, mesurée en lignes et en pages.<sup>4</sup>

Genette goes on to caution that

L'analyse détaillée de ces effets serait à la fois harassante et dépourvue de toute véritable rigueur, puisque le temps diégétique n'est presque jamais indiqué (ou inférable) avec la précision qui y serait nécessaire. L'étude ne trouve donc ici quelque pertinence qu'au niveau macroscopique, celui des grandes unités narratives, étant admis que pour chaque unité la mesure ne recouvre qu'une approximation statistique.<sup>5</sup>

Duration, then, deals with such questions as "how long?" and "what proportion?" In the case of Maurermeister Ihles Haus the narrative spans approximately seven years, from the time Suse Ihle is twelve until she marries at nineteen. Within these seven years Grove deals with approximately three of them in detail, each focussing on a member of the Ihle household. This proportion is deceptive however, unless one looks further at the text. Each book or year centers around significant episodes such as a dance, a visit to the cemetery or a walk through the town. It would be virtually impossible--and extremely tedious--to determine precisely how much of the three years is presented, but a brief glance at the text will reveal that far more of it deals with these single episodes and their consequences than with the connections between the episodes.

Furthermore the seven years of Maurermeister Ihles Haus are not an abstract seven years but have historical specificity, since Grove places the novel in Germany from 1885 to 1892. Evidently these dates have significance beyond themselves, at least in Grove's mind, for the characters and their actions and within this structure of time and history Grove selects important events not just from the life of a young girl coming into womanhood but from a nation in transition as well. In speaking of textual temporality in this way one insists on a logical totality from which certain events are chosen to be placed before the reader while others are not. What is not presented to us, in the case of Maurermeister Ihles Haus, is more significant than what is revealed.

One of the most important components of "duration" in terms of Maurermeister Ihles Haus is the ellipsis, whose analysis

se ramene à la considération du temps d'histoire éliidé, et la première question est ici de savoir si cette durée est indiquée (ellipses déterminée) ou non (ellipses indéterminées).<sup>6</sup>

From a formal point of view one can distinguish three kinds of ellipses:

- a) Les ellipses explicites . . . qui précèdent soit par indication (déterminée ou non) du laps de temps qu'elles élient, ce qui less assimile, à des sommaires très rapides, de type "quelques années passèrent"; c'est alors cette indication qui constitue l'ellipse en tant que segment textuel. . . .
- b) Les ellipses implicites, c'est-à dire celles dont la présence même n'est pas déclarée dans

le texte, et que le lecteur peut seulement inférer de quelque lacune chronologique ou solutions de continuité narrative. . . .

- c) Enfin, la forme la plus implicite de l'ellipse est l'ellipse purement hypothétique, impossible à localiser, parfois même à placer en quelque lieu que ce soit, que révèle après coup une analepse telle que celles que nous avons déjà rencontrées au chapitre précédent.<sup>7</sup>

Maurermeister Ihles Haus uses ellipses to move the narrative forward from book to book and from subsection to subsection. At the same time, the school year serves as a reference point for the narrative, which helps keep the reader rooted in the story and yet allows Grove to expand his ideas and move beyond the bare necessities of plot.

Book one, dealing with Suse Ihle, her sisters and her classmates, is set up according to the season and its relationship to the school year. The first subsection begins:

Suse Ihle und Betty Julow gingen am Bollwerk entlang. Die späte Abenddämmerung des Hochsommertages lag zögernd über dem Fluß der drüben von einer Perlenschnur roter Lichter abgeschlossen wurde. Die beiden Kinder kamen vom Großen Markt und näherten sich den letzten Häusern der Stadt.<sup>8</sup>

The second begins:

Es war drei Tage vor Weihnachten.<sup>9</sup>

and the third with

Der Sommer war wieder ans Meer gekommen, und mit ihm Fremde und Badegäste aus dem Lande. Ganz plötzlich hatte sich, wer in der kleinen Stadt miteinander bekannt war, wie in der Großstadt aus den Augen verloren.<sup>10</sup>

In each of these cases the announcement of the season allows Grove to present his characters in a way that is credible

and logical for the reader. The first subsection is a long description of Suse Ihle at school, her relationships to her fellow students and to the rest of her family. The Christmas vacation of the second subsection brings with it Herr Ihle, Suse's father, who turns into one of the dominant adult figures of the novel. The third subsection begins with summer holidays and expands the setting to include the countryside surrounding the town, complete with peasants, horses and the landscape itself. The cycle of the seasons and how the human world is organized around it is central to the movement of the story in Book one. In each case the subsection begins with an implicit ellipsis of time, approximately four to six months, to match the length of a season. The seasons and the elided time become points of departure for Grove to expand Suse's character by showing her interactions with classmates, family and the rural community.

Book two, which Grove subtitled "Frau Ihle," is the second installment of the exposé of the Ihle family, in which the mother is now the focus of attention. And here too, he attempts to change perspectives and fully round out her character as he does in the first book with Suse. The natural year and its seasons is again the springboard into her specific psychology: the first subsection begins in the spring, the Kaiser has died and Frau Ihle is moved to reminisce of her now deceased mother. The second subsection

moves back to the previous winter from the day the Kaiser dies, and then progresses over the ensuing summer; here Frau Ihle is shown interacting with her family and the surrounding community. The third takes place in the winter, and reveals her growing alienation from the world and her subsequent suicide.

At the same time that Frau Ihle's story motivates the motion of the narrative, the scope broadens to the community, and to important historical events:

Es war das Jahr 1888. Wenn man später an jenes Frühjahr dachte, so war es einem, als habe seit langem schon eine Erwartung in der Luft gelegen. Trotzdem kam die Nachricht, dass der alte Kaiser gestorben war, wie etwas Niederschmetternd-Unvorhergesehenes.<sup>11</sup>

This is clearly no ordinary year, but one in which a ruler dies. The implications of his death reverberate through the Ihle family, and these are explicitly drawn out in the second subsection that begins:

Nicht immer pflegte Frau Ihle sich seit einiger Zeit, wenn einem ihrer Kinder etwas fehlte, soviel darum zu kümmern wie am Todestage des Kaisers. Suse und Lotte wussten nicht recht, woran es lag, aber es schien ihnen, als werde ihre Mutter etwas "wunderlich."<sup>12</sup>

In Book two the story begins to build and become multi-layered, more complicated thematically. And here too, Grove begins to do what marks much of the novel: he begins to interpret and comment for us. The Kaiser's death in 1888 acts as a stimulus to move to generalities and abstractions. Rather than expressing character through interaction, Grove begins to summarize, as he does in the

following:

Und wenn sie sich höchst selten um ihre Kinder kümmerte, so tat sie es, wenn es einmal geschah, um sie mit gelesenen Versen zu verfolgen, Suse, die sich bis ins Herz hinein genierte, sobald ihre Mutter schwärmerisch wurde, wies sie meist unzärtlich ab, und dann wandte sie sich an Lotte, die aus Gutmütigkeit alles über sich ergehen ließ.<sup>13</sup>

According to Genette, summary in the classical novel of the nineteenth century is "la narration en quelques paragraphes ou quelques pages de plusieurs journées, mois, ou années d'existence, sans détails d'actions ou de paroles."<sup>14</sup> Summary speeds up the narrative story to be told, since it can condense a great deal of time, and at the same time it forces a kind of slowing down of the reading of the text, since it deals with generalities, repeated actions for the most part, that have significance beyond themselves. What is striking about Grove's use of summary is less what is involved in the summary than what is not. That is to say, summaries cannot deal with process or interaction in the way that dialogue can, for example. They are by nature more abstract aspects of the narrative. Summaries, too, provide ample opportunity for overt authorial interventions, since the implication of a summarized action is often important and thus explicitly drawn to our attention.

By using phrases such as "on the rare occasions" Grove can give the impression of time passing, and make his ideological point much more quickly than he can in long

descriptions like the few in Book one, where the children's conversation and the surrounding countryside are rendered in miniscule detail. Grove seems at ease with the details and interactions of the younger Ihle generation, and captures the mood and tone of their conversations much more easily than he does with the Ihle adults. Perhaps he has more ideas to draw to our attention that pertain to adolescence and its corresponding process of coming into consciousness. Certainly the summaries increase in frequency and length as Suse moves closer to womanhood. Here, for example, is how Grove presents a moment from the life of Frau and Herr Ihle in Book two:

Frau Ihle machte ihrem Mann auf das geringste Wort hin Szenen, schrie und warf die Türen. Oder sie beklagte sich in einer Stunde des Anlehnungsbedürfnisses heimlich bei ihrem Mann über die Kinder, deren angebliche oder wirkliche Ungezogenheiten sie grotesk übertrieb. Herr Ihle wehrte sich gegen die Szenen einzig dadurch, dass er brummend und geniert aus dem Hause ging. Die Kinder bestrafte er nicht, weil er den Begriff der Strafe nicht kannte und nur schlug, wenn er eigene Wut auslösen musste: er "wurde aus dem Weibervolk nicht mehr klug," sagte er, seit seine Frau zum erstenmal das Worte gegen ihn erhoben hatte.<sup>15</sup>

To anticipate for a moment, this is the kind of narrating that marks The Master of the Mill. In these two long<sup>7</sup> paragraphs there are no particularly concrete references to time: they consist solely of general phrases like "since the previous winter," "but suddenly, one day," or "in the hour when she needed support." At times, in fact, these phrases are an obstacle rather than an assistance for the

reader, since they force a correspondence to time that is clearly artificial and manufactured to do precisely what they do not do: keep the narrative coherent through a sufficient level of mimesis. To return to the quotation, Grove implies action but does not state it directly. Frau Ihle's hour of need, when she reaches out for a "Anliehungsbedürfnisses," does not explain what happened, but in fact is an unmotivated psychological conclusion drawn by Grove. Because of the frequency and length of these summaries, "Frau Ihle" is much slower-paced even though the actual elapsed time is but a few months. The summaries slow the story in another way too, by allowing Grove to introduce new characters who seemingly have little or no relation to the story at hand. In the description of growing insanity of Frau Ihle and her subsequent neglect of Suse and Lotte, Grove summarizes rapidly in the following example:

All solchen Abweisungen zum Trotz wiederholten sich diese Szenen immer häufiger. Es war, als sehe Frau Ihle ihre Kinder nur noch als Publikum an und vergesse ihren Mann allmählich ganz. Sie wurde gleichgültig selbst gegen die Bedürfnisse der Eitelkeit Suses. Als Suse ein neues Sommerkleid haben wollte, speiste sie sie einfach ab: "Geht doch zu eurem Papa und fragt's ihm!"--Ein paar Tage darauf machte Suse ihr Vorwürfe und sie antwortete: "Na, ja, ja! ich will mal sehen." Aber sie unternahm nichts.

So ging es mehr als drei Monate lang, bis diese Vernachlässigung eines Tages ganz plötzlich auf etwa vierundzwanzig Stunden in ihr Gegenteil umschlug.<sup>16</sup>

What follows are tearful scenes between Suse and her mother over her piano lessons, at which point Dr. Hennings is

introduced as the family physician, and Frau Stuewe also appears, to be invited by Frau Ihle for a cup of coffee the following day. This subsection continues to move from character to character in a seemingly unconnected way. Each character is important for throwing light on Frau Ihle's insanity but none have a function or interest beyond a relationship to her. None of the secondary characters ever take on more than one dimension.

Grove very infrequently halts the narrative altogether in Maurermeister Ihles Haus, and moves to description outside the Ihle family, but in such cases he is extremely effective in capturing the atmosphere and mood of a particular scene. The following example illustrates this point:

Im Hotel zum Löwen am Bollwerk Kinderball . . .  
 Festlich erleuchtet der große Saal mit den drei  
 Seitenräumen, in denen man ausruht. Zu beiden Seiten  
 neben der offenen Flügeltür an der Wand hin auf  
 Stühlen die Mütter und auch ein paar besorgterer oder  
 naiverer Väter. Gegenüber die Streichmusik. Rechts  
 an der Längswand hin in langer Reihe die Mädchen,  
 blau und weiss und rosa und creme: links die Knaben  
 im Sonntagsanzug. Alles friert. Die Musikanten  
 stimmen. Ein Schauer läuft durch die Kinder hin  
 . . . Der Tanzlehrer tritt durch die Flügeltür,  
 schlank und zierlich, ein älterer Herr; mit tadellosem  
 Gruß fasst er erst rechts, dann links die Eltern in  
 eine Verbeugung zusammen. Dann schreitet er gleitend  
 bis in die mitte des Saals. Ein Wink zu den  
 Musikanten hinauf, die sich abschreckend alltäglich  
 benehmen. "En avant!" ertönt das Kommando ins  
 hüpfende Spiel hinein. Die Knaben stürzen herbei,  
 und Paare beginnen sich langsam zu drehen. Die Eltern  
 sitzen in Wirbeln von Luft, und tanzende Paare nicken  
 bekannten Müttern zu. . . .17

Here Grove is indeed at his finest. He captures the gestures and phrases of a wide cross section of society and

renders them in an interesting and convincing way to the reader. Scenes such as the one quoted above serve as a backdrop for the Ihle family in which the community transcends its literariness and becomes a vital cluster of real human beings. Unfortunately Grove seldom allows the town some autonomy from the master mason's house since this does not service his ends.

The third book, subtitled "Herr Ihle," begins with an ellipsis:

In der "Bürgerressource" hatte man für die erste Liebhabervorstellung in Herbst 1892 eine Posse gefunden, die durchschlagenden Erfolg versprach: sie führte den Titel: "Guten Morgen, Herr Fischer."<sup>18</sup>

Much of the section involves the rehearsal for this event. The story continues to move forward by ellipsis and is halted by summaries, with Herr Ihle's relationships to Suse and his second wife as the character focus. What is striking about the summaries in this book, aside from their growing frequency, is that they proceed in a way that is distinctive of Grove's style of presentation:

Herr Ihle wu te von diesen Verhältnissen wenig. Seit dem Tode seiner Frau, und seit ihm Martha, das große, braune, kräftige Mädchen, das Brot backen konnte, die Wirtschaft führte, war er unhäuslicher geworden als je, wenn er auch nicht mehr in demselben umfang die Nacht zum Tage machte. Er hatte Suse und Lotte in die Bürgerressource eingeführt und Frau Vogelsang, die Mutter Hannas, der jetzt einzigen Freundin seiner Tochter . . . gebeten, sie ein wenig in mütterliche Obhut zu nehmen.<sup>19</sup>

The paragraph proceeds like a mathematical proof: it begins with a thesis and proceeds to explain or prove the truth of

the thesis. This becomes the logic of the paragraphs of The Master of the Mill, which also proceed as theme and variations. Both novels suffer as a result of frequent summaries. The main threads of the plot are too easily lost in the proliferation of characters and details. In the passage just quoted Herr Ihle is buried amongst Martha, Suse, Hanna Vogelsang, Hanna's mother, and their relationship to each other. Even though Maurermeister Ihles Haus is a much more modest proposal than The Master of the Mill, it does not escape the ponderousness of the later narrative that is generated by an excessive use of summary.

Thus, in terms of its temporality Maurermeister Ihles Haus moves forward primarily through ellipses and summaries, with the largest periods of time being elided between the three books. Within each subsection an announcement of the season signals the omission of a shorter period of time, usually several days or a few months. The effect of these two techniques taken together is to render the novel extremely episodic and disjointed, or, to use Genette's terms, to lend it an unevenness in speed that is marked by formal stops and starts in the text itself. And at the same time the narrative stops and starts, so too, do the characters: new ones appear and disappear, seemingly at random. Thus one identifies a particular subsection in terms of its characters, so that the last one, for example, is marked by Suse, her stepmother and their quarrel over

Suse's smoking, which culminates in Suse's decision to marry Konsul Blume. The connection to the previous parts of the narrative however, remains hazy.

In dealing with time in this manner Grove continually cuts off the possibility of change or process or even confrontation for his characters, and so must psychologically motivate them through a more abstract means. Thus as readers we are always one or two steps away from the psychology of the character and from real actions in the novel. A static picture emerges of the master mason's house, where possibilities for change do not, in fact, exist. We are never told exactly why the house is as it is, even though we are told a great deal about the master mason and his behaviour. Grove hints at the reasons for Herr Ihle's tyranny by attempting to build a metaphor between the Kaiser and the master mason, so that the family would become a microscopic version of the community, but this relationship is not sustained throughout. The Kaiser is a cardboard figure who looms in the distance but has no meaningful position in the novel. In the same way, historical change over seven years is a convenient peg upon which to hang the tale; it does not transcend its function as a literary device. To say that the novel lacks focus is to say, partly, that it lacks conflict and that it lacks real development. For while on the one hand it is stated that Suse discovers a solution, on the other hand

the only manifestation given is her acquiescence at the end to Konsul Blume. In the same way it is only at the end that the worst in Herr Ihle is made clear by his attempt to strangle Suse. Up until then his actions are described abstractly, through his effect on others. Thus Grove tells us that Herr Ihle terrifies Suse and Frau Ihle without demonstrating why. This lack of action insofar as the "conflict" is concerned is important when put next to the directness with which Grove reveals the school and its functions. These vignettes bring to life both the children and their schoolmates. But why are these present in the text when no such scenes exist in the world of the adults-- which after all becomes the location of the novel's tension. More importantly, why do the interactions between the generations ring slightly hollow? They do not have the immediacy, the directness in the telling or narrating that the scenes from childhood have.

The episodic nature of Maurermeister Ihles Haus, its seeming disjointedness and its increasing abstractness is due in large part to its moralistic ideology. In the end there is no real conflict, nor is there any "development" in the conventional sense of the word; hence there is no real solution. The father is as tyrannical at the end as he is at the beginning and Suse deals with him no more directly than she does at the beginning. The kind of tension that develops is moral tension, so that the reader

wonders when exactly Suse's coming into consciousness will translate itself into a criticism of her father's role and even of her own position within the family. This tension gives Maurermeister Ihles Haus all the appearances and virtually none of the reality of conflict. Its movement is essentially a vertical one over time rather than a horizontal one. The main characters of Suse, Frau Ihle and Herr Ihle are built through description rather than developed through action and interaction. Ideologically speaking, what remains after the text is stripped of its character description is an explanation of the master mason's behaviour that borders on an apology. Given a sufficient engagement in the text, all the reader can muster is moral outrage for that is all Suse can muster against her father. There is no meaningful solution to her problem, since there is no resolution to any moral discord other than tolerance and war, each of which gives the illusion of solution by ignoring or decimating the opponent.

At the same time one must recognize that what Grove attempts in Maurermeister Ihles Haus is a psychological novel, an exposé of Suse, Frau Ihle and Herr Ihle at the level of their minds and emotions. This is done by drawing out individual eccentricities and problems, and strengths and weaknesses through third person narrator and interaction with others. There are few personal meditations and contemplations in the manner of Sartre's La Nausée, for

example, where the world is filtered through Roquentin's consciousness at all times. Nor is there the blend of individual consciousness and social awareness and panorama as in Madame Bovary. Therefore it is not doing injustice to Grove to say that his novel is an exposé without motivation for the majority of his characters. We can understand Suse's pain but not the actions of her father, which is where the real problem lies. In Maurermeister Ihles Haus individual suffering takes precedence over a wider social reality but Grove is not successful in rendering this in a credible way to the reader. The novel is neither realism nor a form of modernism but rests awkwardly in between. This helps explain the absence of a fully realized community and partially accounts for the one-dimensional character support system that Grove draws as background. Moral tension, even if it is skillfully wrought, does not require social motivation. Maurermeister Ihles Haus does at least partially succeed on the psychological level of the Ihle family members.

The artificiality of the text is not transcended however, by the psychological credibility of three members of the master mason's house. The tension becomes lost in the morass of secondary characters and in the attempts to root the novel in the historical world of 1888. It is almost as if Grove's insistence on some level of mimesis in terms of time and chronology interferes with the thrust of the

conflict. In the same way the victory of Suse over her father has none of the triumphant chords a true victory would elicit; her self-consciousness as an oppressed petit-bourgeois woman encompasses the same situation as that of her mother thirty years before. She too, wants to be mistress of a home and live within the conventions of bourgeois marriage. All she can muster is the courage to leave a tyrannical father for an aging Konsul for whom she feels sorry and even can order around. Her "victory" is won by a passive assertion of her own will! From absolute terror to passive resistance: this is her development, this is the solution to the problem. Certainly leaving a father who beats his family is the first step to emancipation but it is only the first step and not the ultimate solution as Grove seems to suggest by the novel's conclusion.

In the same way that Suse's moral victory over her father rings hollow, so too do the apologies for his behaviour. For while it is true that Herr Ihle is an aging old man whose family is slipping away from him, does this fact sufficiently account for his behaviour? Is he merely a morally "bad" man, or does his behaviour speak too, of a kind of misery? One cannot condone his actions; the focus of Grove's attack is on the master mason to the end. The moment at the breakfast table when Suse watches her father cry over her mother's death, and sees him as a pitiful old man, speaks more of Suse's naiveté--and Grove's--than of

a genuine understanding of his behaviour or of an ability to put it in its proper context. A thorough-going critique of this man and the women he lives with, and his lord and master over, requires more than is in the novel. Grove needs to continue the metaphor between the Kaiser and the master mason; he needs to explore the community around the Ihle family. A fully developed criticism would explore those who rule and those who are ruled.

It would be easy to reject Maurermeister Ihles Haus on the grounds that it is ideologically corrupt, for in the end it is. The novel's moral dilemma, to the exclusion of other kinds of conflict and to the exclusion of a real motivation, belongs to the ideology of a ruling class. The moralistic solution defends capitalism's class system by upholding one of its most powerful--and flexible--institutions, the patriarchal family. The family brings with it the overt tyranny of men over women as manifested in the master mason's actions, and it maintains a more covert oppression of men by a ruling class.<sup>20</sup> For one must ask if the master mason is any more "free" and emancipated than the women, and if his behaviour is any less legislated and determined than theirs. The attack by Grove on Herr Ihle is misguided and does not penetrate to the roots of the problem.

The ideology of Maurermeister Ihles Haus is indeed bourgeois moralism but it is also a curious mixture of

attack and retreat: from complete condemnation of the master to apologies for his behaviour. This novel is not from an author whose ideology is formed and fixed; who is self-conscious of himself and the world and who has come to conclusions that can be clearly articulated. The ultimate confusion of the form speaks not of ineptitude as much as lack of experience and practice, and of being unskilled in his craft and unformed in his ideology. It is true that Grove is insulated from the struggles that were tearing at the fabric of European society at the turn of the century. His life as a student abstracted him from the mainstream and he spent much of his youth swimming in a dizzying eddy of style and excitement. Grove did not know that a dedication to literature and writing does not require the kind of life that Oscar Wilde and Stefan George both spoke of and lived. Experience can be gleaned by exploring less costly and more meaningful avenues than the ones that Grove chose-- fraud and deceit among them. It is probably true, as Professor Riley suggests, that had Felix Paul Greve not been resurrected as Frederick Philip Grove, the novels from his youth would have remained buried in the depths of Germany's archives and second-hand bookstores. Maurermeister Ihles Haus cannot stand on its own, but relies for its merit and interest on history, for being part of the life works of the man who surfaced a decade later in Canada.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>For the major results of their findings, see Douglas O. Spettigue, FPG: The European Years (Toronto: Oberon, 1973). Felix Paul Greve will be referred to as Frederick Philip Grove, for the sake of clarity.

<sup>2</sup>Peter A. Stenberg, "Translating the Translatable: A Note on a Practical Problem with F. P. Greve's Wanderungen," Canadian Review of Comparative Literature/Revue Canadienne de Littérature Comparée, VII, 2 (Spring, 1980), Special Issue: Translation, 209.

<sup>3</sup>See Spettigue, "Felix Paul's Career, 1904-9," FPG: The European Years, 119-68.

<sup>4</sup>Gérard Genette, Figures III (Paris: Seuil, 1972), 123.

<sup>5</sup>Genette, 123-24.

<sup>6</sup>Genette, 139.

<sup>7</sup>Genette, 139-40.

<sup>8</sup>Frederick Philip Grove, Maurermeister Ihles Haus (Dresden: Carl Reissner, 1909), 9.

<sup>9</sup>Grove, 36.

<sup>10</sup>Grove, 61.

<sup>11</sup>Grove, 83.

<sup>12</sup>Grove, 95.

<sup>13</sup>Grove, 107.

<sup>14</sup>Genette, 130.

<sup>15</sup>Grove, 96.

<sup>16</sup>Grove, 149.

<sup>17</sup>Grove, 149.

<sup>18</sup>Grove, 177.

<sup>19</sup>Grove, 178.

<sup>20</sup>The classical text is Frederick Engels, The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State, in the light of the researches of Lewis H. Morgan (Zurich: 1884 and New York: International Publishers, 1972). See also Hilda Scott, Does Socialism Liberate Women? Experience from Eastern Europe (Boston: Beacon, 1974) and Alexandra Kollontai, Selected Writings (London: Allison and Busby, 1977). For an analysis rooted in the Canadian experience see Women and Socialism: Our Own Experience (Vancouver: Vancouver Women's Study Group, 1979). For an excellent analysis of the bourgeois family and the so-called "sociast" family of Eastern Europe, Cuba, China and elsewhere, see Women's Liberation and Socialism, Revolutionary Workers League Papers No. 1 (Toronto: Vanguard Publications, 1978).

### Chapter III

#### THE MASTER OF THE MILL

. . . the novelist is in the everlasting dilemma between a novel, which must be living life, and an argument. Every novel, of course, is an argument if it is a novel.

Frederick Philip Grove  
Letter to Lorne Pierce  
May 14, 1941

In these two poignant sentences, Frederick Philip Grove reveals most succinctly the direction his craft had evolved in thirty to forty years. While in all probability Grove was no less interested in problems of style and form than he had been as a youth, his attention in the later part of his life turned primarily to ideas. This is hardly surprising, given the events in his own life that were shaping his spirit and thoughts. He was deteriorating physically; he never satisfactorily recovered from a back injury as a young man, and was losing a good portion of his hearing. In a letter to Lorne Pierce in 1940 he says that he is "feeling menaced with a cessation of things--chronic arthritis and a suspicion of cancer of the throat."<sup>1</sup> Spiritually Grove never recovered from the death of his daughter in 1927, and openly expressed his grief until he himself died in 1948. Financial troubles continued to plague him, despite his success as a writer. All in all, Grove in his later years was not free from worry and pain.

World events of this period provided no solace, as Fascism gained a stranglehold in Italy, Spain and Germany and the imperial powers began to mobilize for a war. Small wonder, then, that Grove is contemplative; small wonder that he wrestles with the problems of man in the world and attempts to render it in fiction. The Master of the Mill is a product of all these forces: it is a monument to Grove's success as a perceptive man able to render these thoughts into a logical whole; at the same time it is a testament to the spirit of the age, to pessimism and defeat that scars the modern consciousness, and hence marks certain of the novels as well. It is perhaps due to its own contradictions and complications that The Master of the Mill has continued to seduce and repel literary critics from the time of its publication onwards.

Margaret Stobie, for example, points out that this novel "sits uneasily" in its literary landscape of Thomas Mann's Buddenbrooks, Well's The Shape of Things to Come and Huxley's Point Counterpoint. She continues with the comment that:

The second part of the novel is sprawling and formless as the flashback technique gets out of hand, and there is much unrevealing repetition of what happened from Sam, from each of the two women, and from a partially written history of the mill. There is endless reporting of people and events, in which the work does not rise to the level of created fiction, but remains a voluminous notebook, out of which a novel could be formed. Once more, a grandly conceived plan failed in the execution.<sup>2</sup>

Impatience with its size and unwieldiness, with its psychologically thin characters; this is what marks much of the criticism of this novel.

Desmond Pacey notes in 1945 that such a complicated theme as "the relations between capital and labour, for example, and the relation of Man to the Machine" require "a complicated technique."<sup>3</sup> He goes on to say that he does not "think that Grove has succeeded in fully mastering the difficulties involved," but that he himself would be "hard put to it to explain precisely how I should have improved upon his performance."<sup>4</sup> Twenty-five years later, after much time and energy devoted to Grove and his works, Pacey remarks that

As almost all other critics of Grove have been, I was content to apply to his novels the usual realistic canons of credibility, consistency, social accuracy and psychological objectivity. I failed to see--and to this day no one has fully demonstrated--that Grove is as much a surrealist as a realist, and that an examination of his patterns of imagery and symbolism would have been much more revealing than my rote application of the rules of Flaubert and Zola.<sup>5</sup>

While admiring the breadth of spirit that allows such rigorous self-criticism, I think that Pacey is too quick to dismiss his early criticism. For it cannot be disputed that Grove's vision and technique demands that he be evaluated against the backdrop of the realist and naturalist traditions of France and Germany in particular. We know, for example, from It Needs to Be Said, that he is aware of the mainstream of realism and in all probability sought to

implement these tenets. In his essay on "Realism in Literature" he says that in

realistic art the creative spirit as such will never appear in the first person; whatever it has to say it will say indirectly, through the medium of action and character; it will submerge itself in the world of appearances. Secondly, it will, in the indispensable and unavoidable interpretation which all artistic activity implies--an emotional interpretation--aim at giving an as nearly universally valid reaction to the outside world as is possible to its own human limitations. Thirdly, it will place itself and thereby the reader in the heart of things in such a way that they look on at what is happening from the inside, as if they were themselves a world-consciousness which has its ramifications in all human beings that appear on the stage of the world of literature.<sup>6</sup>

Besides the Goethian echoes of the last few phrases, it is clear that Grove has a knowledge of the French and Russian schools of realism, and even if he had not so explicitly stated it, it is clear from his writing that this is the spirit that informs his own work. None of this takes away from or ultimately explains the peculiarity of The Master of the Mill; but this kind of critical enterprise can serve as a key to the discovery of what marks Grove's fiction as exactly that--Grove fiction.

To my mind the novel is neither a success nor a failure. Its peculiarity and ambiguity is due to unresolved contradictions on an ideological level and due to a certain clumsiness of narrative technique. Stobie is correct in pointing out that "the flashback technique gets out of hand" in the second part of the novel: it is extremely difficult at times to keep clear the main narrative thread

of Senator Sam, his death and the fate of the mill. Since the present time of the story--the passing of the mill from Sam to Maud--constitutes virtually a handful of chapters, it is overwhelmed by the past events, by Grove's desire to present all sides of the argument that centers on man's fate. For in this novel Grove is indeed a novelist and debater. He begins from an ideological perspective and ends at the same place. Present action, plot, specificity of characters--these are not his concerns. The narrative is instead an attempt to explain or justify the ethical stance of Senator Sam and, by extension, that of his heirs. A reconciliation with the past is what he seeks. The present and the future exist only abstractly in the narrative and in its ideology, and Grove's sense of justice leads him to this enormous past. There he can articulate the arguments and their resolution.

Part One, titled "Death of the Master," begins with Sam as an old man, a senator in fact, who goes to the window to look over to the lake and his mill. There he begins to dream through the history of the mill and his own individual history. From the beginning this pattern is established whereby some action, in this case going to the window, acts as a departure point for contemplation and speculation. In the present action of the story, the first chapter consists of Sam going to the window, looking through it to the mill and then going upstairs to bed. The second

chapter repeats the same pattern, as the following quotation illustrates:

Reliving a past life is a different thing from merely reflecting upon it. So, when, a few days later, things began to crystallize in his mind, the senator rose again from his arm-chair to go to the window and to stare at the mill; his deeply-cut features had been working for some time, even during dinner, which was taken late in this house, with three maids, two footmen, and a butler ministering to the needs of the three members of the household. For no reason whatever the old man had led the way to the smallest of the four drawing rooms--the "blue room"--where they had been sitting for an hour.<sup>7</sup>

As in the first chapter, the minimal action of going to the window is dwarfed by the description and detail surrounding it. The reader must make a conscious effort to maintain a sense of life, interaction and process that "story" implies, since in this case the plot is so easily lost in the details of the past that surround it. There are sufficient reference points to the real world, such as "dinner," the servants and the drawing room to maintain a certain level of concreteness to the novel. The passage quoted above is a case in point. What is interesting is the manner in which these descriptions are presented--not through some sort of interaction or dialogue but as appendages to the dinner, to help explain its appearance. Had these details been presented through action, had the plot been given more weight, it would have been up to the reader to form the composite view. In this way it is Grove who has the overall view and the reader who must dissect out the component parts.

This second chapter in the main is a vision of Sam's, and this second trip to the window allows Grove to implant us in history: the year is 1888 and the important characters are Sam's father, Rudyard, and his grandfather, Douglas. This second chapter does not close with Sam going off to bed but with the reminiscence of an event between Rudyard and Sam in 1888. There are no clues to remind the reader of the present time of the novel, so that the beginning of Chapter three that returns to Sam as an old man unfortunately leaves the reader groping. In this chapter little plot or present time of the narration is allowed, since Grove quickly takes us back to the past to describe well-established personal habits and the history of his son's love affair with Maud Fanshawe.

The predominant temporal feature readily discernible in the opening chapters is ellipsis, both at the level of the present and of the past. In both cases the majority of ellipses are definite, as in the following sentence:

A year later, Rudyard Clark, Sam's father, had built the first addition; and from 1880 on warehouses and granaries had gone up in a planless, haphazard way, makeshift after makeshift, every one designed to enlarge capacity for the moment, without plan or thought of a greater future.<sup>8</sup>

The present time of the novel, what little there is, also makes frequent use of ellipses:

It was a week after the evening when he had seen himself and his father at the loading platform of the old mill; and in the interval another grand conspectus of

a phase of his life had prepared itself in his subconscious mind, only trifles, so far, emerging into full view.<sup>9</sup>

The point of connection between present and past is explicitly stated: it is the content of his dream, "the evening when he had seen himself and his father at the loading platform of the old mill." It seems that Grove is aware of the need to establish the logistics of time as a means to maintain the coherence of the text.

In terms of order, the story in the present is told chronologically while the past is not. Moreover many of the episodes touched on in the reminiscences reappear farther on in the novel. Two of the most important turning events in the narrative, for example, the fire in the mill and the death of Sam's son, Edmund, are referred to in the first chapters, the latter being mentioned in the opening few paragraphs:

The history of the mill had been his history, beginning with the time when his father had started to build it; and again beyond the time when his son, having done something to it of which he himself dis-<sup>10</sup>approved, was killed by the stray shot of a striker.

The psychological implications of the growth of the mill without a concomitant passing of its demands onto someone else's shoulders is drawn out by Grove in the next sentences:

Whatever had happened to him, in his inner as well as his outer life, had been contingent upon its existence. His father had forced it on him; his son had thrown it back on his shoulders.<sup>11</sup>

The next reference to the death of the son is at the end of

the chapter, where the perspective has expanded to include not just the Clark family but the workers of the mill and their families:

It was true, his father, Rudyard Clark, had himself been a man "of the people," a workman who had run the mill as it had been for the greater part of his lifetime by his own labour, aided by a few helpers and a single foreman; while he had been seeking his place in the sun, he had been a democrat; but when he had won success, he had become an autocratic ruler. His son, Edmund Clark, had done what he had done with the ultimate purpose of giving the people what they needed as a gift from above; if he had lived, he might have revealed himself as a public benefactor; but he had died. Between them, the two had forced him, Samuel Clark, to assume all the odium attaching to a task which he had not been allowed to fulfil in his own way.<sup>12</sup>

These two references, coming as they do at the opening of the novel, forecast not just the workings of the story of the mill and its success but also the attendant degeneration of Senator Sam, who, one cannot forget, is the figure that binds the novel together. His "reflections" are the story of the mill. From the very beginning the reader knows everything about the mill and Senator Sam on a psychological level; there will be no surprises. The challenge for Grove is to "fill in" the narrative in an interesting way and create a tension that will sustain itself throughout--a difficult task, to say the least.

Proportionally Sam's and Maud's meditations on the past take up the majority of the text and within both the present and the past certain events continually recur. Seemingly unimportant movements like Sam's walk to the

window function as points of departure from the present to the past, while the repetition of events like the strike slowly broaden the perspective on the event itself. Each time an event is described more characters become involved. Genette refers to this type of narrative as "recit repetitif" and reminds us that

certains textes modernes reposent sur cette capacité de répétition du récit: que l'on songe par exemple à un épisode récurrent comme la mort du mille-pattes dans la Jalousie. D'autre part, le même événement peut être raconté plusieurs fois non seulement avec des variantes stylistiques, comme c'est généralement le cas chez Robbe-Grillet, mais encore avec des variations de "point de vue," comme dans Rashômon ou le Bruit et la Fureur.<sup>13</sup>

In this case the narrative builds the metaphor between the life of the mill and the lives of Sam, his family and the entire community. As the novel moves on, the perspective expands, and it is able to do this through repetition. The negative repercussion of this constant recapitulation is that the text becomes fragmented and at times seems to lack inner coherence. It requires a high degree of skill to make this technique work and Grove partially succeeds by continually commenting on the events and by explaining how they are to be read.

Grove relies not only on repetition of events to implant the mill's history and the plot in the reader's mind. Direct physical description occasionally occurs in the narrative, in which lists of details form a vivid and credible portrayal of a specific character. The general manager of

the mill, Captain Stevens, is described in the following manner:

In spite of his seventy years, the captain was still a dapper little man; he still wore loud-checked suits, brilliantly flame-coloured neckties, smart heavy-soled English shoes of brown leather, a gold-headed cane. He still bore himself very erect; he still gesticulated sparingly with his free hand which clasped a pair of new and immaculate lemon-coloured dog-skin gloves.

When the senator entered the library, the caller was sitting on the forward edge of a leather-bottomed chair, both hands on the knob of his cane, his chin resting on the knuckles of his upper hand.<sup>14</sup>

In both examples these descriptions neither push the action forward nor do they interpret on an ideological level. The repetition of "he still" becomes the base upon which the description is built, and at the same time reminds us that time is passing. And here is one of Grove's strengths: in two short paragraphs he captures the past and present characteristics of a 70 year old gentleman whose personal history is as tied to the mill as Sam's or Maud's life history. This description is one of the few times Grove allows himself to pause, to stop the story and reveal for awhile in this kind of aesthetic detail. These kinds of pauses are lacking in the novel, obviously not because Grove is incapable of a direct rendering of character and personality, but simply because this was not his concern. Strictly speaking, the novel is not bound by an interior monologue: it uses a third person narrator. But the novel is taken over by the mind of Senator Sam, and then by Maud

so completely that details like the description of Captain Stevens are not important. Paradoxically, we have little idea of what Sam looks like or what defines his character, since he is not described to any great extent by anyone other than duplicates of himself, Maud Fanshawe and Captain Stevens. We know only minimally how he responds to the contemporary world around him and we know more fully how he interprets history and its events.

Because virtually everything in the story of the mill is forecast before it comes to pass, Part two of the novel, "The Resurrection of the Master," follows the same technique of Part one. Ruth's and Edmund's fates are known, as is the fate of the mill, from the very beginning of this section. For, as Lady Clark says to Odette:

Both Edmund and Ruth were Clarks; there was little of the mother in them. Within the Clark tradition, Ruth resembled her father more than Edmund did; as everybody agreed, Edmund was his grandfather resurrected. Ruth was a rebel. As for Edmund, I believe it was part of Mr. Clark's deliberate method to abstain from asserting any influence which he might have had; against Ruth he held that grudge . . . [sic] . . . Since everybody knew of her father's attitude, there was always the problem of keeping her out of his way. From an early age she seemed to live under cover; her chief problem was to eclipse herself.<sup>15</sup>

As with Part one, no opportunity is available to go beyond the limits of the story of the mill, or more precisely, beyond the confines of Sam's mind. Everything insofar as Ruth and Edmund are concerned is fixed. They must fit a character mould already cast for them. And while repetition

of an event from more than one perspective is an interesting way of attaining a variety of ideas on a given subject. Grove goes so far as to prefigure ideas or concepts. The physical description of the mill at Arbala forecasts the fate of Sam and Edmund's mill. As Lady Clark relays past conversations, similarities between that mill and the one that has affected the Clarks become obvious:

Throughout the building there were not more than half a dozen men about. There were no elevators, no stairs, no floors. We climbed over steel ladders to the third tier of windows; and then, not being a mountaineer, I said I had had enough. There was nothing to see in any case. The place was like an enormous well into which all sorts of puzzling machinery had been suspended. Here and there a man with a mop of cotton waste was hanging in mid-air; here and there another was crouching on a grid, wiping flour dust. Everything glittered; everything felt and smelt oily.<sup>16</sup>

He then continues:

You may say, of course, it is much the same here; but it is different too. For one thing, there is the town; the mill is not surrounded by an interstellar vacancy; for another, there are men in this mill, at least in spots. At Arbala, everything proceeded as in a void; no vestiges of the past were to be seen or inferred. It was uncanny. Though it was much smaller than the mill here, it was the pure essence of the thing.<sup>17</sup>

Small wonder then, that the strike, and more particularly Edmund's death, is somewhat anticlimactic, as is the culmination of the mechanization of the mill. We have been so carefully prepared for it that it reads as any other part of the novel.

Ostensibly, Part two signals a sharing of narrative duties between Sam and Lady Clark. This division, however,

exists almost solely on a formal level, not only because as characters they lack psychological specificity but because this is the manner in which Grove wants this to take place:

And suddenly, by a sort of transference of thought, she became aware that the visions, hers and the old man's, had merged; as if their blood were beating in a common pulse. She knew that he saw what she saw.

. . .18

She is his heir to the mill and will be privy to the same sorts of tactics of self-justification that the mill imposes on Sam as a young and middle-aged man. Captain Stevens' chapter from his book on the mill, while clearly an attempt on Grove's part to introduce another perspective, deviates little from the style of Sam and Lady Clark. His chapter is useful as information, to fill in the plot, but lacks a relationship to the figure of Captain Stevens as a separate entity from the other main characters. There is nothing intrinsically wrong with lack of character distinction, but this aspect of the text, coupled with the repetitiveness of the narrative and its technique produce an interesting debate from the mouths of indefinable figures.

There is, however, an important difference between the two parts of the novel, and it lies in the nature of the key events of the second part as opposed to the first. The key event dealing with the mill, the strike, is the only episode that deals with real confrontation or that poses a real dilemma for the characters involved. The central actor in this dilemma, Edmund, is struck down accidentally

before further tension develops. The remainder of the second part is personal intrigues and love affairs couched in the guise of business discussions. Even the dinner party evokes personal antagonisms rather than real debate. This is entirely consistent with the life of the mill, since Part one signals the end of its life under human hands. It has become driven by a lifespring not entirely under human control. As Odette says to Lady Clark, in the opening chapter of Part two,

The mill ran itself; it had become an independent thing. There were details to be looked after, of course. Will, Mr. Stevens, in charge of production, and Miss Dolittle, in charge of distribution, looked after them. Mr. Clark got into the habit of having these two report to him, ordinarily over the telephone, occasionally here at the house. I believe the conversion of the mill to automatic operation was responsible for the change; the twenty units which were still operated by hand had lost their importance.<sup>19</sup>

The political importance of the strike is continually undercut by the relative unimportance of individual difficulties and problems. This is by no means to say that this second part has no interest or dramatic tension at all; indeed it has, in the strike, in the dinner party, in the mill at Arbala and even in Captain Stevens' chapter from his book. But the mill as a problem for the Clarks to deal with is clearly more abstracted from their lives than it was in Part one; and, ultimately the reader shares the same process of abstraction. That which characterizes the first part, the overwhelming emphasis on the past, is continued

in the second with this very major difference in focus on the mill.

What are the implications of this emphasis on the past and of the fanning out of statements and references into fully illuminated events with the dynamics of these events laid bare? The kind of novel we are dealing with, in which the present acts as a springboard into the past, is the kind of novel through which Grove is free to weave his debate with this technical device as help and hindrance. For, on the one hand, it allows Grove to play with perspective, using various characters' memories as a device to manipulate ideas--as he does with Sam for example, when we are told that:

All which was as it had been for years, more or less; yet he was not the same as he had been before his brief illness. At his age even a trifling indisposition was bound to leave its effect behind.<sup>20</sup>

When Lady Clark and Captain Stevens meet, he informs her of an unusual action on the part of Sam; she nods sympathetically, since "More than anyone else she was aware of the chronological confusion in the old man's mind."<sup>21</sup> Frequently Sam's memory becomes a transition between him and Maud Fanshawe, as in Chapter ten, where Grove states that "the senator's memories faded" and with no further ado, moves to a discussion between Maud and Miss Charlebois:

But meanwhile, his question having aroused Lady Clark's curiosity, she dismissed, when her father-in-law had left them, the dinner-party from her mind and turned to Miss Charlebois.

"What about Sibyl Carter? Who was she?"<sup>22</sup>

The changes in perspective, most obvious in ~~Captain Stevens'~~ book, and the casting of the story in retrospect, allows Grove to interpret as the narrative moves along with the benefit of hindsight. But on the other hand it is precisely this possibility of intervening and interpreting, and not the use of flashback per se that is overused by Grove and becomes tedious for the reader. Not just events and situations are repeated in an extremely complex and sophisticated manner but individual actions within an event are dwelt upon. A rather extreme example which nonetheless makes the point is Grove's description of Sibyl:

No doubt he had never seen a woman so self-conscious in a physical sense. Every motion of hers was studied and purposeful; she marshalled herself with the genius of a stage ingénue. One saw at a glance that she acknowledged no bond, no approach even, between the sexes but the physical one. Aware of the fact that her figure, theoretically, was the one least capable of arousing awareness in the opposite sex, she accepted her handicap, determined to find the ultimate triumph of her art in her ability to turn a weakness into a strength. Anticipating the wiliness of the present day, she sought a reinforcement of her very great powers in a studied slanginess of speech.<sup>23</sup>

As with Grove's use of flashback, there is nothing intrinsically redundant about this paragraph. But the entire description is extremely abstract and quickly becomes monotonous since every sentence is a restatement in different terms from the previous one. There is no subtlety: there is complexity but not, in the end, anything left for the reader to do. This conceptual repetition, taken together with the huge passages of reminiscences, and the purely

formal division between narrators is not sufficiently counterbalanced by the present or forward motion of the narrative.

Ultimately one must ask the question about the continual intervention of Grove. Why must he explain when the ~~the~~ ~~is~~ ~~partly~~ a production of the ideological ~~for~~ the novel; he begins so stridently with the thesis that "the individual destinies connected with it (the mill) had merely woven arabesques around it"-- and goes on to explain what he means:

To many people as the old man was aware, that mill stood as a symbol and monument of the world-order, which, by and large, was still dominant; . . . a ruthless capitalism which had once been an exploiter of human labour but had gradually learned, no less ruthlessly, to dispense with that labour, making itself independent, ruling the country by its sheer power of producing wealth.

To others, fewer these, it stood as a monument of a first endeavour to liberate mankind from the curse of toil; for it produced the thing man needed most, bread, by harnessing the forces of nature. . . .

To still others, fewer again, the old man among them, it was the abode of gnomes and hobgoblins, malevolent like Alberich, the dwarf of the Rhinegold, but forced, by a curse more potent than their own, to do man's work. The uncanny thing about it was that these gnomes and goblins--or were they jinx--had the power of binding man to their service in turn, or to the service of the machines, as he, the old man, had been bound.<sup>24</sup>

The novel on a thematic level, on the level of ideas, can be reduced to these three perspectives and how they are manifested in the text. But to reduce them to this, of course, would be unfair to Grove and would underestimate the difficulty of his task and the skill with which he

handles it. But the debate, the confrontation, the problem that Grove refers to in the opening motto, never really begins. There is no confrontation once the third perspective is introduced: the gnomes and goblins that Grove talks about stunt the possibility of conflict and of real, concrete development and dilemma. Furthermore Sam's search for justification of his father's actions abstract him from the present and the future and their possibility of development or conflict. Rather than confronting the battle between labour and capital that lies behind the machinery of the mill, Sam chooses to ignore it. He focusses on his father instead:

His father, whether actuated by that mistrust [of Sam] or not, had made himself his master. If he, Sam, lived to be a thousand years old, he would remain the slave of the man who was dead. Others would call him the master of the mill; they might even call him a Titan. He would be nothing of the kind. Though the real master of the mill lay in his grave, he would remain the master even thence. That, the old man had by means of his crime, most cunningly devised. So far, Sam had lived for a future; now he would have to live for a past. . . . Let anyone else step into his place, and would not that somebody else at once delve into the past, lured by a mystery, just as he, Sam, was delving into it right now? Well, he would carry on as one carries on with what one cannot shake off. He had seen himself a prophet; he would have to be the defender of that which is.<sup>25</sup>

No wonder then, that the narrative has no present nor even much of a future. The possibilities for change are predetermined by the past, and the present becomes some kind of a passive receptacle for the process to begin again. As Grove's philosophy is primarily deterministic so too, is the

narrative: it can only reflect or look back to the past, since the possibility for change is cut off from the outset.

To speak of a tragedy in Grove's Master of the Mill is in the end to speak of precisely this stasis and helplessness, of this divorce from life forces. As Grove cuts off the process by telling and retelling, he cuts off the future from man's hands and places it . . . in what? the machine? goblins? At any rate, not with man. Thus it is a helpless and predetermined Sam we see, a helpless and predetermined Maud; the characters never break out of the mould from their past.

In extrapolating these aspects of temporality, both the strength of Grove's scheme and its weakness come into view. Grove's vision is enormous. Not content to deal with une tranche de vie of a family or family life, he wants to capture an entire society, as his motto from Chapman's play that prefaces Part two so emphatically states. His project is on the same scale as Tolstoy's War and Peace, of Flaubert's Madame Bovary, of Thomas Mann's Buddenbrooks, of Ringuet's Trente Arpent's. He is intensely aware that the events that shook Spain, Italy and Germany and eventually the world, were to shake lives as had not happened in previous centuries. The modern consciousness in agony, the century of imperial struggles and the rise of post-industrial, monopoly capitalism: this did

not pass Grove by. Moreover his world has no future. The Master of the Mill contains all the ideological contradictions of the man caught between exploited and exploiter, between capital and labour. There is no decisive battle, not even a prospect for struggle, but only the world-weary voice of a man looking for justification for deeds and misdeeds in the world of the metaphysical. Like Sam, Grove is a man unwilling to take responsibility for the seeming chaos around him, who cannot translate his correct instincts into concrete action. In the end Grove becomes a victim of the world he so strongly reviles: the mill is no more at the centre of the problem than the gnomes and goblins are. The problem lies with the men, Senator Sam and the workers: their confrontation is what lies at the root of the mill. Sam displaces the conflict into the machine and thereby absolves himself and his family of responsibility for the future.

As noted at the beginning of this chapter, Desmond Pacey points out that Grove deals with a complicated theme in the relations between capital and labour and between Man and the Machine. Capital and labour become part of a kind of evolutionary socialism as Man and the Machine become subsumed into cyclical history with the Machine as ultimate victor. Evolutionary socialism then becomes fused into a historical pattern where everything that has come will appear again. The final chapter of the novel, in

which Grove attempts to synthesize these two themes, does not have a conclusive ending. We are not really certain if apocalypse or the machine will come again, and if they do, what will happen. Miss Dolittle's affirmation of confidence "in the capacity of the collective human mind" is an attempt by Grove to undercut the determinism of apocalypse and machine and to leave the reader too, with some confidence in human beings. But this cannot possibly reverse the impetus of an entire novel that fuses the past with the future and virtually eliminates human beings and their toil.

At this point it is sufficient to say that Grove remains aloof from Marxism and from placing himself and his sympathies in the class struggle around him. His own class ideologies and his personal contradictions are not overcome. Removal from the world struggles of his day and the construction of distorted autobiographies have their parallels in the omissions, abstractions and contradictions of The Master of the Mill. To what extent these characteristics of the later narrative are distinctive of both novels under discussion will be explored in my concluding remarks.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>Frederick Philip Grove, "To Lorne Pierce," 5 April 1940, Letters of Frederick Philip Grove, ed. Desmond Pacey (Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1976), 386.

<sup>2</sup>Margaret R. Stobie, Frederick Philip Grove (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1973), 174-5.

<sup>3</sup>Desmond Pacey, Frederick Philip Grove (Toronto: Ryerson, 1945), 85.

<sup>4</sup>Pacey, 85.

<sup>5</sup>Desmond Pacey, Frederick Philip Grove (Toronto and Winnipeg and Vancouver: Ryerson, 1970), 5.

<sup>6</sup>Frederick Philip Grove, It Needs to be Said (Toronto and New York: Macmillan, 1929), 76.

<sup>7</sup>Frederick Philip Grove, The Master of the Mill (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1961), 24.

<sup>8</sup>Grove, Mill, 26.

<sup>9</sup>Grove, Mill, 30.

<sup>10</sup>Grove, Mill, 20.

<sup>11</sup>Grove, Mill, 20.

<sup>12</sup>Grove, Mill, 22.

<sup>13</sup>Gérard Genette, Figures III (Paris: Seuil, 1972),

147.

<sup>14</sup>Grove, Mill, 33.

- 15 Grove, Mill, 180.
- 16 Grove, Mill, 202.
- 17 Grove, , 203.
- 18 Grove, Mill, 230.
- 19 Grove, Mill, 185.
- 20 Grove, Mill, 248.
- 21 Grove, Mill, 249.
- 22 Grove, Mill, 117.
- 23 Grove, Mill, 119.
- 24 Grove, Mill, 21.
- 25 Grove, Mill, 104.

## Chapter IV

### SOME TENTATIVE CONCLUSIONS

In its mystified form, the dialectic became the fashion in Germany, because it seemed to transfigure and glorify what exists. In its rational form it is a scandal and an abomination to the bourgeoisie and its doctrinaire spokesmen, because it includes in its positive understanding of what exists a simultaneous recognition of its negation, its inevitable destruction; because it regards every historically developed form as being in a fluid state, in motion, and therefore grasps its transient aspect as well; and because it does not let itself be impressed by anything, being in its very essence critical and revolutionary.

Karl Marx  
Preface to the Second  
Edition of Capital,  
1873

Now the moment in the critical process has come, to place Maurermeister Ihles Haus next to The Master of the Mill and discover what it is that binds them together and what it is that drives them apart. They are products of the same mind and yet of different social settings, the first being written in Germany and the second in English Canada. The twenty-five years that separates them makes the reader expect a refinement of technique and a development of ideology into a coherent whole. In Grove's case one can also speak of a developing political acumen, perhaps hastened by a rapidly unfolding global depression highlighted by acute political struggles, or perhaps not. It would be easy to say that Maurermeister Ihles Haus

anticipates The Master of the Mill, as of course it does, but one cannot stop there. The novels themselves intend different things: Maurermeister Ihles Haus is primarily a psychological exposé while The Master of the Mill is for the most part an ideological exposé. The "form" and "content" of each novel are distinct from each other, and yet are connected. As we have seen, the discussion of the former includes some aspects of temporality, narrator and perspective.

From the use of Genette's analytical tools, we have discovered that the predominant features of Grove's narration are the ellipses and summaries, and that both give Grove the opportunity to present and compress psychological and historical data. So too do they lend themselves well to authorial comment, for the omitted time allows Grove to draw out the implications of what has ostensibly transpired. Genette's conception of temporality assumes that the text moves over time and has its own process at the same time that it is bounded by time; the relationships that are generated can be brought to bear only on the text and have no relationship to the "real" world. He recognizes that literature is a reconstruction of life, and therefore is subject to its own laws and to a certain extent, generates its own laws of criticism. Genette also insists on the act of writing as a process of labour and acknowledges the hand of the author throughout

his analyses. In conceiving of the text as bordered by time, he believes that certain actions or events are chosen by an author over other events, and that real decisions are behind a text. Novels do not arise as some spontaneous manifestations of culture but have authors that are motivated to write by various aesthetic or ideological criteria or a combination of both. Genette is an eminently dialectical thinker to the extent that he refuses to define Figures III as either a theoretical work or a piece of practical criticism. It is a union of theory and practice, a piece of praxis that pushes forward some theoretical considerations and an understanding of the Proustian narrative at the same time. He says in the Avant-propos to Discours du récit that

Il me paraît impossible de traiter la Recherche du temps perdu comme un simple exemple de ce qui serait le récit en générale, ou le récit romanesque, ou le récit de form autobiographique, ou Dieu sait quelle autre class, espèce ou variété: la spécificité de la narration proustienne prise dans son ensemble est irréductible, et toute extrapolation serait ici comme une faute de méthode; la Recherche n'illustre qu'elle-même. Mais d'un autre côté, cette spécificité n'est pas indécomposable, et chacun des traits qu'y dégage l'analyse se prête à quelque rapprochement, comparaison ou mise en perspective. Comme toute oeuvre, comme tout organisme, la Recherche est faite d'éléments universels, ou du moins transindividuels, qu'elle assemble en une synthèse spécifique, en une totalité singulière.<sup>1</sup>

Genette's weakness is implicit in the phrase "la Recherche est fait d'éléments universels," which he himself appears to recognize by qualifying his claim slightly with "du

moins transindividuels." What Genette does not do is seek the motivation for ideology in society itself; neither does he acknowledge that this is either possible or even useful. While a Marxist analysis can use these universal elements, such as ellipses and summary, which provide starting points for an uncovering of certain aspects of style and form that would otherwise remain indistinguishable from each other in the literary text, it must seek to implant a text in its social environment.

As discussed in the previous chapters, the scope or duration of Grove's novels is seven years in the case of Maurermeister Ihles Haus, and fifty years in The Master of the Mill, although one must remember that the majority of the latter takes place in the past. The difference between the two novels is significant, because the shorter time span dictates a narrow focus on the Ihle family, with the surrounding community being tangential to the narrative, and it provides little movement between past, present and future. An historical consciousness has not yet been awakened in Grove, so he does not range as freely over morning, afternoon and night or times past, the present, and the future as he does in The Master of the Mill. Only on a few occasions in the early novel does the past surface, and in every case it is an individual past history that is explicated. We are told of the parentage of Frau and Herr Ihle but nothing else.

One can say, then, that the past is dead for Grove: it does not exist to be learned from except insofar as individual character traits are concerned. Both time and history are much more concrete and real in The Master of the Mill than in Maurermeister Ihles Haus but its predominant action takes place in the past. History in this novel is a huge dragon that must be tamed, if not slain, and it offers little in the way of direction for the future. In fact, the past becomes the future, as the women tell us at the end of the novel. What has come to pass will come again. The fifty years of the mill's operation allows Grove to present an entire society rather than just one family in crisis, but the fusing of the past with the future effectively seals off the possibility for an alternative. The Master of the Mill does not give the human race a chance to write a new future any more than does Maurermeister Ihles Haus. Instead men are fated to create flour mill after flour mill and women are fated to flee from tyrannical fathers to pitiful husbands all of which may end with an apocalypse. This is hardly an inspiring vision, all in all!

In both novels the future is not "real," in the sense that men and women are not given the opportunity to create their lives themselves. Things are determined, in the main, by the machine and by personality quirks. The ideological determinism has its indicators in the narrative in

the ellipses and summaries, which hurry the narrative through its time frame and allow Grove to intervene. In his desire to present all sides of a debate as clearly as possible, he resorts to summarizing, but he does so in such a repetitive style and with such overtness that the story, its interest and tension, becomes lost. Both novels share this feature, but the frequency of these recapitulations increases in The Master of the Mill. Grove even goes so far as to direct the literary interpretation of his novel, as he does in his description of the prime minister at the second dinner party:

He, too, like everybody else, represented something. As a person, that is as an intellectual or spiritual entity, he did not exist; as the holder of the first office in the country, he represented the benevolent attitude of a paternalistic government elected by the people towards all whose interests lay in the preservation of the status quo. . . . He was the Buddha of his world. He sat there, knees crossed, metaphorically, bored and stony.<sup>2</sup>

This paragraph is extremely awkward and pedestrian. We are told everything about the prime minister from an indirect perspective, and not through direct action or physical description. Grove relies on ideology to explain that the prime minister is the benevolent attitude of the status quo. There is nothing inherently difficult in abstract explanations, and as a stylistic variation this may have been effective description, but as the norm in both novels it becomes tedious and confusing. The reader is asked to juggle-too many abstractions.

Narrator and perspective are also a problem for the reader to contend with. Maurermeister Ihles Haus uses a third person method of narration and presents three members of the Ihle household whose connection to each other exists on a purely formal level. They are relatives of each other, a part of the same family, but are rarely put in action together so that we are convinced of the totality of the family unit. Each book represents a new perspective on the Ihle household but there is no real and concrete connection between the three--even though the focus of Grove's attack rests with the father. We believe that this is a family because Grove tells us that it is, but our willing suspension of disbelief cannot be sustained throughout the novel. The generations do not overcome sufficiently their abstract relationship to each other through direct action and interaction. The two generations do not represent different sides of a debate but two different perspectives--those of Frau and Suse Ihle--on the same man. A coherent and consistent narrator does not bind the generations together. Grove attempts to accomplish this in the character of Suse, but introduces too many secondary characters outside her life for the reader to assimilate. Suse and her consciousness become lost.

In The Master of the Mill, on the other hand, Grove forms a meaningful connection between the characters: we can visualize the two generations, and particularly the

fathers and sons, in action and in conflict with one another. There is more than one perspective presented here; Edmund is "his grandfather resurrected" and forces the automation of the mill, which is contrary to Sam's wishes. Grove introduces the three Mauds as commentators on the action, and we have already seen how explicit he is in pointing out the shift from Sam to Maud. As discussed in the previous chapter, the debate for Grove centers around what the mill represents, and to whom. Grove wants the argumentation accessible to the reader, and while the novel is often confusing in terms of who is speaking and at what point in the mill's history, at least the sides of the debate are apparent.

These considerations of the novels, their temporality, Grove's style and his narrators constitute the basis for a discussion of "form" in Grove, and highlight the strengths and the weaknesses of Maurermeister Ihles Haus and The Master of the Mill. The ideological and technical seeds of the later novel are evident in the early novel, and despite the disparity in size and in the control of his material, these two form part of what one could call Grove's "semi-urban" or "social" fiction. They are neither thinly disguised autobiography, such as A Search for America or In Search of Myself, nor part of his prairie fiction that includes Our Daily Bread, Settlers of the Marsh and Fruits of the Earth. While neither of the novels under discussion

are strictly "urban" novels as opposed to "rural," they deal with problems of an urban society, or at least of an urban society coming into existence. Maurermeister Ihles Haus deals with human relationships where work or the land do not appear to any large degree, although we can view--albeit hazily--the surrounding urban community. Human beings have only each other to confront and very little of the world beyond the confines of the family. The Master of the Mill, while still focussed on the family, bursts this boundary to implicate the community that revolves around the mill. The Clark family becomes the basis for the relationship that Grove builds between it, the mill and the community--a relationship that he hints at in the earlier novel but does not sustain. The Ihle family is created out of a vacuum and recedes into one, so that a curious reader who demands to know the genesis of this institution and these particular inhabitants is not satisfied by Grove's lack of explanation. The Clark family is also a microcosm not just of the mill but of the entire human race. As the mill passes from generation to generation, from Rudyard through Sam to Edmund and back to Sam again, it becomes more and more inhuman. There is something ominous about the vision at the end of the novel when Miss Dolittle describes the mill as being:

self-contained, except for what little help it needs from engineers and mechanics. And when the last engineers and mechanics disappear from earth, it

will still go on for a while, till it wears itself out and crumbles.<sup>3</sup>

Despite the affirmation of the power of the collective human mind and the possibilities that this engenders made at the end of the novel, the movement from mechanization to apocalypse appears to be what can be expected. The Clark family will not survive. The institution of the family, however, will continue to exist. But this is not the only thing Grove has to say about the family.

In both novels this institution is the thematic base and from the lack of criticism in both novels Grove implies that the family is a "natural" institution, intrinsic to the human condition. It is not just a literary device whereby psychological realities are explored, as in the case of his early novel, nor is it only a literary device for examining social reality, in the case of The Master of the Mill. The family has a concrete presence in both novels. What is interesting in his portrayal of human relationships within this context is that the third generation does not appear except as some sort of shadowy figure. The parents of Frau and Herr Ihle are evoked to motivate the second generation's individual psychologies, and give the reader a sense of the psychological climate that both people inherit. The three generations of The Master of the Mill all appear as characters, and the primary conflict rests between fathers and sons. When the

three generations are discussed from the point of view of ideology, however, Sam is an intermediary between the other two: he neither defends his father's trickery on behalf of the accumulation of capital nor defends his son's zeal for automation on behalf of the workers. Conflict is avoided through rationalizations for Rudyard's behaviour, and self-justification for that of Sam, and the real political conflict between capital and labour that could have been successfully realized by Grove is channelled into generational conflicts between the Clark men. Grove does attempt to move beyond the confines of the family in Maurermeister Ihles Haus by explicitly linking the father to the Kaiser, but there is no parallel between the Kaiser's death and the father. The connection is between the Kaiser's death and the mother. In this novel one can see that the basis for an examination of society will become the family but at this point Grove cannot render it successfully.

It would be incorrect to read The Master of the Mill and Maurermeister Ihles Haus merely as explorations of the family, since this omits a good deal, particularly with respect to The Master of the Mill. In the later novel Grove demonstrates a social and political conscience rare in English-Canadian fiction,<sup>4</sup> which he dramatizes by the confrontation between capital and labour; by the presence of the description of the girl at work on the bagging floor of the mill, where the bags come so fast "that her

eye is not reliable, her muscular response not quick enough."<sup>5</sup> Grove recognizes the monstrous working conditions of factories like his flour mill and is not unsympathetic in his portrayal of the workers and their strikes. His account of the strike-breaking tactics by the police is most extraordinary:

Provision had been made for their safety provided they stayed within the cordon of police. If they left it, they did so at their peril.

Since the automatic units were taking care of the overseas demand, and reserves were ample, the bringing in of this handful of strikebreakers was branded as a needless provocation.

Passages like these express political instincts and analysis, an awareness of oppression and an assessment of those who are responsible.

Ideologically speaking, Grove's vision expands from Maurermeister Ihles Haus to The Master of the Mill. He attempts to look at relations in the world between owners and workers as relations that shape human struggle and existence. Where Grove is incorrect is in using the family as the means by which to examine this problem without recognizing the family itself as a political apparatus too. Grove is deluding himself and the reader to the extent that he propogates the family as an intrinsic human institution. He presents it as a source of conflict, true enough, but ends by tacitly supporting its oppressive structures: alternate ways of arranging human relationships are not explored. Grove fails to see it as part of

the system that oppresses a working class of both men and women; as stated earlier, Herr Ihle's behaviour is no less determined than Frau Ihle's, Sam's or Ruth's. In both novels Grove condones the very instrument that carries out the oppression that he is so aware of; the psychological torment, in the case of Maurermeister Ihles Haus and the economic exploitation, in the case of The Master of the Mill. None of the Clark family suffers save Ruth. Sam questions his decisions but undergoes no crisis because of them. Ruth, however, is tormented precisely because of her family and her position within it. She is trapped and has nowhere to flee. Sadly, the Grove world has no exit from this kind of hell, since Grove himself remains steadfastly blind to one of the sources of tyranny he so thoroughly abhors. The family is the tool by which Grove excuses the exploitation of the workers--Sam blames his father and then undergoes the same process of justifying his own actions. He then wonders if his son will bear the same taint that has forced him to become a slave to the mill. Grove seeks an answer to the problem of man's fate in the world but cannot find it, so he fuses past with future and extinguishes the problem rather than deal with it. In reality Grove's The Master of the Mill has all of the appearance but none of the concrete realities of a political confrontation: he abstracts the struggle by blaming it on history and the family.

Ultimately Grove must be criticized for his failure to perceive the family as an institution of class rule that perpetuates the very inequalities he so acutely sees and feels. Grove divorces the family from a social context in the early novel and in the later novel completely isolates it from the political upheavals surrounding it. The family is not, however, a mere instrument that depends for its "success" upon the integrity and principles of the individuals within it. Leon Trotsky is one of the first post-Engels Marxists to deal with the family, and his reference point in the following quotation is the new "socialist family" of the 1930s:

Genuine emancipation of women is inconceivable without a general rise of economy and culture, without the destruction of the petty-bourgeois economic family unit, without the introduction of socialized food preparation, and education. Meanwhile, guided by its conservative instinct, the bureaucracy has taken alarm at the "disintegration" of the family. It began singing panegyrics to the family supper and the family laundry, that is, the household slavery of woman. In complete contradiction with the ABC of Communism, the ruling caste has thus restored the most reactionary and benighted nucleus of the class system, i.e., the petty-bourgeois family.

Recent scholarship continues the earlier analysis of Trotsky and explores the interrelationship of women's liberation and socialism. The introduction to Women's Liberation and Socialism outlines in a very general way some of the products of the patriarchal family:

The sexual division of labour between men and women in the family forces women to bear the responsibility for domestic labour and the reproduction of the labour

force. As increasing numbers of women enter the labour force, they are forced to carry a double burden.

Their superexploitation as workers in the labor market is justified and maintained by the notion that their "first" role lies in their responsibility for domestic labor. At the same time, the performance of that labor within the home lets the capitalist patriarchs off the hook. This work, so essential to life, is performed privately by women--and the system as a whole takes no social responsibility for it. The economic benefits to the capitalist system of the maintenance of the family are enormous. So too are the benefits the social system reaps from family socialization, which inculcates competitive and authoritarian values and ensures rigid and repressed sex roles.<sup>8</sup>

Grove fails to spot the connection between Suse and Frau Ihle's pain and their role in the family itself. He cannot perceive that so long as Suse's solution lies in finding a man to take care of her she will always be enslaved. Ruth is the only figure in The Master of the Mill to be psychologically tormented and this is precisely because she is trapped by the family and the expectations that accompany it. Grove does not see that the Clark family is part of a mechanism that continues exploitation by passing wealth from one generation of a family to another. He speaks of socialism and yet does not liberate women from domestic responsibilities and from what is traditionally "women's work," even if it has all the illusion of grandeur and glamour that go along with managing a house like the Clark mansion.

Moreover Grove speaks of a kind of socialism that is achieved by argument or by reason: when men like Sam

realize the error of reaping profits at someone else's expense and labour, they will do as Sam did, in the face of an attitude generally hostile to the management:

yes, hostile to him who considered himself the best friend the men had anywhere: he had raised wages in the face of the fact that automatic production was cheaper now than hand production; he had lowered rents; he had established company stores where all the necessities of a mill-hand's life were sold at cost. He had made concessions. We had anticipated the demand for, concessions. Against his will, against his reason, he found himself driven into an attitude of defending class interests instead of preparing a new world order by eliminating human toil. He tried to understand; he had always tried to understand; he had never succeeded; he did not succeed now.<sup>9</sup>

In postulating this kind of philosophy, Grove turns political issues into moral issues and thereby "solves" the problem. Perhaps Grove himself is uneasy with the contradictions but does not know how to synthesize them. He therefore closes the novel with a leap into salvation and apocalypse. As Miss Dolittle says to Lady Clark about the fate of mankind:

"A few will survive in every country--few in comparison. As the centuries and millennia go by, they will till the soil, first with the tools which an industrial age left behind; then, as they wear out, without them. A thin stream of mankind will flow through the needle's eye into a distant future."

"And will they work through to some sort of salvation?"

"Indeed they will," Miss Dolittle said. "And since they will be essentially the same that we are, that we were, they will start the whole process over again. With the decline of man the beasts of the wild will increase: they had no industrial revolution to bring them to a crisis. Man will be a hunter again, then; and, being a hunter, he will slowly once more evolve the shotgun."<sup>10</sup>

When asked about this process ending in extinction, Miss Dolittle does not answer, but speaks of another possibility:

Some entirely unforeseen thing. Some development of which we cannot even dream yet. It is useless to try to divine it. But in one point I have begun to differ from even Sir Edmund. I have come to place a great confidence in the capacity of the collective human mind.<sup>11</sup>

The novel concludes on this ambiguous note.

Evolutionary socialism, the bourgeois family, a curious kind of cyclical history, quasi-religious motifs-- these are the layers of Grove's ideology. They are bound to clash with each other, as indeed they do. The ideology of Maurermeister Ihles Hagen is much less developed than that of The Master of the Mill, although it is made much more accessible to the reader. Its characteristic is naivete: it communicates an anguish that has yet to find an articulate voice. The Master of the Mill is profoundly contradictory, although this is less apparent due to a sophisticated but clumsily handled technique. The blurring of past and present, the fusing of future into past, the blending of Sam and Maud into one ideological position, the repeating of plot motifs all obscure the "debate" that informs the novel. There is, however, much less debate than confusion. How can these ideas be resolved into a logical system? They cannot; this goal remains as frustratingly elusive as the figure of Grove himself.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Gérard Genette, Figures III, (Paris: Seuil, 1972), 68.

<sup>2</sup> Frederick Philip Grove, The Master of the Mill (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1961), 275.

<sup>3</sup> Grove, 330-31.

<sup>4</sup> Robin Mathews phrases it another way: "At one level . . . we must face the fact that our writers write out of a sensibility heavily afflicted with false consciousness . . . [which] simply means that the person perceives the reality of the social structure as he or she is conditioned to do so by dominant class interests for the benefit of those interests." See his article "Developing a Language of Struggle: Canadian Literature and Literary Criticism" in Paul Cappon's In Our Own House; Social Perspectives on Canadian Literature (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1978), 135-147.

<sup>5</sup> Grove, 193.

<sup>6</sup> Grove, 170.

<sup>7</sup> From Writings of Leon Trotsky 1937-38 (New York, Pathfinder, 1970), quoted in Leon Trotsky, Women and the Family (New York: Pathfinder, 1970), 10-11.

<sup>8</sup> Women's Liberation and Socialism (Revolutionary Workers League Papers No. 1 (Toronto: Vanguard Publications,

1978), 3. See also Vladimir Lenin, The Emancipation of Women (New York: International, 1934); Karl Marx, Frederick Engels and others, The Woman Question (New York, International, 1951); and Charnie Guettel, Marxism and Feminism (Toronto: The Women's Press, 1975).

<sup>9</sup>Grove, 190-91.

<sup>10</sup>Grove, 331.

<sup>11</sup>Grove, 332.

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