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DESIRE AND DISRUPTION: Narrative Structures in the
Fiction of Timothy Findley

by

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ABSTRACT

The study examines the operation of narrative desire in six novels by Timothy Findley: The Last of the Crazy People, The Butterfly Plague, The Wars, Famous Last Words, Not Wanted on the Voyage, and The Telling of Lies.

Narrative desire is defined as the force which generates and shapes the construction of narrative. The purpose of the study is to identify the various desires at work in Findley's fiction by analyzing such aspects of narrative structure as the beginnings and endings of the novels, embedded narratives, double-plotting and the influence of several different genres. The study takes a post-structuralist, narratological approach.

The analysis reveals that Findley's narratives seem to be structured by conflicting desires. In particular, the conflict between a desire for wholeness and a desire for fragmentation seems ongoing in his work. The desire for wholeness manifests itself in such elements as coherence, closure, explanation and order, while the desire for fragmentation manifests itself in the disruption of these elements.

Many of Findley's characters engage in activities which involve the creation of narrative (film-making, research, autobiography, detection) and thus it is possible to interpret Findley's own narrative structures in light of his treatment of these characters' projects.

While each novel investigates the implications of narrativization in a different way, it is possible to conclude that, over all, Findley links the imposition of narrative structure to the imposition of power, and that the conflicts which disrupt his own narrative structures can be traced to a strong ambivalence toward the notion of authority.

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Introduction

The Reluctant Postmodernist

An apocryphal story about Timothy Findley has it that, after hearing Linda Hutcheon describe him as "a postmodern writer," he stood before his mirror repeating: "I am a postmodern writer ... imagine ... me. A postmodern writer!" The anecdote is attributed to Findley himself, who undoubtedly related it with the self-effacing irony for which he is known. The story conjures an image of the author doubly doubled -- by mirror and by irony -- contemplating, in good postmodern fashion, his own postmodernity. But the story appeals to me not only because of its self-reflexivity. It is a story about identity, about living with and rejecting the structures imposed upon the self by others. Findley's fiction is constantly engaged in this process. In its astonishing diversity of style and genre, it continually repeats and subverts traditional structures, in just the way that Hutcheon defines the postmodern. But it does not do so easily; its relationship with traditional narrative forms is the constant source of an ambivalence which can be read in the disrupted structures which it produces.

One of the characteristics that defines the literature of the postmodern era is a suspicion of the meta-narratives, or official narrative explanations, provided by history, science, religion and the state, many of which filter into popular culture and thus serve to maintain the status quo. As an example, one could look to the popular romances, which, contemporary feminists argue, reinforce the passivity of their female readers. Or one could look to the popular western, in both novel and movie form, which serves to perpetuate the official myth that white Europeans are justified in their slaughter of the native peoples of North America. Postmodern fiction tends to view such meta-narratives with distrust. In Canada, for example, Audrey Thomas's Intertidal Life (1984) and Rudy Wiebe's The Temptations of Big Bear (1973) subvert these meta-narratives by writing, respectively, the story of a marriage and the story of a historical battle from perspectives which differ widely from the traditional romance or western. Findley's novels examine a variety of such meta-narratives, displaying an ambivalent attitude not only to their content, but to their form as well.

This study discusses the structures of Findley's novels individually and in detail, attempting to generalize from them a theory of the ways in which desire operates in his narrative. The diversity of Findley's novels, however, makes it difficult to generalize about his work as a whole,

or to place Findley in any one school of writing. Several of his peers, such as Margaret Atwood, Robertson Davies and Alice Munro, tend to deal fairly consistently with genre and subject matter, developing and enriching their themes through a series of identifiably similar works of fiction. In contrast, Findley tends to take on different subject matter and to write from a different perspective with every new novel. As a result, Findley's fiction avoids the "trademark" of a "distinctive and consistent subject position," which Frank Davey identifies in the work of several equally successful Canadian writers (96). Although Findley's themes are quite persistent, they are expressed through a wide range of vehicles. In fact, as a body, Findley's work could be said to represent one massive disrupted narrative structure in itself.

Findley experiments with several genres, including the tragedy, the war novel, the confessional autobiography, and the mystery, with varying degrees of obedience to the rules of genre. And almost every one of his works is engaged in a dialogue with the texts of the past, including texts from such heterogeneous traditions as Hollywood, the Bible, Greek mythology, literary modernism and European fascism. Findley is indeed both resisting and desiring to repeat the traditional forms of the past, but his ambivalence is not centred on any one tradition. What Findley seems to distrust are the elements of narrative coherence and

narrative closure common to many of the traditions which serve as his intertexts. The result is neither a duplication of traditional structures, nor a total abandonment of them. Instead, Findley reproduces the structures of various traditions in broken, disrupted forms which seem to bear the mark of a certain anxiety about story-telling itself.

Traditional narrative structures are characterized by their adherence to a restricted point of view, seemingly consistent characters, and a linear plot which follows the Aristotelian tradition of "the sequence of events that develops causally from a beginning that generates discords through a middle that amplifies the discords into crisis to an end that resolves the discords" (Spanos 14 n.1). Findley is both attracted to and repelled by the coherence of traditional structures, that is, their apparent ability to explain everything, and their tendency toward closure, that is, their apparent ability to bring the process of questing to a halt and to shut out alternative explanations. The meta-narrative is an "apparatus of legitimation" (Lyotard xxiv). It seeks to explain the way things are, to naturalize and legitimize the social order and its structures of power. Thus it makes use of the explanatory force and the seductive nature of coherence and closure.

Gayatri Spivak argues that "the desire to explain might be a symptom of the desire to have a self that can control

knowledge and a world that can be known" (In Other Worlds 104). "On a more specific level, every explanation must secure and assure a certain kind of being-in-the-world, which might as well be called our politics" (105-06). The meta-narratives of the traditions which Findley examines are fuelled by just such desires for control and authority. One of the few constants in Findley's work is his thematic concern for the abuse of power and the suffering it creates. Judging from his treatment of characters and institutions who impose their authority unjustly on others, authority is a force with which Findley is very uncomfortable. He is clearly outraged at a society in which the weakest members are made to suffer for the irresponsibility of those in power. He tells the stories of the disempowered, from the neglected children of his early fiction, to the mutilated young soldiers of The Wars, the concentration camp victims of The Butterfly Plague, the helpless animals of Not Wanted on the Voyage and the mentally ill of The Telling of Lies. In Famous Last Words, the victims of political violence are written out of Mauberley's narrative in a manner which only draws attention to their absence in his discourse. Many of these novels focus on the nature of the narrative structures which keep in place the totalitarian authority of the social institution -- whether it be familial, educational, military, medical or legal. Findley's indictment of the machinations of power in society seems to create anxiety

about his own authority as a story-teller. Findley's narratives seem driven by the desire to create coherence, to construct characters, plots, messages and images which are whole and absolute. Yet in the process of construction, this desire is frequently disrupted. In the resulting shape of the narrative, one can read the traces of a conflict which mirrors the power struggles of his characters.

Authoritative narratives tend to preserve such abstract notions as origins and closure, objectivity, wholeness, knowledge, explanations and order. The traditional narratives which Findley explores seem driven by desire for these absolutes, which can perhaps best be defined collectively by Jacques Derrida's term "metaphysical presence":

all the names related to fundamentals, to principles, or to the centre have always designated the constant of a presence -- eidos, archè, telos, energeia, ousia (essence, existence, substance, subject), aletheia, transcendentality, consciousness, or conscience, God, man, and so forth. ("Structure, Sign and Play" 249)

The narrative which seeks access to these absolutes leaves the mark of its desire in the form of logical coherence and closure. Such narratives are convincing, even seductive, and are thus effective tools in the construction and

maintenance of power. They appeal to the authority invested in essence, origins and teleology.

Many postmodern writers challenge these bastions of order and subvert the authoritarian aspects of narrative by playing deliberately with its traditional tendencies toward coherence. Metafiction, for example, such as the work of Robert Coover, exposes the manipulative, constructed nature of narrative and reveals its indeterminacy (Waugh 101). By drawing attention to its status as fiction, it undermines its own authority. Postmodern fiction also questions the rules of various traditions. Julian Barnes's Flaubert's Parrot (1984) and Michael Ondaatje's Running in the Family (1982) blur generic boundaries out of recognition. And in Nabokov's Pale Fire (1957), the supposedly main text is less important than the appendix. Traditional notions of logic and order are disrupted by D. M. Thomas's The White Hotel (1981), in which the interpretation of signs seems to move in both temporal directions at once; Umberto Eco's The Name of the Rose (1980), in which accident and coincidence triumph over knowledge and logic; and Gabriel García Márquez's One Hundred Years of Solitude (1967), in which narrative logic finally is completely subverted as the text we are reading is "exiled from the memory" and rendered "unrepeatable" as we finish reading it (383).

Clearly, many postmodern writers are challenging traditional narrative structures for political as well as

aesthetic reasons. In Flann O'Brien's The Poor Mouth (1974), logical explanations and the desire to impose coherent narrative structures on events are associated with the colonizing forces in Ireland. The colonizing forces in Canada are similarly characterized by Rudy Wiebe in The Scorched Wood People (1977) and The Temptations of Big Bear (1973). In the feminist novel Ana Historic (1988), Daphne Marlatt's narrator refers to the structure of historical discourse as a "cover story" (60), which has hidden the presence of women; she determines to break the rules of historical objectivity in order to write women back in. Conventional representations of reality are subverted for political reasons as well. Magic realism is sometimes used as a means of exposing the lies of official authorities. When the banana company in Macondo says that it is raining, García Márquez makes it rain -- for years! When the army massacres hundreds of striking workers, the banana company covers up the crime with the story that production has ceased because of the rain: "It had not rained for three months and there was a drought. But when Mr. Brown announced his decision a torrential downpour spread over the whole banana region" (287). The rainfall lasts for "four years, eleven months, and two days" (291). Salman Rushdie plays on the ways in which authorities in India also manipulated their people through narrative lies that covered up their crimes. In Midnight's Children (1981), scenes of

magic realism claim to be simply recording "a time which damaged reality so badly that nobody ever managed to put it together again" (420). These novels draw attention to the way that discourse constructs reality. Those who control the official version of reality may bend it to their will.

Findley does not stray as frequently nor as far from tradition as the writers named above (though he certainly can make it rain for a long time). Despite the fact that elements of metafiction, generic parody, deconstructive logic and magic realism all appear in his work, most of his novels are still quite firmly grounded in coherence and closure. Although these postmodern elements in his work, like those in the work of many of his contemporaries, are closely tied to political concerns, Findley's resistance to traditional structure is not so much a rejection of it as an ambivalence toward it. The desire for coherence is always at work in his texts, although over the years it is increasingly embodied in tyrannical characters and institutions.

Postmodern literature, as the label suggests, is usually defined in relation to literary modernism. In attempting to define the Canadian postmodern, theorists tend to focus on its difference from the modern. In the process, both modes tend to become homogenized in rather deceptive ways. Nevertheless, one distinction between the modes is very helpful to an understanding of Findley's conflicting

narrative desires and his place among his Canadian contemporaries. This is the distinction between modern lamentation and postmodern celebration in regard to the crumbling of absolute values to which both eras bear witness. Robert Kroetsch writes that modernism seeks "to assert the oneness, the unity of all narrative" (Lovely Treachery 24). In T. S. Eliot, he reads "a longing for the unity of story or narrative" (22). The contrasting attitude, which Kroetsch finds in William Carlos Williams, is "an acceptance of, even a celebration of, multiplicity" which characterizes the postmodern (22). Frank Davey also characterizes the postmodern as an agent of liberation and celebration. Canadian postmodern writing is

a writing that seems undismayed by cultural or literary disunity. It is one that seems diffident about its own authority. [...] It is as much interested in multiple voices as modernism had been but less interested in granting priority to any one of them. It usually sees mythology not as sacred inheritance but as arbitrary human construction. It views language not as an instrument for human use but as an immense system of codes continuously modified by the politics of human culture. (107)

Findley is not entirely "undismayed" by disunity; his writing is more anxious than "diffident" about its own

authority; it usually seeks to give moral priority to specific voices; it takes mythology extremely seriously; and it desires to use language "as an instrument," by which I assume Davey means using it with the desire to communicate a message.

As examples of the carefree postmodern attitude toward unity, Davey cites a passage from Running in the Family in which the character "surrender[s]" a novel to the insects which are tearing it apart, even though he "had not got that far in the book yet" (Ondaatje 189); and the end of Kroetsch's Badlands in which "the main character scatters her father's notebooks" thus "achieving a freedom [... from] patriarchal hierarchies and sequences" (Davey 108). In contrast, one could cite the end of Famous Last Words. While this novel throws Mauberley's narrative into doubt, it does not do so joyfully. The possibility that Mauberley's story will be lost to posterity (392-93) is presented as a kind of tragedy. Findley is suspicious of coherence and closure, but he does not entirely reject them.

If one takes a chronological view of Findley's novels, as I do in this study, one can see a progression toward the kind of postmodernism described by Hutcheon, Kroetsch and Davey. The attitude toward mythology, for example, goes through a transformation over the years, changing from reverence in The Last of the Crazy People to distrust in Famous Last Words to disrespect in Not Wanted on the Voyage.

But even in Not Wanted on the Voyage, there is no celebratory triumph over its power; no Bibles are ripped and scattered to the wind. It is not that easy, Findley's novels suggest, to dispense with power structures. In fact, these novels often suggest that the disempowered need to construct the same kinds of narratives that the authorities do, to play their game in order to survive. Even in his sixth novel, The Telling of Lies, the power of explanation and containment is not entirely a repressive force; while it is suspect, it is still the force which enables Vanessa to find and rescue her friend from the enemy. Findley has never reached the point of abandoning coherent narrative. Although one should never make such predictions, I doubt if he ever will. Findley's narratives are postmodern in the same ambiguous manner that Findley brings to his description of himself as a postmodern writer: with irony, but uncomfortably.

Narrative Desire, Narrative Conflict

"Narrative," as I use the term, is distinct from "story." Throughout this study, I maintain the narratological distinction between these terms as defined by Gérard Genette. Story is the "signified" and narrative is the "signifier"; story is the "narrative content" and narrative is the "statement, discourse or narrative text

itself" (27). In other words, story refers to what Findley tells us, while narrative refers to how he tells us. Findley makes interesting use of such conventions as narrative openings, narrative closure, and the demands of genre, all of which I explore. This study examines the shape of his narratives and also the desires which shape them. This project is valuable to an understanding of the dynamics of Findley's fiction, particularly his early work which has not yet received the critical attention that it deserves. One can read, in Findley's first two novels, the incipient desires which later dominate his more famous works. The project is also valuable, I believe, in that it examines, in detail, some of the narrative techniques that are used to construct and to rupture desires which are at work in the construction and disruption of North American society. For Findley rarely lets his readers forget about the world outside the text, which is also constructed by desire.

Recent theorists have used the term "desire" to describe the force which generates narrative activity and keeps it in motion. I borrow this term for the purposes of my study, following the direction of theorists such as D. A. Miller and Peter Brooks, who wish to go beyond a structuralist perspective toward the study of the dynamics involved in narrative. The term has its roots in psychoanalytic theory, and has come into prominence among

narratologists along with the growing influence of Freud and Lacan upon literary study. Yet the study of narrative desire need not involve all of the tenets of psychoanalysis. I do not follow psychoanalytic theory in my analysis of Findley's characters, and I certainly do not do so in any analysis of Findley as a person. Desire is a kind of trope for the purposes of describing and analysing the movement of narrative -- the movement which creates the structures we read on the page. Peter Brooks, the theorist on whom I draw most heavily, explains that Freud's work

presents a dynamic model of psychic processes and thus may offer the promise of a model pertinent to the dynamics of texts. Psychoanalysis, after all, is a primarily narrative art, concerned with the recovery of the past through the dynamics of memory and desire. [...] It is not that I am interested in the psychoanalytic study of authors, or readers, or fictional characters, which have been the usual objects of attention for psychoanalytically informed literary criticism. Rather, I want to see the text itself as a system of internal energies and tensions, compulsions, resistances, and desires. (xiv)

Narrative desire has a psychoanalytic aspect in that its movement is similar in structure to the movement of psychic impulses as described by psychoanalysis. Lacanian analyses

of desire suggest that desire is that which cannot be fulfilled, and so it can only attach itself to a series of substitutions for its unnamable object in a continual metonymical movement. Narrative too has unattainable ends to meet and moves forward metonymically, fuelled by desire. Aside from these structural connections with psychoanalysis, I use the term "desire" in a strictly narratological sense, to describe the forces which keep narrative in motion. In a sense, desire is motion. Desire is the name for that which moves narrative from one place to another, leaving the traces of its movement on the narrative's structure.

"The desire of the text," writes Brooks, is the "desire for the end" (104), suggesting a force which moves narrative ever forward. But this is only one of the forces which can be identified in a narrative (as Brooks discovers in his analyses of specific texts by Balzac, Flaubert, Conrad and others). Like the desires of the psyche, narrative desires often meet up with conflicting forces which cause them to take a circuitous route.

Almost every narrative consists of gaps, repetitions, paradoxes and irregularities which are the sign of plural, often contradictory desires. The ensuing conflicts change the direction of narrative, often at crucial moments, causing it to swerve away from the apparent object of its desires; they interrupt, slow down, cut short or otherwise impede its progress. The movement of desire is

discontinuous, disrupted because frequently, while one desire is moving the narrative in one direction, another desire is moving it in an opposite direction.

The characteristic opening of the Findley novel is an example of the way in which ambivalence leaves its mark on the structure of his narratives. Findley's ambiguous prologues seem to perform two functions at once. On one hand, they seem to signify a definite point of origin, especially when they are explicitly labelled "Prologue." On the other hand, because they relate events that occur later in the story than the events which immediately follow the prologue, they seem to signify an uncertainty about where the story begins. Unlike the experimental novel, such as Alain Robbe-Grillet's In the Labyrinth (1959), or even George Bowering's A Short Sad Book (1977), which may attempt to dispense with beginnings and endings altogether, Findley's novels manage to point directly at, and at the same time escape from, traditional beginnings. Findley's hesitant openings seem to be created by a conflict between the desire to give the story a coherent shape, with a definite beginning, and the desire to resist coherence by obscuring that beginning. Each prologue functions differently in each novel, but collectively they suggest a certain anxiety involved in the processes which generate narrative.

Narrative desire is generated by instances of "narratability," which D. A. Miller defines as consisting of those "instances of disequilibrium, suspense, and general insufficiency from which a given narrative appears to rise" (ix). Narratability is the condition which makes narrative possible by arousing the desires which fuel its momentum. The traditional nineteenth-century novel, of which Miller writes, moves toward the "nonnarratable" -- the opposite of the narratable, that "state of quiescence assumed by a novel before the beginning and supposedly recovered by it at the end" (ix). The nonnarratable cannot generate a story, but can only function as closure. As Miller demonstrates in his study of Jane Austen, George Eliot and Stendahl, the traditional novel has its "discontents":

[...] there is a wide spectrum of ways in which a novel may characterize the function of the nonnarratable. In traditional fiction, marriage is a dominant form of this ne plus ultra, but death is another, and these are not the only ones. Narrative closure may coincide with the end of a quest, as in a story of ambition, or with the end of an inquest, as in a detective story [... or with] a proper transfer of property. But whatever the chosen privatives might be, it is evident that traditional narrative cannot dispense with the function that they motivate -- namely, that of

both constituting and abolishing the narrative movement. [...] traditional narrative is a quest after that which will end questing [...] (3-4)

Findley's fiction inherits this traditional discontent, although, like many modern and postmodern works, its resistance to closure is stronger and more obvious than that which Miller has to tease out of the nineteenth-century texts he analyzes. It puts up more of a struggle, one might say, before it dies.

But the struggles of Findley's fiction are different from the struggles of the traditional novel in kind as well as in degree. Miller's list of nonnarratable events (marriage, death, inquest -- depending on the genre) names the things that are lacking in the state of narratability. They are the objects of desire which will kill desire (and thus discourse) by fulfilling it. But in Findley's fiction, the object of desire is rarely a specific event; and resistance to closure does not merely take the form of leaving us without telling what happened next. Rather, the object of desire often seems to be untellability itself. The very thing his narratives desire to tell us about is untellability. They may promise to tell us what Effie is waiting for ("About Effie"), who Robert Ross was (The Wars), why Mauberley sunk to such moral depravity (Famous Last Words) -- but they never do. In a kind of double nonnarrativity, Findley's fictions often close once they

have succeeded (through a series of struggles and disruptions) in making their stories unnarratable.

The struggle to keep stories unnarratable, most notably in the early works, is partially motivated by a fascination with mystery for its own sake -- a desire to keep the story somehow transcendent, as if it were above or beyond narration. But isolating this desire does not get us very far. I am reminded of Franz Kafka's lines:

All these parables really set out to say merely that the incomprehensible is incomprehensible, and we know that already. But the cares we have to struggle with every day: that is different matter.

(Parables and Paradoxes 11)

Findley's fictions are firmly grounded in this "different matter." The "cares we have to struggle with every day" -- sexism, racism, the authoritarian tendencies of the family, religion and the arts -- are the cares that Findley continually explores through fiction. And the exploration continually reveals that these dangerous tendencies write themselves as narratives. The attempt to keep certain aspects of his stories unnarratable does more than evoke the mysterious. It strives to keep these aspects free from the authoritarian explanations that coherent narration may impose.

In an article about The Wars, Diana Brydon writes: "Even more frightening than the void of what could not be

told is the tyranny of all that is too easily told" ("It could not be told" 64). Brydon's perceptive remark points to the two fearful poles between which Findley's narrative swings -- not only in The Wars, but in his other works as well. The "void" is what motivates narration, so that Findley's narratives seem always to be trying to fill it. But in doing so they always risk approaching the "tyranny" of coherent narrative structures. Characters who create coherent narrative structures (and thus explain what Findley seeks to keep inexplicable) are usually suspect characters in Findley's fiction. For example, characters who seek to essentialize human identity, such as the movie makers in The Butterfly Plaque, Noah in Not Wanted on the Voyage and Dr. Potter in The Telling of Lies, all have a rigid code of normalcy which they try to impose on the people around them. Not only would their explanations threaten to put an end to the mysteries of identity, and thus an end to discourse, they also use these explanations to control others, to gain and maintain power in ruthless, self-serving ways. As Brydon suggests, the void of what cannot be told is sometimes exactly what should not be told. For there is nothing (that we know of) which literally cannot be told. Even the highly mysterious areas (madness, sexuality, violence) with which Findley attempts to deal can be spoken of, and even explained, most notably in political, psychoanalytic or religious discourse. But Findley's

fiction resists such meta-narratives, desiring to preserve the silence which surrounds these subjects. These subjects must not be narrated, or explained, even though, paradoxically, it seems to be the desire to narrate them which gives rise to the writing.

In their effort both to approach and to avoid certain moments, Findley's narratives move in a similar way to that which Miller describes. But those moments which they fear and desire are not exactly what Miller means by the nonnarratable. I prefer to use the term unnarratable because it connotes more than the simple absence of narratability; it is a reversal of that state, even a release from it (as in the difference between "not doing" something and "undoing" it). As an example, one could look at the way in which Findley's tyrannical Noah seeks to bring the story of God's relationship with "man" into the realm of the nonnarratable by imposing closure in the form of the story of the covenant (350-52). By undermining (and undoing) Noah's story, Findley's narrative keeps the nature of the relationship between the human and the divine unnarratable, frees it from narration. Findley's fiction returns us, again and again, not to quiescence, but to lack. The story is not left unfinished. The story is unnarratable. In one sense, to narrate it would "ruin" it. After all, if you want to write about the untellable, you can't tell it. In another sense, any narration of it would

create a power structure and, thus, the authority about which Findley's narratives are so ambivalent.

The construction of narrative, intimately grounded in desire and politics, cannot be "stopped," although the desire for the unnarratable is a kind of dream of stopping it. Findley's fictions vacillate between the desire to explain and the desire to stop explanation -- neither of which can ever be fully satisfied. But in the process of the conflict, and in my process of reading the conflict, I believe that Findley's fictions begin to perform the difficult work that Spivak proposes: "to question privileged explanations even as explanations are generated" (In Other Worlds 117).

Chapter One

Openings:

Prologues of Violence

"I don't know how to begin about Effie," says the narrator of "About Effie," the story which begins Timothy Findley's career as a writer of fiction. The narrator's statement thematizes a difficulty which runs throughout the body of Findley's work and manifests itself in a variety of ways. The opening of a narrative, especially in his early works, is often linked with a loss of innocence, imaged through the figure of a troubled adolescent whose fall from childhood constitutes the narrative movement. In Findley's later work, anxiety about beginning is almost always manifested in the disrupted narrative structures of his novels' openings, openings which are seemingly multiple, and which make impossible the identification of any absolute beginning to the story. As well, Findley's openings are always marked by scenes of violence, in which the human body is disfigured or destroyed. Beginnings are also troubled by ambivalence about authority, both that of past texts and that of Findley's narrative itself. The typical Findley opening is characterized by several of these elements. The Wars, for example, contains all four: a sense of innocence

lost; an uncertainty about how, and where, to begin; a scene of pain and violence; and a reluctance to establish narrative authority. All of these elements are signs of conflicting narrative desires which seem to arise from anxiety over the task of constructing a coherent story and the sense of coherent identity, or self, which such stories require.

While examining these four elements in this chapter, I write frequently of the (paradoxical) unnarrated story and the coherent self, but these exist only as objects of a desire that is never fulfilled. The desire to attain these absolutes is always nostalgic, always looking backward to a golden age which never was. Although structuralist narratology separates the term "story" from "narrative," and I use this convenient separation constantly, the two are inextricable. The unnarrated story does not exist any more than narrative can exist without story. The unnarrated story is the dream of a story uncorrupted by narration. It is also the very story that would, if it could, put an end to narration. The coherent self is the dream of a self innocent of division, confident of its own authority.

In Findley's work, the beginning of narration marks the place where the beginning of writing, with its play of différance, will rupture the desire to believe that either story or self can exist in a self-identical, cohesive, uncorrupted form. Because writing appears to split

signified from signifier, thought from word, intention from meaning, Jacques Derrida uses writing as a metaphor to investigate this split. The sign, or trace, marks the operation of difference, in which "the completely other is announced as such -- without any simplicity, any identity, any resemblance or continuity -- within what is not it" (Of Grammatology 47). Writing is the site where the split is announced, the place where the dream of self-presence is ruptured.

But writing itself is not the cause of this split. "The presentation of the other as such, that is to say the dissimulation of its 'as such,' has always already begun and no structure of the entity escapes it" (Of Grammatology 47). Writing is only a metaphor, a particularly apt one, for a split which has "always already" occurred.

Findley's texts display an ambivalence toward self and story -- both a nostalgic desire for stable absolutes and a desire for fragmentation and even destruction of them. This does not mean that I am necessarily condemning nostalgic desire and privileging as more "realistic" the conflicting desire to destroy the illusion. I am interested in examining the ways in which the conflict itself leaves its mark on the structure of narrative. This is, I believe, an important part of the project which Gayatri Spivak urges on us: to persistently re-examine that which we cannot not desire.

Innocence Lost

"About Effie" is the first in a series of early narratives¹ concerned with sexuality, mental illness and violence -- issues which later become the focus of Findley's major works. In his early fiction, the investigation is hesitant and tentative. As if uncertain how to begin, Findley circles around these concerns, portraying them usually, as in "About Effie," through the eyes of children. The use of children as narrators and/or focalizers serves to keep the central action of the story at a distance, and thus these narratives are marked by silences and gaps. The children can never get close enough to the story to be able to tell it whole. They are kept at a distance by an adult conspiracy of silence. The adults in these stories never speak of the frightening things which are happening in their families, partly because they wish to keep the children innocent. Parents who refuse to be parents, mothers who want to murder their babies, fathers who betray their children, people who drink themselves into oblivion, shoot themselves, drive their cars off cliffs -- these are unspeakable acts; these are the stories which must never enter into the discourse of society. Findley's later fictions (Famous Last Words, Not Wanted on the Voyage, The

Telling of Lies) clearly express a distrust of narrative explanations for madness and difference. Mauberley, Noah and Dr. Potter all seek to explain (away) aberrations through narrative structures -- with disastrous consequences for the people around them. In these early fictions, the characters react to aberrations with silence. Yet their attempts to protect the children never succeed. The prolonged innocence is double-edged. It builds up unbearable tension, in both story and narrative, generating an insatiable desire to break the silence. The stories of these families must be told -- and the desire to tell them is embodied in Findley's children. Yet without a language in which to speak, they don't know how to begin.

"I don't know how to begin about Effie," says the narrator, and his statement suggests that it is not only Effie, strange as she proves to be, who causes the difficulty. It is the story itself: I don't know how to begin "About Effie." The story of Effie, a maid with peculiar delusions, is narrated by the young Neil Cable, a character who appears also in "War," in "The Name's the Same" and in "Real Life Writes Real Bad." In all of his stories, Neil is a very self-conscious narrator, anxious about structuring his narrative, uncertain of his ability to get it right. In "About Effie," Neil, like many of Findley's young male characters, sees only the bare outlines of a story -- the puzzling clues and traces left by adult

mysteries. In the case of Effie, the mystery is apparently a benign, almost charming, form of madness. Nevertheless, the story is full of silences and gaps. The enigma of Effie's behaviour is never explained. Neil doesn't know how to begin the story because the story cannot be told.

Every encounter with Effie, it seems, is a scene of miscommunication. The first sign of her presence is an inarticulate "noise": "I went in, and there was a shout. Maybe it was a scream, I don't know. But somebody sure made a noise [...]" (83). Effie does not speak immediately, but gives Neil "the look that said 'Are you the one I'm waiting for' -- and then she sat down and started to cry" (83). Effie's explanation for her behaviour is vague, to say the least: she is waiting for some mysterious man, or men, who will be heralded by music and thunder, to summon her away to some unspecified, but clearly metaphysical, place. Neil's attempts to learn more about Effie are thwarted at every turn. His conversations with her consist of a series of interruptions, non sequiturs and misunderstandings. For example, when Neil asks her to identify this man, she answers without answering:

"Him."

"Who's that?"

"There has to be thunder, or he won't come."

Effie promises Neil: "Some day when I know you better, I'll tell you" (88). But that day never comes. One night, Neil and his mother seem to be on the verge of discovering the answer to the mystery. Hearing thunder and music, they creep downstairs to see Effie watching at the window. Finally, Effie speaks, but Neil reports: "I don't know what it was because she said it too quietly for me to hear" (91). Neil and his mother say nothing, but turn and go back upstairs. They lie in bed, thinking about Effie, and their conversation echoes the silence that permeates this whole story:

"Do you know?"

"No. Do you?"

"No." (92)

The story is not only about Effie. As her name suggests, it is about ineffability itself, what cannot be said.

"About Effie" is the gentlest of Findley's tales of childhood encounters with the ineffable. In most of these stories, the young male characters react to the silence around them in aberrant, usually violent, ways. In "War," Neil's anger at his father's decision to go to war is exacerbated by the fact that his father did not tell him he was joining up. In "Lemonade," eight-year-old Harper, bewildered by his alcoholic mother's silent withdrawal from him, concocts a dangerous scheme to regain her presence. Harper longs to communicate with his mother, but she is

interminably concealed within her bedroom. He is forced to wait outside her room, morning after morning, for increasingly longer periods, until she summons him. Finally, the maid mysteriously informs him that he is no longer allowed within this inner sanctum. Planning to restore his mother to her former, caring self by redeeming the jewellery she has pawned, he steals her gin and sells it, mixed with lemonade, to the neighbourhood children. The boys in both "War" and "Lemonade" attempt to attract their families' attention by running away. But these attempts fail and both boys resort to more direct methods. Neil's response is to ambush his father with an arsenal of rocks. Harper gazes up at the window of his mother's bedroom, then, quite suddenly, hurls a rock through it, shattering the glass and, apparently, shattering his mother's precarious balance: she shoots herself that very night. Both of these stories foreshadow Findley's first novel, The Last of the Crazy People, in which Hooker Winslow's reaction to his family's unbearable silence is to massacre them with a handgun.

"Are we crazy people?" Hooker asks his brother (203). "Mother is upstairs and won't come down. You live in the library. Rosetta won't look at me. Iris has secrets. And Papa sits with his back to everything. What does it mean?" (204). At the age of eleven, Hooker is vaguely aware that sexuality plays some part in the mystery of his family's

behaviour. His mother's illness is linked to her recent stillbirth; his brother Gilbert is accused of fathering an illegitimate child; his father is exiled from his mother's bed. But sexuality is never discussed in this family. Hooker's questions are never answered. Iris, the maid, tells him that he will understand when he's "old enough." In the meantime, "You shouldn't speak on things you don't know about" (54). Even Gilbert, the only one who seems willing to talk at all, reacts with despair to Hooker's questions about sex: "I don't want you to know. Oh, Jesus - - I don't want you to have to know things!" (203).

The boys in "About Effie," "War," "Lemonade," and The Last of the Crazy People exist in a pre-adolescent realm from which they perceive the world of adults through soundproof glass. Nothing is explained to them. Even the kindly maids who care for Harper and Hooker in the absence of their parents refuse to explain or even to speak of that absence, other than by oblique reference. Harper and Hooker are driven, by the tension of the silence around them, to create a narrative logic which will enable the untellable stories of their families to be told. Brooks notes that one function of narrative is that it "demarcates, encloses, establishes limits, orders" (4). This is the desire of the boys in these stories: to place some limits on their experience, to give it some order.

Harper envisions a logic in which the redemption of jewellery will equal the redemption of his mother. And Hooker, forced to rely on eavesdropping to get any information, is left to draw on his own limited experience to interpret the euphemisms and unfinished sentences which he overhears. He must supply his own narrative structure to explain the disjointed words and actions of his family. From his unsophisticated perspective, the only context he can place them in is that of "crazy people." And the only ending to the story he can think of is total destruction, forcing a narrative closure so lethal that it puts an end to the story of his family forever.

These boys begin to break out of their innocence by creating narrative structures. The pain that they experience as they do so suggests a conflict surrounding the genesis of narration. Despite the energy and force of the desire to begin, there is an opposing desire to resist beginning. In his study Beginnings, Edward Said describes one aspect of beginning as a point of rupture and loss. Said quotes Merleau-Ponty: "Qu'il soit mythique ou intelligible, il y a un lieu où tout ce qui est ou qui sera, se prépare en même temps à être dit." Merleau-Ponty suggests that there is a "place" where the ineffable resides. Said's comments on this concept touch on the imaginary space which exists, as it were, before the beginning:

Mythical or utopian, this place of which Merleau-Ponty speaks is probably the realm of silence in which transitive and intransitive beginnings jostle one another. Silence is the way language might dream of a golden age, and words, R. P. Blackmuir says, are sometimes 'burdened with the very cry of silence,' with their very opposite and negation. Yet we do speak and we do write. We continue to use language, its burdens and confusions notwithstanding. (73)

This "realm of silence" is the realm of the unnarratable story, and it does seem to represent a dream of a golden age, a nostalgic desire for a time before language. The realm of silence is desired; it represents, perhaps, a kind of childhood. Yet it is a childhood that can only be desired in retrospect. As Harper begins to formulate his plan to break the unbearable silence of childhood, that silence is already becoming a lost, and therefore desirable thing: "Perhaps he was turning from childhood -- although he did not feel it going from him. His sense of loneliness was to determine this, beginning to become the loneliness of an adult, the loneliness defined by remembrance" (34). The break from silence is a break from innocence and wholeness into the criminal and shattered realm of language. In The Last of the Crazy People, this link between narration and corruption is made at the very beginning. The novel opens

with the last moments of Hooker's innocence, just before he finally breaks (and is broken by) the silence of his family and leaves childhood irrevocably behind him. Beginning with this moment may serve as a narrative hook, to pique the reader's interest. But it also serves to link the beginning of writing with the beginning of the end of innocence. Hooker falls from grace at the same time that Findley's story "falls" into discourse.

Like the boys of his early fiction, Findley continually tries and fails to break silence on mysterious and taboo subjects. The desires of story and narrative intersect. For what remains hidden in the story is the very thing which is unnarratable. If the adults in the story were to reveal what is hidden -- to create, say, a sociological or psychological narrative to explain alcoholism -- there would be no story or at least there would be a very different (and certainly not a Findleyesque) story. In these early works, narratability depends upon ineffability -- it is ineffability which sets narrative desire in motion.

Neil's story of Effie seems to reach its peak of narratability just when its untellability becomes unbearable; he begins at the point where he doesn't know how to begin, as if his desire to shape the story into a narrative is fuelled by his very inability to do so. Paradoxically, the insufficiency from which these narratives arise can never be satisfied, because satisfaction would

kill narrative desire. After all, if Neil could really tell us about Effie, there would be nothing to tell.

Findley's troubled characters act out the conflicting desires of his narrative. Because the ineffable in the story is often taboo, most of the characters avoid it, and the immature boys who seek to penetrate it are incapable of doing so. In a sense, Findley uses the naivety of his characters to keep the unnarratable at bay and to keep narrative desire in play so that the narrative continually approaches yet never arrives at its destination, and so continues to engender another story, another beginning, and thus a series of boys who are always on the brink of "something."

The children in these stories are driven by a desire to break out of silence, but that silence, it seems, can only be broken by an act of violence. This is a violence not only of stones and bullets, but of writing itself. Even the narrator of "About Effie," who commits no act of violence, can feel the conflict between his desire to tell the story and his inability to tell it. The beginning of his narration is a kind of violence, destroying the ineffable which it seeks to preserve. As soon as each narrative begins, the silence is broken, and in Findley's fiction that break is usually fraught with conflicting desires. "I don't know how to begin about Effie," says Neil, "but I've got to." Neil's "but" marks the split desire which is to

structure all of Findley's fiction in the years to follow. The narrator cannot begin, but he must begin, and so he does what he can only do. He begins -- but not without doubt, anxiety and paradox.

Hesitation

The boys in Findley's early fiction serve as a sort of buffer for the narrative, distancing it from the story which it both desires and fears to tell. In Findley's later fiction, this distancing effect is achieved through the structure of the narratives themselves. Findley's openings are often shaped in a way which suggests an intense ambivalence about breaking the silence. Findley's works tend to open hesitantly, with repetition or with achronic prologues which serve to conceal the point where the story begins.

The Last of the Crazy People, The Wars and Not Wanted on the Voyage all begin with achrony; their prologues relate events which occur in the middle or near the end of their stories. Each suggests a scene of violence and then breaks off, as though backing away, and allows the novel to begin at the "beginning" -- each of these prologues is immediately followed by a "Chapter," "Book," or section which is clearly marked by the number one. Genette defines achronies as proleptic or analeptic depending on their relationship to

the "first" narrative, which is the narrative from which the achrony departs (48). As a prologue has no point of departure, however, Findley's achronic prologues are somewhat ambiguous.

For example, on a first reading of The Last of the Crazy People, one has no way of knowing that the scene in which Hooker sneaks out to the stable is not the beginning of the story but in fact relates an event which occurs near the end of the story. Therefore, one could say that the prologue constitutes the "first" narrative; but if this is so, then almost the entire novel is one long completing analepsis. Genette notes that a "complete" analepsis, which joins the first narrative without any gap in the story, is "tied to the practice of beginning in medias res [and] aims at retrieving the whole of the narrative's 'antecedents'" (62). In The Last of the Crazy People, this practice works to concentrate attention on the opening scene, giving it the status of an impetus, or cause, for the narration.

One effect of the prologue to The Last of the Crazy People is to create suspense, both with sinister imagery and with several unanswered questions. What is in the box? What are the boy and the cat waiting for? Where is the boy's brother? These questions stay with the reader for the rest of the novel (as it recovers the prologue's antecedents), informing otherwise minor events with dramatic significance. The suspense sets the tone for the narrative

to follow -- a gothic novel full of foreboding and psychological tension.

Another effect of the achrony is to illuminate one of the major themes of the novel. The prologue is not the beginning of the story, nor is it the end. Rather, it constitutes the beginning of the end, the point just before the apocalyptic climax. As discussed above, the narrative begins on the morning of the last day of Hooker's innocence. Because this scene is the beginning of the end, its appearance at the opening suggests a prophecy of some kind, a warning that one should read the signals which point the way to the end. Thus, the prologue underlines the theme of prophecy which runs throughout this novel and, indeed, throughout much of Findley's work. As John Hulcoop has noted, Findley's works seem constantly to be urging the reader to "pay attention" to danger signals both in his individual texts and in the larger world ("Look! Listen!").

Yet perhaps the most significant effect of the prologue to this novel, in the context of Findley's later openings, is to suggest that the narrative doesn't entirely want to begin. The prologue ends just at the point before the murders take place. At the beginning of Chapter One, the narrative jumps backward in story-time (to the scene of Hooker's relatively peaceful last day of school), as if to avoid the coming slaughter, and the novel proceeds chronologically from this point on. The beginning of the

"Epilogue" returns, briefly, to the last moments of Hooker's innocence which open the novel:

Waiting in the stable, the boy and the cat at last were answered.

"Hook!"

It was beginning.

Hooker drew the box close and opened it. He lifted the revolver up into view before his eyes, and it gleamed for him, oiled and ready, in his grasp. He inserted six bullets [....] (272)

Hooker opens the Pandora's box and loads the gun when he "at last" is "answered." The silence will be broken now. "It" is "beginning," ironically, in the epilogue. For "it" is the end -- the scene of the massacre which the narrative has previously avoided, for all 22 chapters of the novel. And during those 22 chapters, the narrative has piled up, along with a considerable amount of suspense, a library of untold stories and unanswered questions. The narrative has taken the whole length of the novel to be able to begin to tell this story of violent destruction. And in the telling, it seems to destroy itself. The novel ends almost immediately, its desire, apparently, abruptly spent, as though the long analepsis had been only a way of delaying its own death.

The Wars displays a similar tendency to veer away from certain sections of its story. Laurie Ricou has said of The

Wars that "The novel opens stammering. It begins -- in the Prologue and first three sections -- four times, in four different ways" (129). The chronology of this novel is complicated because the narrative moves back and forth between two stories which take place approximately sixty years apart: the story of Robert Ross and the story of the researcher who attempts to piece that story together. The prologue narrates a scene from Robert Ross's story, at a point, like Hooker's, near the beginning of the end. But unlike the completing achrony of the prologue to The Last of the Crazy People, the prologue to The Wars not only anticipates but repeats in advance a later section of the story (181-183). This is Findley's first use of a repeating achrony as a prologue to a novel. He uses this technique also in Not Wanted on the Voyage. In contrast to completing achronies, repeating prolepses double a narrative section to come, while repeating analepses repeat a narrative section which has already appeared (Genette 54, 71). The opening of The Wars can be classified neither as a prolepsis nor as an analepsis. Which of the two identical passages is the one from which the other departs? Findley's technique makes such a question unanswerable. Repeating achronies, according to Genette, may present "problems of interference" between two narrative levels; they run the "risk of redundancy or collision" (50). But Findley's narrative seems to court this risk, to desire this collision. The

reappearance of the opening, midway through the novel, raises questions about where the novel begins. The difficulty of distinguishing which narrative is the "first" narrative serves to conceal the moment of beginning, and this concealment can be read as a sign of ambivalence about that moment.

Famous Last Words also begins hesitantly. This novel consists of three main levels of narrative: first, that which narrates directly the actions of Mauberley; second, that which narrates directly the actions of Lieutenant Quinn and Captain Freyberg; and third, Mauberley's own narrative, his writing on the walls. And the novel has, roughly speaking, four beginnings. The first beginning is the prologue (not, in this novel, explicitly labelled as such), "1910," a two-page scene in which the suicide of Mauberley's father occurs. This prologue is followed by Chapter "ONE," entitled "March, 1945," which recounts Mauberley's flight from Italy and his arrival at the Grand Elysium Hotel in Austria, where he is to write his famous last words. Both the prologue and Chapter One take place on the first level of narrative, narrating directly the actions of Mauberley. Chapter Two, "May, 1945," recounts how Mauberley's body was found by the American military, including Quinn and Freyberg, who read what Mauberley has written. This chapter is the beginning of the second level, narrating directly the actions of Quinn and Freyberg, and constitutes the framing

narrative for Mauberley's writing on the walls. Chapter Three marks the beginning of Quinn's reading and thus the beginning of the "third" level, the embedded narrative which is Mauberley's writing. From here on, the three narrative levels alternate until the end of the novel.

The beginning of Mauberley's narrative is split in such a way that the reader can never be sure exactly where it begins. Quinn decides not to begin reading at the place where Mauberley had "obviously intended" (59). So he does not begin at the beginning, but instead begins reading under a "second epigraph," which catches his eye (59). Throughout the novel, Mauberley's narrative is mediated through Quinn's reading, and therefore the "actual" beginning of Mauberley's narrative is forever obscured for the reader, in somewhat the same way that any "actual" beginning to the novel is obscured by its multiple openings.

Not Wanted on the Voyage is another novel which seems to have trouble getting started. After the dedication and acknowledgements, comes an epigraph, from Phyllis Webb's poem "Leaning," then a "Prologue" (in two parts) with its own epigraph, followed by "Book One" and another epigraph. This hesitation at the edge of the text suggests an uneasiness about origins which seems ironic in a novel based so heavily on Genesis. Yet it recalls the structure of Genesis itself, its two beginnings, reminding the reader

that even the ultimate story of origin is divided at the source.²

The two-part prologue to Not Wanted on the Voyage is doubly anachronistic. The fantasized scene of the first part seems to be set in a different time from that of the rest of the novel -- some time far beyond that of the biblical Noah and yet long before the time of the novel's publication (1984):

Noah and his sons relaxed on the poop deck, sipping port and smoking cigars beneath a blue and white striped awning -- probably wearing yacht caps, white ducks and blazers. Mrs Noyes and her daughters-in-law fluttering up the gangplank -- neat and tidy -- dry beneath their umbrellas -- turning and calling; "goodbye, everybody!" And all their friends shouting; "bon voyage!" while the daughters-in-law hand over their tickets, smiling and laughing -- everyone being piped aboard and a band playing Rule Britannia! and Over the Sea to Skye. Flags and banners and a booming cannon ... like an excursion. (3)

As Helen Tiffin notes, this "setting is recognisably British and faintly Edwardian" (54). Tiffin very convincingly links this setting to themes of colonialism and post-colonial resistance in the novel. It is also linked, I believe, to the theme of beginnings and the novel's project of obscuring

beginnings. It serves to emphasize the timelessness of the story of Noah -- the seemingly endless legacy of the patriarchal biblical tradition. It also serves to displace the time of the narrating, erasing not only the point of the story's beginning but the point from which the telling begins.

The second part of the prologue depicts a scene of confusion and fire, which is not explained until much later in the novel. The horror of this scene contrasts sharply with the image of the gaily waving ocean-liner passengers in part one. The split prologue suggests the existence of two readings of the story of Noah: a happy, gentle one (which recalls Effie's present to Neil -- "a set of toy animals, little ones [...] all in a box" [92]) and a cruel and violent one. The novel claims to side with the latter: "It wasn't an excursion. It was the end of the world" (3). Yet the more "innocent" story remains inscribed. It has been mentioned, at the beginning, as though the narrative were leaving behind the traces of its desire for such a story. This desire, it seems, is ruptured as soon as narrative begins.

Violence

As Brooks notes, the opening of a narrative signifies, or "gives the illusion" of being the moment at which

narrating begins (103), regardless of the point at which the author began to write. In Findley's fiction, that moment is often in hiding, obscured by a multiplicity of apparent beginnings, a sign of the split nature of the desire to begin. But a more dramatic sign of that split is the repetition, in novel after novel, of a story which begins with blood, pain, fire, or death. Among the opening scenes of Findley's novels, the most prevalent common thread is violence: in The Butterfly Plague, a decapitation by train; in Famous Last Words, a suicide; in Not Wanted on the Voyage, a sacrificial fire; in The Telling of Lies, a murder. The Last of the Crazy People begins with a scene which later is revealed as a prologue to violence, and The Wars begins at a point after which violence has obviously occurred. This series of violent beginnings suggests that violence itself is the impetus, the "irritation," as Brooks puts it (103), which gives rise to narration. It also suggests that beginning itself -- particularly the beginning of writing -- is a form of violence.

The "violence" of writing, as Derrida has demonstrated in his deconstructive analysis of Lévi-Strauss, is a violence which violates only that which has always already been violated. Writing is violent because it occasions the loss of the proper, of absolute proximity, of self-presence, in truth the loss of what has never taken place, of a self-presence which has never

been given but only dreamed of and always already split, repeated, incapable of appearing to itself except in its own disappearance. (Of Grammatology 112)

Self-presence, says Derrida, is "only" dreamed. But with what persistent and forceful desire has the dream been forged -- a desire whose traces are, in fact, writing (for there is nothing outside of writing, as Derrida never forgets, nothing "that one can call alien at once to writing and to violence" [127]). Findley's narratives are driven by the desire to forge that dream again and again and at the same time by the conflicting desire to rupture that dream. And both desires operate through the same (and only) means: writing.

As soon as the narrative begins to construct, in writing, the unnarratable dream of coherence, innocence, authority or any other absolute, the dream explodes (usually in a blazing fire). Yet it always begins again. The unnarratable story -- that fiction, that falsehood, that lie, which is "only" dreamed -- is nevertheless the force which drives the narrative. It is a force as powerful in its absence as it might be, if it could be, in its presence.

Findley's mystery novel, The Telling of Lies, begins, as most mysteries do, with an unsolved murder. The gaps in the story of the murder -- the identity of the murderer, the means, the motive -- give rise to the desire which fuels the

narrative. This desire is embodied by the "detective," Vanessa Van Horne, who seeks to unravel the story of the murder and to turn it into a narrative in her journal. Vanessa does not originally intend to turn her journal into a murder mystery. Like many Findley novels, her journal opens with the evocation of the beginning of an end, and with a sense of inexpressible loss. Vanessa's first entry reads, "I write this on the first day of the last summer I -- or anyone -- will spend at the Aurora Sands Hotel" (1). The hotel, which Vanessa thinks of as a "sanctuary," with its view of the ocean "unbroken all the way to Brazil" (2), is to be razed and replaced with a condominium complex. "Nothing I can think to say or write reflects my sense of loss," she records in her journal, "I feel not only dispossessed but impotent" (1). Every summer of her life, except for five years spent in a Japanese prisoner-of-war camp, Vanessa has visited this hotel. It represents her lost childhood and youth. The photographs in the hotel's library document her life and her connection with the hotel: "I'm there in all my stages -- and, before me, all my people; Mother's family all the way back to when the Hotel first opened" (5).

The journal is a gift from Vanessa's friend Lily, who says she chose it because

seeing that we won't be coming back, I thought perhaps there might be something you'd like to

write [...] You're always taking photographs, Vanessa, and I thought -- there might be something you'd like to write ... (4)

Lily perceptively recognizes Vanessa's photography as a sign of her desire to document her life. Vanessa intends to preserve the unbroken, Edenic realm of the resort hotel in writing. Vanessa contrasts this realm to that of the prisoner-of-war camp, as though corruption existed only in the world outside her "sanctuary." But even as Vanessa begins to write, that Edenic space is already disrupted. The murder is not the first invasion of her genteel world, only the first undeniable sign of a corruption which has always been present, although Vanessa hasn't been paying attention.

The very day after Vanessa begins to write in her journal, a dead body is found on the beach. Vanessa comments on the juxtaposition of these two events:

I have so much to write -- so suddenly -- and cannot yet believe so much has happened that must be written only one day after the gift of all this paper. There's a coincidence for you; dreadful. But then, I don't believe in coincidence. It must be a sign -- (8-9)

It is a sign alright, one is tempted to say, a sign that Vanessa is a character in a Findley novel. The connection between writing and violence is clearly drawn in

this passage. It is further underlined by the covertly metafictional technique in which a fictional narrator "cannot believe" a fictional coincidence, as if questioning the realism of the plot she is inhabiting/creating. Violence does not occasion the beginning of Vanessa's writing (although it does shape that writing); she begins her journal before -- very shortly before -- it occurs. The beginning of writing in fact precedes the murder, suggesting that it is writing which occasions violence. The desire to make sense of events, to structure them into a cohesive, coherent whole, is a highly suspect force in this novel, perhaps more so than in any other Findley novel. It is thus fitting that the beginning of Vanessa's writing -- the imposition of structure -- should be linked to murder.

The "stammering" opening of The Wars also signals violence and ruptured desire -- its structure traces the operation of the wars of conflicting narrative desires. The "Prologue" depicts Robert Ross, his clothing torn and burned, his nose broken, his face and hands "streaked with clay and sweat." Behind him, "a warehouse filled with medical supplies had just caught fire" (9). In this scene, Robert teams up with a horse and a dog and releases twelve cars of horses from a train. The train's "engineer and crew had either abandoned it, or else they had been killed. It could not be told" (9). The image of a broken or burned human body, the image of fire, and something that "could not

be told" are common elements in the openings of Findley's novels.

In the passage immediately following the "Prologue" to The Wars, the discourse seems to distance itself from the scene of violence: "All of this happened a long time ago" (10). Yet alongside this apparent desire for distance, a desire to move closer is inscribed in this description of the research process:

But not so long ago that everyone who played a part in it is dead. Some can still be met in dark old rooms with nurses in attendance. They look at you and rearrange their thoughts. They say: 'I don't remember.' The occupants of memory have to be protected from strangers. Ask what happened, they say: 'I don't know.' Mention Robert Ross -- they look away. 'He's dead,' they tell you. This is not news. 'Tell me about the horses,' you ask. Sometimes, they weep at this. Other times they say: 'that bastard!' Then the nurse nods at you, much as to say -- you see? It's best to go away and find your information somewhere else. In the end, the only facts you have are public. (10)

The story of Robert Ross has been "obscured by violence" (11). Yet another kind of violence, it seems, must be employed in order to uncover that story. The "occupants of memory" must be disturbed, made to weep and

curse in the attempt to wrest the story from them. They "have to be protected" from this disruption. And so, it seems, must the narrative itself. For it abandons this second scene of conflict and, in the next section, "You begin at the archives" (11), a relatively quiet place.

The scene at the archives, section "3," describes a series of photographs -- Robert Ross's life at a safe distance. The beginning of the war is documented here in a gay, celebratory manner, similar to the picture of Noah relaxing on the poop deck in Not Wanted on the Voyage:

Here come the 48th Highlanders!! Kilts and drums and leopard skins. Boys race after them on bikes. Little girls, whose mouths hang open, hardly dare to follow. Older men remove their hats. There is Sir Sam Hughes standing on the dias, taking the farewell salute. 'GOD SAVE THE KING!!!' (a banner). Everywhere you look, trains are pulling out of stations, ships are sailing out of ports. Music drowns the long hurrah. Everyone is focused, now, shading their eyes against the sun. Everyone is watching with an outstretched arm -- silenced at the edge of wharves and time. (12)

This "silence" is interrupted immediately by an italicized paragraph which describes the other side of war:

Robert Ross comes riding straight towards the camera. His hat has fallen off. His hands are

knotted to the reins. They bleed. The horse is black and wet and falling. Robert's lips are parted. He leans along the horse's neck. His eyes are blank. There is mud on his cheeks and forehead and his uniform is burning -- long, bright tails of flame are streaming out behind him. He leaps through memory without a sound. [...] You lay the fiery image back in your mind and let it rest. You know it will obtrude again and again until you find its meaning -- here.

(12-13)

The narrative shifts back and forth between a distant, historical stance and direct narration, as if it doesn't know how to begin about Robert Ross. The hesitation imparts to the discourse a disrupted structure which mirrors the disruption of war. Violence, particularly violence involving fire, obtrudes again and again; it lies at the core of the story which the discourse continually attempts, and continually fails, to tell.

In Not Wanted on the Voyage, the second part of the "Prologue," like the prologue to The Wars, is a repeating achrony, and so presents all the same problems in determining the "beginning." But the repetition in this novel is not quite verbatim. The scene in the prologue (4) is repeated with a small but significant difference at its chronological place in the story (123-24). In this scene,

Mrs Noyes runs frantically through heat and smoke toward a fire in which something "alive" is burning. The prologue does not make clear what this something might be. The later passage identifies the burning shapes as "sheep and cattle and goats and dogs [...] the sacrifice of hundreds" (124), but this clarification is withheld from the prologue. The prologue arouses the reader's desire to learn the identity of the burning shapes, and thus it functions as a (particularly gruesome, even for Findley) narrative hook. It very strongly suggests that the shapes are human -- their "arms and necks and heads" are visible above the smoke, and Mrs Noyes wonders if they might be "her sons -- her husband -- her daughters-in-law." The later revelation -- that the victims are animals -- allows the reader to revisit the opening scene and compare his or her reaction. The reader who feels that the animal massacre is less horrific than the promised scene of human destruction may, in the context of this novel, begin to question that judgement. The prologue emphasizes the connection between ourselves and other species by concealing the difference from the reader. The repetition is thus strongly linked to the novel's theme of harmony with nature. But the connection between fire and something which cannot be told is also significant in the context of Findley's other openings. Not Wanted on the Voyage appears to begin with the burning of human bodies, an

opening which is obsessively repeated at the beginning of Findley's works.

Findley's television drama script "The Paper People" (broadcast on CBC TV 13 December, 1967)³ also begins with smoke and flame. In the first sequence, a life-sized papiermâché doll is set on fire. The doll sits among a broken bedroom set in the middle of a junk yard, its face reflected in a cracked mirror, its outline obscured by smoke. This first sequence is shot in black and white. In the second sequence, shot in colour, the camera zooms back to reveal the first sequence as a film being viewed in a screening room. The viewers are artist Jamie Taylor and film-maker Janet Webb. The film sequence they are watching is a scene from Janet's documentary on Jamie and his work. Their discussion of the sequence (minus Findley's stage direction) is terse:

Janet: Well?

Jamie: So much for nothing.

Janet: You don't like it?

Jamie: I hate it.

Janet: So?

Jamie: So burn her again. And this time I want to be there to see you do it right. (68)

The camera then cuts to sequence 3, in colour, in which the doll is burned again, on the same location, this time with Jamie's assistance.

The first sequence of "The Paper People" is deliberately deceptive in its use of smoke to make the doll appear human to the viewer. Findley's directions read: "the obscuring is sufficient to maintain the illusion that the figure is human" (67). The use of black-and-white film increases the illusion. Findley commented on viewing the film that "Whenever the burnings were in colour, you were certain it was a series of dolls being burned, but as soon as it went to black and white they were people" ("On 'The Paper People'" 61). It is also deceptive in concealing its frame (i.e. Janet's screening room) from the viewer. The first three sequences take the viewer rapidly back and forth between "illusion" and "reality," "art" and "life," setting up and simultaneously blurring the distinctions between narrative levels. Like the repeating achronic prologues of Findley's novels, the opening sequence of "The Paper People" is doubled. It appears first as a film and then, in sequence 2, as a film within a film.

"The Paper People" further blurs its point of beginning by beginning "again" in sequence 3, with the re-shoot of Janet's documentary. Jamie's desire to "burn her again" and "this time do it right" is seemingly also the desire of Findley's film, which incorporates Jamie's repetition of the burning. Jamie, in his editorial capacity here, is a metafictional double of the maker/editor of "The Paper People," whose desire to "Do It Again" (the script-title of

sequence 2) is acted out in sequence 3, "Tonya Burned Again." During this second burning, Janet's cameraperson is reluctant to risk getting too close to the flames, and Jamie grabs the camera in order to shoot the scene himself. At this point, "The Paper People" shifts again to black and white, showing Jamie's point of view through the view-finder (71). The position of Jamie is identical here to that of the maker of "The Paper People" and to that of the viewer, who are both thus implicated in Jamie's desire to "do it right" by "moving in [toward the fire] to a point of danger" (71).

The opening of "The Paper People," like those of the novels, is structured by split desire. The first opening, it appears, is unsatisfactory -- it does not get close enough to the fire, and must be redone. Like the prologues to The Wars and Not Wanted on the Voyage, the "prologue" to "The Paper People" must be repeated. The repetition, in all three works, of a scene of fire, suggests a narrative ambivalence about such a scene. The narratives tend to describe a scene of fire, then back away from it, then return to it later, as if unable to touch it and yet unable to leave it alone. "The Paper People" suggests that the reason for the return is to narrate the fire more directly, even though this desire is impossible to fulfill. Brooks describes narrative desire as

a desire that never can quite speak its name -- never can quite come to the point -- but that insists on speaking over and over again its movement toward that name. (61)

The "point" that Findley's narratives seem to be moving toward is one of destruction.

The fire itself, which is what the film seems to desire, signals destruction -- both of the self (in the first sequence where it appears to destroy a human figure) and of artistic creation (in the third sequence, where the "human" is revealed to be a papiermâché doll). The viewer's identification with Jamie's point of view, as he risks his life to get a closer shot of the fire, suggests that this desire may destroy the viewer as well. Artist, art and audience all court destruction when they participate in the making of narrative. Ricou says of The Wars that "Findley touches on the possibility that violence obscures story, and storyteller, and even reader" (130). Perhaps, as well, Findley suggests that story-telling itself is a kind of violence: "Nothing so completely verifies our perception of a thing as our killing of it" (The Wars 191). As an artist, Jamie creates and then destroys his sculptures, filming both his creative and destructive processes. This type of performance art can be read as a form of social protest against the reification of art as product, and as such it focusses attention on the dynamics of the artistic process

(M. Miller 51). In Jamie's case, those dynamics suggest that creation equals destruction: his dolls are created for the purpose of being destroyed -- they are born to die. In Janet's case, her desire to get at the "real" Jamie is thwarted by Jamie's secrecy (like a gothic hero, he has a mad wife hidden carefully away). But she is also thwarted by the very nature of her documentary desire: the closer she gets to finding out about Jamie's inner life, the closer she comes to destroying him. Jamie recognizes the lethal nature of her project: "You really dig deep -- don't you?" he accuses, "I knew you were a born killer the moment I laid eyes on those cold, cold hips of yours" (142-143).

In the case of "The Paper People" as a narrative, creation also equals destruction. The desire to narrate the fires of destruction is thwarted as soon as the narrative begins. The first sequence apparently fails and must be redone. But it is preserved, as a sort of prologue to the film. Its failure consists in failing to fulfill the desire to get closer to the fire. Yet even the third sequence, in which Jamie does get closer, is a failure. Jamie must wear an asbestos hood to protect himself. He cannot fully enter into the fire. Neither can the narrative, despite its desire, for, of course, like Jamie, the desire would then cease to exist. The hesitant opening of this film is the narrative's protective "asbestos hood," its way of

distancing itself from the beginning which marks the point where its desire begins to die.

Virtually all of Findley's narratives are motivated by the desire to investigate violence, to get closer to the fire, as though the narrative were compelled to return to the scene of some primal crime. This series of beginnings and beginnings-again describes the movement of the desire to narrate the unnarratable -- and this time to "do it right." Nevertheless, the beginning of every narrative is the violent rupture of this desire. At the beginning -- the point where story breaks into discourse -- this desire breaks into flames.

Authority

Peter Brooks says that "the end calls to the beginning." The beginning is structured by the end; the end "transforms and enhances" the beginning (94). Findley's prologues often serve to set up the major themes of his novels, such as prophecy in The Last of the Crazy People, and the value of animal life in Not Wanted on the Voyage. Beginnings can be understood by what follows them and gives them meaning. Yet a beginning, by definition, has also a relationship with that which precedes it, that from which it follows. "The necessary creation of authority for a beginning is also reflected in the act of achieving

discontinuity and transfer: [...] in this act a clear break with the past is discernible" (Said 33).

As Said argues, a break from the past is the condition of possibility for any beginning. For a novelist, he argues, the break must be made from the "real world" (81-83). To render this notion more concretely, I would say that the novelist's break must be made from the social and literary texts of the past. This aspect of beginning concerns the situation of the writer in terms of intertextuality. In Findley's work, the break from and continuity with the discourses of the past involves a break from authority which creates conflicting desires and therefore gives rise to narrative anxiety.

In Famous Last Words, Findley performs a break from traditional historical discourse by using historical figures of the recent past as fictional characters. For this reason, Findley and his publishers protected themselves with libel insurance (Wideman 46). The Duchess of Windsor was still living when he finished Famous Last Words, and in fact its publication in England was delayed until after her death (Adachi D1). These circumstances also leave their mark on the structure of the novel itself. Findley explains how his use of historical figures brought moral and legal considerations into play which affected the narrative:

For instance, I had to make it very clear that Lindbergh merely delivered a message without

knowing that the results of the message would be the murder of Edward Allenby. To imply that Lindbergh would be party to murder would be libellous -- and, incidentally, I wouldn't dream of saying he was. [...] And likewise, Wallis must not say to Mauberley, 'I want that man killed,' meaning Oakes. So what she says, instead, is a very diplomatic thing from the writer's point of view, which is simply, 'We must do something.' Mauberley contracts the killing: for Wallis. Wallis doesn't even know about it. (Goldie Interview 64)

Findley's project, in Famous Last Words, constitutes a beginning-again, a re-writing which both incorporates and subverts the texts of the past. This process is the essence of Linda Hutcheon's definition of postmodern parody; and as Hutcheon comments, "We cannot separate parody and history in this novel" (Theory of Parody 111). But Hutcheon's discussion of Famous Last Words as historiographic metafiction tends to homogenize the desire of the narrative. She focusses on the novel's "didactic message about the ideological consequences of the refusal of political action" (Canadian Postmodern 72), which is, indeed, an important aspect. But Findley's narrative is not so single-minded nor so confident as Hutcheon's reading suggests. Findley's narrative is implicated in the very structures -- both

political and narrative -- of the texts which it seems to critique. By using historical figures, he binds his narrative to those texts in a way which gives rise to hesitation, ambivalence, and the kind of vagueness, or hedging on details, which he describes above. His characters are not as "free" as purely fictional characters might be (although Mauberley, as a historical fiction, is a special case). The anxiety about beginning again is noticeable in the disrupted structures of the novel, and it is also thematized (at the beginning) through the suicide of Mauberley's father.

The initial position of the suicide suggests that writing begins at the point of a rupture from the past. As Stephen Scobie has suggested, the death of the father serves to set up the theme of abdication from authority and the subsequent sense of loss, both for Mauberley personally and, in a wider implication, for the society he lives in (216). Mauberley's father bequeaths to him a silver pencil (once again, a link between violence and writing), suggesting that the impetus for Mauberley's writing is the desire to fill the gap left by the absence of the authority figure of his father. Thus the beginning of the story mirrors the break from authority which is the necessary prerequisite for the discourse to begin. Findley's novel breaks with the popular romantic story of the king who abdicated for love, and rewrites it in terms of a power struggle in which a

pathetic, reprehensibly weak Duke is manipulated by a ruthlessly ambitious Duchess. The break from romanticism is thematized in the quotation which Mauberley's father tells his son to look up: "the world is too much with us" (1). The father is thus linked to Wordsworth's poem of that title, with its romantic nostalgia for wholeness, simplicity and communion. His suicide marks the end of Mauberley's innocence and the beginning of Mauberley's disrupted and fragmented adult life, a life -- as the silver pencil suggests -- of writing.

Chapter One, the second beginning, opens with Mauberley taking leave of Ezra Pound. Pound is a father-figure for Mauberley, both within the novel, where he is cast as Mauberley's mentor, and outside of it, for the historical Ezra Pound "fathered" Hugh Selwyn Mauberley by creating him as a fictional character. Mauberley's break with Pound thematizes the novel's break with high modernism. Throughout the whole of Famous Last Words, modernism's elitist tendencies are exposed as dangerously fascistic. In this scene, Mauberley seems to be leaving behind the elitist trappings of the modern author he had become. His clothes are in disarray, his underwear is rotting away, and he looks like "Dorothy's Scarecrow" (4). The image of this disintegrating self is linked to the disintegrating story of modernism. Dorothy Pound laments the changes that have occurred: "it was sad about the writing [...] all the old

traditions of order and articulation fading under the roar of bombast and rhetoric" (5). Like the prologue, this first chapter begins with the loss of order; Mauberley's identity, everything he has stood for, is coming to an end. This loss precedes Mauberley's writing on the walls.

A major focus in Famous Last Words is the conflict between Quinn and Freyberg, who disagree violently in their interpretations of Mauberley's narrative. Each produces a different reading, a different re-writing, creating for the reader of the novel a condition of undecidability. In a literal enactment of Roland Barthes's theory, the death of the author allows this diffusion of meaning to occur (see Barthes "The Death of the Author"). Quinn and Freyberg are reading (almost literally) over Mauberley's dead body. Each of these breaks from authority -- from Mauberley's father, Pound, and Mauberley himself -- seems to make possible the beginning of writing. The sense of order which a father- or author-figure represents must be destroyed before the dissemination of writing can begin. Yet none of these breaks is unambiguously positive. All are marked by a sense of nostalgia for an authority which could stabilize meaning and control the uncontrollable movement of desire. The nostalgia of Findley's narrative suggests that the break from authority is not without anxiety. The narrative is thus implicated in the very tradition of modernism which it seeks to subvert.

Not Wanted on the Voyage also begins with a break from the authoritative texts of the past, in this case, the Old Testament. The "Prologue" begins with a biblical quotation:

And Noah went in, and his sons, and his wife, and his sons' wives with him into the ark, because of the waters of the flood ...

Genesis 7:7

This epigraph is followed immediately by the first words of Findley's narrative: "Everyone knows it wasn't like that" (3). The beginning explicitly points to its own status as a break from authority, a re-writing of the meta-narrative of Genesis.

Edward Said distinguishes between beginnings and origins: "beginning and beginning-again are historical whereas origins are divine" (xiii). In this novel, the two are intimately related. The narrative begins by contradicting Genesis, the story of the divine origin of the world. Yet it cannot begin without invoking this authoritative intertext; in fact, it could not exist without it. The denial of the story of origins allows Findley's narrative to begin. In this sense, the death of that story seems an enabling condition, a positive factor. Yet it is a very similar break from authority which allows Findley's Noah the freedom to impose his maniacal lust for power on the world. "Book One" ends with the most blatant sign of the death of authority in any of Findley's narratives: "The Lord

God Father of All Creation had consented to His own death" (112). Noah mourns the death of Yaweh (who is the personification of metaphysical origins), but this does not stop him from taking advantage of it in order to install himself in the abdicated seat of power. As Diana Brydon argues, Findley's novel "redefines Noah's new order, not as a divinely sanctioned origin for a new world but as a strategically grasped beginning" ("Dream of Tory Origins" 39). The death of divine origins does not necessarily, in this novel, pave the way for greater things.

There are no unambiguously positive origins in the novel. In Brydon's opinion, the novel does not oppose the myth of origins, but simply renames it; the novel chooses as the true origin Mrs Noyes's "world of communion with all living things" (Brydon 39) over Noah's world of hierarchical fragmentation. But Mrs Noyes's world, preferable though it may seem, is not the world. Not only does it fail to prevail, it never existed. Mrs Noyes is a nostalgic dreamer, sitting in her rocking chair, drugging her perceptions with gin. She is also an accessory to the murder of one of her babies (165), a child too different, apparently, to be included in the "communion." Although Mrs Noyes later repents, and tries (but fails) to save another, similar child, she has no claim to any ordinary purity, and no authority.

This novel illustrates clearly the link between authority and origins. Both Yaweh and Noah justify their claims to power by appealing to divine origins. The narrative itself has to break with the myth of origins, kill the authority figure, before it can begin. But the narrative cannot do this without a certain amount of anxiety. Although the novel insists that "it wasn't like that," it seems to wish that it were. The presence of an absolute authority would at least give the illusion of a stable, contained meaning. Then perhaps the narrative would know how to begin.

Findley's openings seem to illustrate Said's description of beginnings as breaks from the authority of the past. But they do not seem to fit so neatly with the second half of his description. Said argues that the break from the past is necessary in order to set up one's own authority (33). Yet in Findley's work, there is a noticeable ambivalence surrounding the establishment of narrative authority. Narrative anxiety about beginnings, which I have discussed at length in this chapter, extends to the creation of almost any coherent narrative structure in Findley's work. I believe that there is an anxiety involved in the creation of coherent structures because such structures are power structures, and Findley's stories are usually involved in exposing and subverting the power structures of society. Findley's ambivalence toward

traditional bastions of order -- such as the innocence of childhood, the authority of the patriarch, the coherence of the self -- reflects an ambivalence toward power understandable in an age where the abuses of power have reached, let us hope, their ultimate height. For examples, one need look no further than Findley's own fiction. His novels are relentless in their documentation of abuses of power as they occur within the family and in the larger political domain. The drive to "protect" the children in his early stories is offered as an excuse to neglect and control them. Noah's appeal to origins is used as the basis for a violent tyranny which mimics the tyranny of a historical religious fanaticism which has fuelled countless inquisitions, persecutions and wars in the world. The desire to see the self whole works to create a seemingly rational excuse for murder in Famous Last Words. And yet the loss of innocence is always painful, the lack of origins dangerous, the incoherence of the self too threatening to confront. The desire to construct wholeness through narrative can never be fulfilled, and this is a considerable source of pain in many of Findley's texts.

To begin to write, Said suggests, is to establish one's authority, to take control of what is to follow. Yet it is also (and here lies the split), the abdication of authority, the loss of control. Ross Chambers argues that narrators desire to establish and to maintain authority.⁴ A

narrative, in order to be read, requires a reader who must somehow be seduced into reading. This seduction, as any writers' manual will attest, must begin at the beginning. A narrative hook is necessary. In Findley's work, the hook seems to be the promise of violence. But buried within the concept of narrative authority -- with its implied communication model of narrative -- lies the concept of a coherent, self-present, authorial self. And writing itself is the destruction of that concept.

As Roland Barthes has said, "writing is the destruction of every voice, every point of origin" ("Death of the Author" 142). The beginning of writing is the beginning of the death of the author, the beginning of diffusion, a break from the dream of self-presence. Many of Findley's beginnings involve an image of the disintegrating/destroyed self. In some cases, the narrative suggests that the "whole" self, the one that existed prior to the disintegration, was an illusion. For example, The Butterfly Plague, in which Findley first begins to move toward postmodernism, opens with a little boy crying for his helium balloon, which has gotten loose and soared away "further and further into the blue, blue sky" (2). The crowd fears that the balloon will hit the telephone wires and

burst into a hundred thousand pieces, splattering himself and all his rubber features -- his black-and-white painted eyes, his grinning Mickey-mouth

and his great big sticking-out ears far and wide;
 so far and wide that [all the people present]
 could never put Mickey together again. (3)

The balloon has a face, signifying its connection with the sense of human identity. It is also a child's toy, and this fact, along with the reference to the nursery tale of Humpty Dumpty, links it with the innocent realm of childhood. Mickey Balloon escapes his initial brush with the wires. But (this is a Findley novel, after all) he doesn't survive for long. He is "assassinated": "By, of all people, a child with a BB gun" (4). It is a child who destroys the symbol of childhood, suggesting that the innocent realm of childhood has always already been corrupted from within. Human identity is not as seamless and simple as Mickey, and never was. The opening of the novel bursts the bubble of any such naive dream, but not without pain, for Mickey Balloon comes down, of course, "in flames" (4). The beginning of writing, it seems, marks the destruction of self as well as story. And although there is nothing (that we know of) outside of writing, these absolute essences are persistently desired.

"What links writing to violence?" asks Derrida. "What must violence be for something in it to be equivalent to the operation of the trace?" (Of Grammatology 101). Brooks speaks of the moment when "story or 'life'" becomes narrative (103). This is a moment of rupture. Writing is

the negation of the ineffable, as the Hegelian creation of matter is the negation of Spirit, which, at the moment of creation, "becomes an 'other' to itself" (Hegel 467). The unnarratable cannot be narrated; the ineffable cannot be written. Yet Findley desires the ineffable. His works are speaking always of the unspeakable, the mysterious unnamable forces which move his characters, and his narratives, from place to place. The ineffable, like desire, is contentless. It is visible only in its effects, in its traces, as writing. It exists only in the form of its own negation. Hence, the trace is violent, disrupting the seamless coherence of both self and story which can exist only before writing begins (although it has always, already, begun).

Chapter Two

Prophecy and Apocalypse:

The Last of the Crazy People

The Last of the Crazy People was received with mixed reviews, and treated as an anomaly in Canadian literature, when it first appeared in 1967, perhaps because it was more closely associated with American literature than with the work of Findley's contemporary compatriots. Although the Ontario Southern Gothic has since emerged as a force in Canadian literature, with the prominence of Alice Munro and Matt Cohen, no such tradition was recognized in Canada by the first readers of Findley's novel. Reviewers tended to ignore the novel's possible connections with such prairie family tragedy such as Martha Ostenso's Wild Geese (1925), Frederick Philip Grove's The Settlers of the Marsh (1925), or Adele Wiseman's The Sacrifice (1956). Instead, they criticized the novel for its heavy American influence. In fact, the novel was published in the United States because, according to Findley, "Canadian publishers wouldn't touch it with a ten foot pole" (Benson Interview 109). Canadian publishers apparently wanted literature that would reflect their view of the country, and The Last of the Crazy People clearly did not: "It's a novel about a young eleven-year-old

boy who kills his family. And the classic reaction was that children don't do that kind of thing in Canada. Isn't that marvellous!" (Findley, Benson Interview 109).

This first novel also stands as an anomaly within Findley's own body of work. It is more firmly grounded in the tradition of coherence and closure which characterizes nineteenth-century realism than any of his other works. Findley was not yet exhibiting the dissatisfaction with traditional realism which is evident in his later novels, although many Canadian writers, such as Graeme Gibson (Five Legs 1969) and J. Michael Yates (Man in the Glass Octopus 1968) were already going further in an experimental vein than Findley ever would. In The Last of the Crazy People, Findley strives to remain well within established tradition, create characters with psychological depth, maintain a restricted point of view, and follow a tightly closed Aristotelian plot structure. He succeeds brilliantly, too brilliantly, perhaps. For the novel is so coherent, its logic so airtight and its ending so final, that one wonders if the desires for fragmentation and open-endedness in Findley's later fictions are not reactions against his own first novel.

The Last of the Crazy People is heavily influenced by the American Southern Gothic and by classical tragedy. As many reviewers have noted, Findley's debt to authors of the American South is everywhere evident in this novel. The

"macabre atmosphere" (Stedmond 386) recalls Faulkner, McCullers, Welty, and Tennessee Williams. One critic remarks that Findley's characters are "people we know from Southern Gothic family horrors" (Bowering, Review 70). Another complains that the "brooding shadow of Faulkner hangs so ponderously over The Last of the Crazy People that any real originality is obscured" (Grosskurth 36). For several Canadian reviewers, these American influences are "only too obviously" apparent (Rosengarten 79). The closed society in which the Winslows move, Nick's all-important code of honour, the nostalgic lamentation for a decaying order and the novel's "emotionally charged, claustrophobic atmosphere" (Dault 120) all clearly mark it as belonging to the gothic genre and raise expectations of violent tragedy. Findley's first novel is strictly obedient to the rules of genre, accepting a pre-defined structure and making little attempt to question it. Is Findley "having us on"? asks George Bowering: "If he isn't, he could use a little irony" (Review 70).

The novel also recalls the tragic vision of classical drama. Parallels to Greek tragedy run throughout all of Findley's fiction, but The Last of the Crazy People is the work that reveals this influence most clearly. The Winslow family follows closely a long tradition of domestic tragedy as defined by Simon Bennett:

one of the most important continuities between ancient and modern drama is [...] the focus on the family [...] This involves, first, a sense of terrible warfare within the family, and second, the sense that problems cannot be solved by displacing the issues to outside the family [...] or by changing conditions around the family. Further, in the tragic characterization, the family tree is at risk of destroying itself, either by literally destroying its own progeny or by making propagation impossible, for example, because of intractable warfare between husband and wife. The continuation of the family that is actively destroying itself is a dominant motif in Greek tragedy, in Shakespeare, and in much modern tragedy, whether the family is the royal house of Agamemnon or Hamlet or the bourgeois houses of Isben's characters. (2)

The Winslows drive one son to suicide and are murdered by another; Jessica is at war with her husband and seems obsessed with the idea of killing babies (109-10). The word "family," Rosetta Winslow says, is "the worst word I know, now" (153). Simon argues that the genre of domestic tragedy is concerned with the possibilities of story-telling; it deals with "thwarted communication, in the frustration and inhibition of telling" (60). As the tragic family of

classical drama collapses in on itself, in an incestuous kind of death, it puts an end to all stories of itself which might ensure a kind of immortality: "Narration and child are gagged and killed, and silence and absence communicate the essence of tragedy" (Simon 66). The Last of the Crazy People, as its title suggests, is the end of the line. There will be no more Winslows -- and no more story. "Will anyone remember?" asks Hooker (191). "Will they talk about her [Jessica]?" Gilbert answers, "No" (192).

Findley follows the tragic genre in his narrative shape as well as with his characters. The narrative movement of tragedy has traditionally been described (from Aristotle through A. C. Bradley to Northrop Frye) as a movement of decline from a superior state, culminating in a purging climax which restores some form of order to the world of the text. In Hooker's case, the superior state is the Edenic realm of childhood which (he fancies that) he inhabited before his mother's illness forced him to begin his swift and premature decline toward adulthood. In a parallel movement, the Winslow family, like Faulkner's Compsons, has degenerated from its former status as a respectable patriarchy to that of "a bunch of people everybody thinks is nits" (91). Hooker's fall is tragic, and the climax is brutal, bringing to the narrative a catharsis so forceful that it seems to purge all aberration and all difference from the text. The narrative gives in, utterly, to the

powerful desire for closure, and it dies. Findley's earlier story "Lemonade" portrays a similar family and a similar (though less thorough) tragedy occurs. "Lemonade," however, ends on a note of possible redemption, with the maid suggesting to the young boy that his dead mother can still see him. "Why it's only just the start here, Harper," she says. "There's a whole lot more to come" (63-64). The Last of the Crazy People admits of no such alternative story which might exist beyond itself. The novel ends with a bleak scene of Iris, the last surviving major character, walking alone through "Hooker's field." As she watches the geese fly south, she knows that "Next year, or another, they would return" (282). But this penultimate sentence, which suggests that the life cycle will continue, is seemingly negated by the last sentence: "The field and its welcome would always be there." The field is the one which Hooker used as an animal graveyard. Its "welcome" can only be death. Right to the end, this novel insists on linking death with relief and, as in classical tragedy, presents death as the only way to cleanse the stage of flaws and aberrations.

This novel is filled with ominous foreshadows of its purging climax. Its uninterrupted movement from prophecy to apocalypse calls to mind such tragedies as Iphigeneia and Oedipus Rex, Macbeth and Hamlet. Reaction to the novel suggests that the fulfillment of the prophecy is very

gratifying for readers. The novel's tragedy is "inevitable"; events "[lead] inexorably" to the violent conclusion (Parton 140). The mass murder makes a "convincing and satisfying climax" (Rosengarten 79). "We are led to feel that Hooker's final solution [...] is the only one possible" (Dault 120). Readers, it seems, tend to share the novel's desire for closure. Yet it is a very disturbing desire, as emphasized by Dault's phrase, with its echo of Hitler's "final solution." Of course these readers do not, I assume, advocate murder as the answer to family crises. Rosengarten is referring to the novel's literary qualities when he labels the climax "satisfying" (one can hardly imagine him making this remark about, say, a newspaper report of a similar event). It is the nature of Findley's narrative structure that draws the reader into its apocalyptic desire. The ending is both necessary and probable, just as Aristotle said that tragic endings should be.

Both prophecy and apocalypse are central to the nature of tragedy, and have become established traditions in narratives as diverse as the Bible, the fairy tale, the mystery story and the modern novel. According to Frank Kermode, "All plots have something in common with prophecy" (83) and "the paradigms of apocalypse [...] lie under our ways of making sense of the world" (28). Narrative is prophetic in its foreshadowing and it is apocalyptic in its

fulfillment. As Peter Brooks puts it, "the end calls to the beginning" (94). Traditional narratives pose questions and then answer them, create enigmas and then solve them, open things up and then close them again. But while it may be true that "Most books have opened up with the first promise of closure" (Bowering Errata 100), most literary novels strive to maintain a certain degree of tension between the end and the beginning, using peripeteia and a variety of "snares," as Roland Barthes has called the false leads that narrative sometimes throws out (S/Z). The Last of the Crazy People, however, provides few of these detours. The end calls to the beginning consistently, and loudly, and the beginning hastens to obey the call.

Prophecy is an important thematic and structural element in much of Findley's work. In his play Can You See Me Yet? the central character, Cassandra, is named for the mythical prophet to whom no one would listen; and the conflicting desires which shape the myth of Cassandra shape Findley's fiction as well. According to Greek mythology, Apollo's sexual desire gives rise to the paradoxical curse. Apollo and Cassandra make an agreement: she will sleep with him and in return he will grant her the gift of prophecy. But after receiving her gift, Cassandra refuses to fulfill her part of the bargain. Rather than taking back the gift, Apollo adds a curse, decreeing that Cassandra's warnings will always go unheeded. Thus, he inscribes upon her the

story of her betrayal, branding her with a double mark: that of his desire and her reluctance. In the structure of the myth, both the original bargain and the revenge impose an economy in which the frustrated desire to tell is linked to frustrated sexual desire. This model of blocked energy works as a way to approach the narrative structures of The Last of the Crazy People as well.

Findley's Cassandra is rendered powerless by the painful conflict between her missionary zeal and her inability to attract anybody's attention. Hooker and Gilbert Winslow, in The Last of the Crazy People, share a similar fate. Hooker remembers his mother's prophecy that he and Gilbert would be silver-tongued:

There were two bracelets she always wore, made of silver. One bore Gilbert's tooth marks and the other his own, and the story was that they had teethed on silver and would grow up to speak like kings. (133)

But this promise, like Apollo's, is never realized. Both Gilbert and Hooker feel that they must warn the family, but are unable to speak. In Hooker's case, he is not even sure what it is he wants to tell:

"Something will happen -- it will. It will happen."

"What honey? What will?" [asked Iris.]

"I don't know," said Hooker. "But it will.
Something will." (152-53)

Hooker knows that the unspoken tension in his family cannot go on forever; like the heat during this hottest summer in memory, it must eventually come to an end. But Hooker cannot say what it is that is going to occur, nor can he imagine any way to stop it. He can only state, over and over, his fearful desire for that final "something," that closure.

Within the Winslow family, creative energy is consistently blocked. The world outside of the house is never allowed in, except in the form of reified narratives which are never challenged. Despite an apparent tradition of respect for the Arts, none of the Winslows is able to create any art work. The stories which are allowed into the Winslow household -- and allowed into Findley's novel -- play an ominous and oppressive role. Literary texts, songs, television news reports and biblical scripture embedded in the text all point toward betrayal, revenge and death, and all import into the text a strong desire for apocalyptic closure. Hooker's favourite song, "Frankie and Johnny," is sung by Iris again and again, and she has told the story "before and before and before" (41). Yet Hooker never tires of this tale of a woman who murders her unfaithful lover. Gilbert and Iris disagree as to the genre of "Frankie and Johnny":

"Well go ahead and tell him, Iris," said Gilbert. "Tell about Frankie and Johnny. There's nothing like a good murder story."

[...] "Ah, but it's not, you see. It's not the story of a murder."

"What is it then?"

"It's a love story."

"A love story!"

"Yes."

"Phooey!" (41-42)

But Iris's interpretation convinces Hooker. It also suggests that The Last of the Crazy People is a love story as well. For, if we read as Iris does, Hooker's murder of his family seems the only way to deal with the "unhappiness of loving someone who does useless things -- or who's bad" (46). Even Gilbert gives up his argument and retreats into a reverie in which yet another text appears to agree that love stories end in death: Wilde's Ballad of Reading Gaol runs through Gilbert's head, confirming that "each man kills the thing he loves" (46).

The world of the novel is painfully small, consisting only of the Winslow family and a few minor characters. The gothic Winslow house is a closed world, where no one is allowed in who might possibly change anything. Hooker rarely goes out of the house, and when he does he meets nothing very new. Lorraine York describes the Winslows as

the "victims of crippled vision." She notes several points where Hooker is unable to see clearly and she associates this "curtailing of vision" with "a stultifying fixity or lack of movement" (The Other Side of Dailiness 64). The vision of the reader is curtailed as well, as the novel rarely provides an outside view.

Because Hooker leads an isolated, house-bound existence, he gets most of his information about how the world operates indirectly, through discussions with Gilbert and Iris. Hooker is fascinated by the death of Lee Harvey Oswald, which he has seen on television. He asks Gilbert to explain to him what "assassination" means. Gilbert explains that it means "killing for a bigger reason than plain ordinary murder" (68), and that the assassins do it in order to "make something happen" (69). Oswald "couldn't make the happiness -- whatever it was -- he couldn't make it happen unless he killed Mr. Kennedy" (69). Like many of the stories that adults tell Hooker, this one has a simplistic logic to it. No one will discuss the complexities of desire and death with this child. They certainly will not discuss the problems in his own family. He watches his family he watches the television, with the sound turned off so as not to disturb Jessica. And he interprets them as he interprets the silent television screen, "having to make up the story without hearing it" (66). Hooker's childish logic is demonstrated early in the novel, when he believes that,

because his baby brother Patrick and his uncle Patrick both died, all persons named Patrick are susceptible to sudden death (12). This is the kind of childish logic, with the influence of "Frankie and Johnny" and the simplistic story of assassination, that Hooker applies when deciding to "make something happen" in his family by shooting them. "Everyone must think out their stories very clearly," says Gilbert (201), but from the limited narrative structures available, Hooker is unable to think out any story for himself except the one that puts an end to all other possible stories.

On Thursdays, Iris takes Hooker to visit her friend, Alberta, who works as a maid for the neighbouring Harris family. In this house Hooker finds, and later steals, the gun that he will use to kill his family. Ironically, the gun once belonged to John Harris, Rosetta's dead and idealized lover. In Winslow family mythology, John Harris belongs to the age of nostalgia. His young face is immortalized among the other photographs in Rosetta's study -- her shrine to the golden past (253-56). But John Harris was a soldier and, as Hooker's actions make brutally clear, the legacy of the war has outlived him. It reaches out beyond the grave, killing John's lover with his own weapon. This melodramatic touch emphasizes the closed system of this novel, its strict economy of detail. Nothing need be brought in to the Winslows' world -- the means of destruction are already within.

Alberta brings into the novel, and into Hooker's consciousness, the discourse of evangelical Christianity. But although this discourse is new to Hooker, its apocalyptic structure only reinforces the ideal of closure which he hears at home. In a drunken, impromptu sermon, the former preacher paints for Hooker a frightening picture of "Arm'geddon." Alberta closes the story by associating death with relief, at least for those, as Christianity promises, who have suffered on Earth, including "all the crazy people caught in madness" (100). After Alberta winds down, she seems to notice Hooker and asks, "You don't un'erstan' -- do ya, honey?" Hooker answers:

"I do a little," he said. But that was a lie.

He understood it all. (100)

Alberta's narrative easily seduces Hooker into its desire for closure. He is used to stories which end in total destruction, and he has been taught to accept authoritative discourse. The Bible says that death brings an end to suffering. Hooker's literal mind accepts the equation without question. As Gilbert prophesied earlier in the novel, Hooker would "believe it if you told him that the world was going to end" (44).

Aside from the visit to Alberta, Hooker only leaves the house to go to the local grocery store, to the Country Club dance, and to the inquest into Gilbert's death. These brief encounters with the outside world provide little relief from

the claustrophobic atmosphere of home. Hooker encounters various forms of discourse in these places, but none of them opens up any possibilities for change. In the grocery store, Hooker hears the town gossip, which is narrow-minded and stereotypical; at the Country Club, he encounters merely an echo of his own father's superficial jocularly. At the inquest, he encounters the discourse of the state, which offers no solutions but only puts the official stamp of closure on Gilbert's life: "Death by his own hand" (250). "Now it's all over," Rosetta says to Nicholas after the inquest (247), seduced by this illusory closure.

Although Hooker is the central character of the novel, it is interesting to look closely at Gilbert's role as well. Because Gilbert is a writer, or at least a writer-figure, his silence and lack of invention are particularly striking. Gilbert's many books suggest that he would have access to a wide variety of stories, but instead his books seem to have a stifling effect on him as he acts out the scripts provided by the literary texts which have constituted his education and forged his character. Gilbert's shelves are full of classics, including many by those writers often romanticized in the popular imagination as tragic heroes -- Blake, Byron, Shelley, Keats, Oscar Wilde and Scott Fitzgerald. "Gilbert duplicates the gestures of literary characters, among them Scott Fitzgerald's Jay Gatsby, whose ambitious timetable Gilbert mocks with his own lethargic version and in whose

forged identity he recognizes his own" (Kröller "Eye in the Text" 369). Gilbert also mimics the romanticized gestures of "the poet." True to popular stereotype, he drinks and smokes to excess, suffers from an "illness of the heart" (64), and is misunderstood by those around him. Yet despite his supposedly artistic bent, Gilbert's literary endeavours are confined mainly to rereading books he has already committed to memory and copying down other people's words. Lines from the canonized poets are continually running through his head. This idiosyncrasy serves as a narrative device, providing a network of literary allusions for much of the action and reinforcing Findley's efforts to keep the novel tightly tied to established literary precedents.

If Gilbert views himself as an intellectually and poetically gifted loner, cast adrift in a world of philistines, his father, Nicholas, seems to have encouraged this romantic view. Nicholas describes Gilbert to Rosetta:

He has a genius for explanations. That's what gets me. He has a marvellous, wonderful -- loaded -- mind. [...] I think, here's someone who will probably write someday, or paint -- or create something, and is just waiting now, simply waiting it out. Time. Waiting for the right time. (64)

Gilbert's mind is "loaded," but more in the sense that Hooker's gun is loaded than in the potentially creative sense that his father imagines. And he is waiting for the

right time -- he times his suicide carefully so as to put his family in the worst possible light in front of the most possible people. Gilbert's dying posture imitates the posture that he struck in life. After crashing his car over an embankment, he lies "like Peter crucified, hooked by his feet to the cross of the motor car, his arms spread out in a hopeless gesture" (230). Gilbert's crucifixion marks him as the slaughtered lamb, sacrificed for the sins of his family.

Gilbert is "sacrificed" in order to preserve the quiet respectability which Nicholas (erroneously) believes that his family enjoys in the community. While local gossip has it that Gilbert is responsible for the pregnancy of a young neighbour, Nicholas's only concern seems to be that "nothing outright has been said, yet" (118). He refuses to speak to Gilbert about it, or to speak to the girl's family. When Rosetta expresses sympathy for the girl, Nicholas demonstrates that he cares only for his own reputation:

"Poor girl. Not having a mother, and now --"

"It's par for the course. Par for the course. And naturally, it all comes straight back at us." (118)

Nicholas will neither accuse nor defend Gilbert. He deals with this situation as he deals with every other family problem: "I don't think we should say anything" (120). Even in this private conversation with Rosetta, the words "pregnancy" and "baby" are never spoken. Sexuality and

birth are consistently associated with suffering and shame, while silence, like death, is associated with relief. Like the actual baby and mother, who have been spirited away to Jamaica, these words must be suppressed. This suppression of language seems to lead directly to death. Hooker is eavesdropping on this conversation, and can make little sense out of the adults' cryptic comments. He understands only one sentence: "They're going to hold a shotgun over your son, and you just sit there!" (120). Hooker's literal interpretation of this phrase provides his motivation for stealing the gun that will eventually kill Nicholas and Rosetta. Fittingly, Nicholas's desire to close off this story of birth leads to the close of his own life.

While Nicholas and Rosetta "discuss" this problem, Gilbert lies in the bathtub, rereading passages from Euripides's Iphigeneia in Taurus (120-23). The story of Iphigeneia, whose father was willing to sacrifice her life in return for safe passage through the sea, stands as a dramatic parallel to the story of Nicholas's sacrifice of Gilbert in return for smooth sailing in society. Even after Gilbert's suicide, Nicholas is concerned with "what people really think" (246) and whether he said "the right things" at the inquest (247). The passage that Gilbert reads aloud is a nostalgic remembrance of childhood days in Athens, infused with the longing to return there. Like the rest of the family, Gilbert is paralysed by a nostalgic longing to

"return" to the past, which is always imagined as perfect and golden. Nicholas believes that everything will remain in stasis, as long as nobody names the disruptive forces in the family. But Gilbert, like Hooker, believes that "something funny" is going to happen, something that he is afraid of (203). Like Hooker's, his warnings fall on deaf ears.

Gilbert seems to take on the role of prophet, attempting to speak the unspeakable secrets of the family and bring them into the open. But he couches his commentary in cryptic terms which he refuses to explain, thus allowing the rest of the family to maintain the fiction that nothing is actually happening. At one point, Gilbert describes the household, with Hooker's animal graveyard, as a death camp:

"This is like living in Belsen," he said.

"Where's that?" said Iris.

Gilbert stepped back and went to the refrigerator for a bottle of beer.

"Oh well..." he said, giving a long and hopeless sigh. Just a place, Iris. Nowhere but a place. That's all." (77)

Gilbert's prophetic remark, though noted by the reader of the novel, goes unheeded by the family. Gilbert himself cuts it short, preferring to cast himself as a martyr. Similarly, during a confrontation with Nicholas, Gilbert refuses to make himself clear, resorting to veiled

references to "blackmail," which Nicholas, perhaps deliberately, dismisses as nonsense (139-47). When Nicholas demands, "Explain yourself" (110), Gilbert replies, "If I could, you wouldn't love me anymore. Or you wouldn't need me" (111). Gilbert's desire to speak, to provide an alternative narrative to the one imposed by Nicholas, is always frustrated. Nicholas forbids any challenges to his version of events by threatening to withdraw his acceptance of those who try to change the story. This, perhaps, is the real "blackmail" that is going on.

While Gilbert's attempts to question the ways of his family are consistently blocked, so are his attempts at writing. Gilbert surrounds himself with the great literature of the past, creating a superficial atmosphere of culture in the library. Yet he never seems to read anything new, engage in any active way with the texts, or be able to compose any work of his own. Although he complains to Hooker that the other boys in his class paid attention only to rote facts and never displayed any creativity, his own mind, "where he hoarded so much, so many words, for quoting" (46), is cluttered with memorized phrases which he repeats to the uninterested members of his family or scribbles on the scraps of paper which litter his room. His only "original" writing consists of garbled fragments interspersed with literary allusions. For example, in his own epitaph, which Hooker finds after Gilbert's death, he

quotes several lines from "Adonais," suggesting that Gilbert's vision of himself as a great talent gone tragically to waste is informed by Shelley's romantic vision of Keats. Following the quotation, Hooker reads:

"Follow where all is fled.

Follow.

Follow Gil. H. Winslow -- you whitewashed son
of a bitch,

Follow in peace where all is ...

Ding-dong the cat is dead which old cat the
kid's old cat ding dong the wicked old cat is ...

Buy the kid a dog! R. I. Pee!" (260)

In an earlier scene, Gilbert and Hooker play out an obviously much-repeated game, in which Hooker reads aloud the titles of the books on the library shelves, while Gilbert corrects his pronunciation. Gilbert seems able to recall whole books with great speed, quoting from them or commenting on them as Hooker reads out their titles. This scene is reminiscent of the pathetic joke about the prison inmates who have heard each other's stale jokes so many times that they have invented a system of telling them by number. For Gilbert, literature is not alive with possibilities. It is a closed system, already coded and confined to its place in the stuffy library, "hung with the opaque air of cigarettes and liquory smells" (187) where Gilbert will "never let anyone in" (188).

Because Gilbert never questions these texts, they become reified and revered, taking on an inflated and powerful status. They not only lead him to act out the narratives of neglected genius and martyred prophet, they also serve to haunt his imagination to the point of obstructing his creativity. Gilbert's paralysis is similar to that of Joyce's Stephen Dedalus, who is also oppressed by literary history. Yet Stephen is aware of the source of his paralysis, and very much aware of his position as a member of a colonized nation. Gilbert seems caught in a pre-modern reverence for the authority of the canonized texts of England and America. He does not desire to "make it new," as Pound suggested, but to make it again; as Iris says, the Winslows are always "tryin' to make over the past" (92).

One of the most revealing stories that Gilbert tells is his tale of Mr. Brown at Markham College. In this story, Gilbert casts himself as a daring young individualist, whose talents go unrecognized by the lesser minds of the authorities. He tells Hooker the story of how he studied the ballad form and produced a fine ballad for his teacher, only to be accused of having plagiarized it. Gilbert describes the ballad: "how good it was, how right it was and how original and excellent it was" (199). But his teacher and the "Head" of the school will not believe that he wrote it himself.

Ironically, Gilbert is censured (and censored) for doing the one thing he was supposed to do -- imitate the form of the English ballad with slavish servitude -- and doing it too well. Markham College, with its headmaster and its borrowed mannerisms of upper-class England, is an imitation British institution. As such, it exerts a colonizing force on its students, holding up "the English poem" as the measure of excellence -- a measure young Canadians can never hope to attain. The school cannot admit that a young Canadian with a "lazy, uncooperative, fooling attitude" (200) can create an excellent ballad, for this would ruin the mystique of the object.

As Linda Hutcheon points out, the distinction between plagiarism and parody is one of intent, depending on whether the author means "to imitate with critical irony or to imitate with intent to deceive" (A Theory of Parody 40). In Gilbert's case, the intention is neither irony nor deception. He is apparently motivated by a nostalgic desire to be one with the great masters of the past, coupled with a belief that the ballad form has already been perfectly completed and cannot be changed. The story of Gilbert's ballad raises questions about Findley's intent as well. In later works, Findley repeats generic conventions with the kind of ironic self-consciousness that Hutcheon associates with postmodern parody. But in this novel, despite the representation of Gilbert's paralysis, Findley does not seem

to be aware of any paralysis in his own writing. Joyce exorcised Stephen's literary problems by parodying the whole history of English literature in his "Oxen of the Sun" chapter in Ulysses. But Findley does not seem to parody the gothic, romantic and tragic conventions which he assimilates. Like Gilbert, he has a reverent attitude toward the literature of the past. Consequently, the desires of these genres, such as the desire for tragic closure, meet little resistance when they are imported into Findley's text at this point in his career.

Gilbert's response to the accusation is to leave school, an act of submission which he interprets as defiance in the version he gives to Hooker. But Mr. Brown has won. He has planted the seeds of doubt in Gilbert's mind: "My God, perhaps in some mad way this could be true. In some weird, long-forgotten way, I might just have remembered what I'd thought I'd made up in my mind" (199-200). Gilbert has learned the lesson of Markham College: English Literature is a complete and seamless text and -- like all great events -- it happens elsewhere.

Gilbert's story of Mr. Brown also serves to illustrate the ways in which story-telling is used by the characters in this novel. As Ross Chambers argues, narratives not only have their own "points" to make, they also derive meaning from the ways in which they mediate human relationships. For example, narratives may derive their points by

manipulating their listeners. In The Last of the Crazy People, members of the family often tell Hooker stories in order to suppress his questioning. Gilbert, for instance, chooses to tell the story of Mr. Brown after the following exchange regarding the family's inability to stop Gilbert's self-destructive behaviour:

"Can't you stop yourself?" [Hooker asked.]

Gilbert looked at Hooker as though amazed, but then, he smiled.

"How?" he said. "In the name of Jesus."

"I don't know, but --"

"No. No. No, no, no ... No. After a while there's only one way to stop yourself. Only that one way."

Gilbert raised a hand, and on the hand one finger.

"What way?"

"Unh? Oh. Well. I mean -- there is a way to stop, if you want to ..."

"I know, but ..."

Suddenly, as if he were changing the subject completely, Gilbert said, "I'm not a liar, Hook. You know that. Don't you?"

Hooker listened but did not speak.

"Have I ever told you the story of Mr. Brown at Markham?" (196-97)

While the point of the story is to paint Gilbert as a romantic hero, the point of the telling is to shut Hooker up. Every time Hooker says "but," he is interrupted or contradicted.

Other possibilities are not allowed to enter the house. When Rosetta seems to be feeling some of the same premonitions as the boys do, she suggests breaking out of the pattern of isolation and closure. But Nicholas quickly cuts her off, and she gives up very easily:

"Someone," she said, "has got to come in here to this house without emotion and do something about this. I think we need help."

Nicholas looked at her.

"No."

"All right then," said Rosetta. "That's that." She walked out of the room. (65)

The Winslows are always walking out and closing doors and telling each other to be quiet. And the structure of Findley's narrative mirrors the stifling atmosphere of the household. Hooker knows that "something" will happen. His logic is the logic of narrative closure, a logic which Findley's narrative obeys.

Findley too, knew that "something" would have to happen, although he was already well into the writing of the novel before he "realized" what that something would be. The shock almost stopped him from writing it (in

conversation, August, 1990). Findley's account suggests that the novel has a life of its own and that it insisted on its own, necessary conclusion. In his journal (1963), he records: "[...] I know it must be done. Stories have their own conclusions. Sure, you can cheat them -- but if you deny a story its integrity it loses all its validity and the reader can tell" (Inside Memory 70). Apparently, judging from the reactions of the reviewer quoted above, they can tell. They seem to feel that the ending is just right. Surely, these reviewers do not all read like the unsophisticated Iris or like Hooker who feels that there has to be a death at the end of every important story (70). Nevertheless, the narrative technique of Findley's first novel seems to seduce its readers "inexorably" into a desire for closure so strong that one critic even goes so far as to argue that Hooker's shooting of his family is a "positive achievement" (Kröller, "Eye in the Text" 370).

The Last of the Crazy People is an excellent example of the powerful and seductive way in which narrative structures work on their readers. While Hooker and Gilbert are seduced by the closed structure of the stories which circulate within their ken, and are rendered incapable of imagining any possible escape from the impending doom, the reader is drawn into a similar bind. Within the Winslow family, all possibilities for change and growth -- Gilbert's poetry, Hooker's questions, Rosetta's plea for outside help -- are

repressed and stifled. Similarly, the narrative itself seems to suppress any attempt to break out of its program of closure. With its oppressive literary intertexts, its chronological linearity and its narrow and consistent focalization, Findley's narrative seduces its readers into a vision as limited and closed as Hooker's.

Hooker's and Gilbert's actions proceed from their own simplistic logic -- a logic they have learned from the various, limited, discourses they have encountered. But their actions also proceed from the discursive logic of the novel itself, what Jonathan Culler calls "esthetic logic" (174). In his analysis of Oedipus Rex, Culler demonstrates that concrete evidence of Oedipus's guilt is actually withheld in the play. Characters and audience alike conclude that Oedipus is guilty, but this "conclusion is based not on new evidence concerning a past deed but on the force of meaning, the interweaving of prophecies and the demands of narrative coherence" (174). The ending to The Last of the Crazy People is "inevitable" because it proceeds from the esthetic logic of the discourse; it is "satisfying" because it fulfills the demands of coherence on which the discourse insists.

With its authoritarian structure, the narrative of Findley's first novel mirrors the "fascist regime" of the family (Findley, Hough Interview 57) which it portrays, building up an enclosure from which there is "only that one

way" out (197). Every page shouts out a warning, but any desire to circumvent the coming prophesied doom is consistently thwarted. The "integrity" of the novel, which is nothing more than its relentless desire for coherence and closure, will not be denied.

Findley's awareness of the paralyzing potential of an authoritative canon, which he displays through his portrayal of Gilbert, appears in his later work where it is worked out through the very structures of his narratives. Findley continues to tell stories in which the characters are often paralysed and confined. For example, the concept of the family as a fascistic institution is taken to extremes in Not Wanted on the Voyage, where Father Noah controls with an iron fist the language and the sexuality of a family which has become the world. But Findley's later narratives tend to have "open" structures. In contrast to The Last of the Crazy People, in which the desire for coherence and closure overwhelms the text, the later novels are disrupted by conflicting desires which create gaps, repetitions, and paradoxes. Instead of following the rules of genre, they bend and often subvert them. The Wars and Famous Last Words play with the notion of the historical novel by questioning the processes by which history is written and read. Not Wanted on the Voyage and The Telling of Lies deconstruct the logic of the biblical myth and the mystery respectively. The later novels employ irony and multiple points of view,

and allow dynamic interchanges to take place among conflicting discourses. Although, as I shall continue to point out, the desire for coherence and "integrity" is still very strong in all of Findley's works, his later narratives refuse to be totally complicit with the authoritarian power of closed narrative structures -- the power which sends the Winslows to their death.

Chapter Three

Problems of Narrativization:

The Butterfly Plaque

Findley's first two novels, The Last of the Crazy People (1967) and The Butterfly Plaque (1969), differ from each other so widely that only his characteristic grammar and sentence structure seem to identify them as the products of the same pen. Perhaps only an inexperienced writer could produce two such divergent works within two years; nevertheless, the dissimilar nature of these early novels stands as an indication of the versatility which Findley continues to demonstrate throughout his career. In contrast to The Last of the Crazy People, which seems to surrender itself completely to narrative desire for coherence, The Butterfly Plaque, a mere two years later, is rife with signs of rebellion against it. The Butterfly Plaque is characterized by elements of self-reflexivity, a disjointed plot structure, a resistance to closure, and a self-conscious concern for the relationship between fiction and history, all of which combine to create a novel which approaches postmodernity.

The Butterfly Plaque also takes place on a larger stage than Findley's first novel. The Last of the Crazy People

refers to the abuse of political power only as a subtext -- allusions to political assassinations and wars run throughout the text, suggesting that violence in the Winslow family is only part of a violence that pervades the world. That Hooker's weapon is a weapon of World War I only emphasizes this theme. Yet The Last of the Crazy People remains focussed on the fascism of the individual family unit. In The Butterfly Plague, Findley moves out into the larger world, examining the desires that fuel public fascism. The novel looks at the official, state-run fascism of Nazi Germany and also at the fascism of North America, which is unofficial, but which contains many of the same elements as that of the Nazi Party: racism, homophobia, an obsession with youth and beauty, utopian desires, fervent nationalism, and strict repression of any opposition to its program.

The connection between European fascism and North American society is one that Findley has never hesitated to make. In a 1984 interview, Findley hinted at a connection between America in the Reagan years and the policies of the Nazi regime, predicting that "we are entering a very dark stage" ("Talking" 28).

And we are going to go under, in the full extension of what's happening. It's classic: intellectuals, women, homosexuals, you know the list. And no one can deny that this is already so

firmly set in such a large part of North American society. (28-29)

In his convocation address to students at the University of British Columbia in 1985, Findley made the analogy quite clearly. Referring to the methods of the German Nazi party in the thirties, Findley reminded his audience that the party suppressed opposition through book-burnings and the control of the law courts, the press and the universities. Only those who said "yes" to the new regime were spared. Moreover, "the need to give the word fear a human shape" gave rise to the persecution of the Jews. Immediately after painting this picture of violent repression, Findley cited Canadian support of Reagan's suppression of Communism in Central America; Canadian budget cuts to the arts, broadcasting and the universities; censorship in Canadian schools; and recent acts of desecration to local synagogues. Findley qualified his analogy somewhat. "This is not Germany, 1938. This is Canada, 1985," he clarified; "I am not saying one is aping the other. To do so would be mere rhetoric." Yet Findley urged on his audience the prophetic warning that: "the word 'yes' is in the air."

The Butterfly Plague deals with the rise of fascism in Europe immediately prior to the outbreak of World War II, and examines the desires which fuel the ascendancy of the Master Race. In juxtaposition to this political context, the novel deals also with the milieu of Hollywood with its

glamorous images of "stars," its highly-charged meta-narratives of romance and purity, and its consequent role in the construction of public desire. Thus Findley begins the exploration of the link between history and fiction, which he continues in The Wars, and the link between elitist political positions and elitism in the arts, which he continues in Famous Last Words. The narratives of Hollywood and those of official fascism are closely aligned in this novel, and they underlie the structure of events which portend the coming plague.

The principal witness to these events is Ruth Damarosch, who struggles with her own desires as she watches her family die and her world crumble around her. In his notes for this novel (1967), Findley considered the problem of creating an "innocent watcher" without having the "child's-eye view of things to fall back on," which he had in The Last of the Crazy People (Inside Memory 107). But he was determined to have such an innocent watcher as a character because he wanted "to show the evil aspects of this story without the sophisticated overlay of people's excuses for doing what they do" (107). That sophisticated overlay was to come later, in the complex web of excuses woven by Mauberley and Quinn in Famous Last Words. The Butterfly Plague takes a simpler position on the issue of good and evil. But it is not simplistic. The desires which

fuel fascism are closely linked to the desire for perfection which, the novel suggests, is persistent and ineradicable.

At the beginning of the novel, Ruth returns to Hollywood from Europe (in August 1938), where she has witnessed the signs of Nazi ascendancy -- the displaced refugees whom she calls "dreamers," the prison camps, the fanatical emphasis on physical perfection and the fear and secrecy which are growing to hysterical proportions. Ruth arrives on an ominous train which Findley has interpreted as "America itself" (Inside Memory 132). Besides Ruth, "America" carries two avatars of the coming "plague" of perfection. The first of these is the movie star Letitia Virden, known as "the little Virgin," who is returning to Hollywood to plan her comeback, dressed in "expensive and beautifully tailored" clothing (11). She is described in inhuman, almost monstrous terms:

Insect-like, the woman's brilliantly clouded head would turn to follow Ruth's every move. Or it would lock, like the head of a mantis, into one poised and trance-like position. Ruth wondered if there were lids on the eyes or if they ever closed. (11)

The other figure who haunts the train is a man:

He was blond from top to toe, probably German, and he smelled of leather. He was extraordinary to look at. He could have been an advertisement for

racial perfection. His eyes were blue; his hair was golden; his teeth were white and even. Every bone was perfection itself. He radiated strength, health, and stamina. Yet, he never seemed to sleep. (10-11)

The constant watchfulness of these two figures is a sign of the relentless grip they maintain over the world of the novel. Letitia and the blond German represent two powerful forms of narrativization -- fiction and history -- neither one more "innocent" or more "real" than the other. Both, in this context, are narratives of purity, fuelled by a nostalgic belief in ordinary perfection and a desire to return to that uncorrupted state.

The story of such a return to purity cannot be written without eliminating all impurities -- and all elements which might challenge the power of the story-teller. As Findley's characteristically bloody and frightening openings suggest, story-telling can be a violent act. The story of racial supremacy requires the elimination of the "unfit"; and the story of Letitia Virden's virginity requires the elimination of the father of her secret child -- her former lover, Bully Moxon, who has come to meet her train. Somehow, Bully falls onto the tracks and is killed and dismembered by the train. Letitia is then free to pursue her come-back as the "little Virgin":

Silently and without lifting her veils, the mysterious lady stared down with remarkable poise into the cinders where still lay the head of Bullford Moxon. She seemed to view it as some gigantic and momentous ruin -- and in her stance and quiet stare could be felt the power and intensity of a conqueror. She had put him there. Ruth knew it. But she didn't know how or why.

(22)

Ruth's intuition that Letitia has murdered Bully is eventually shared by the reader, as Letitia's determination to present herself as a virgin is revealed in the text. The "why" is quite clear. The "how" remains a mystery -- at least to Ruth. The reader, perhaps, will recognize the method -- Letitia kills Bully, quite simply, because Findley writes the story in which she does.

Although Ruth bears witness to the signs of impending doom, she is unable to communicate an effective warning to those around her. She cannot tell of the events she witnessed in Germany -- her husband's complicity with the Nazis and his rejection of her because of her genetic "impurity." She plans instead to tell another, safer, story -- "she would have to be brave and lie and tell the story of her life as though it were a true story" (17). By not telling it, Ruth hopes to make the ugly story disappear "very soon, perhaps, not having to tell, not having to

listen, I could forget" (37). But shortly after her arrival, Ruth has another vision of destruction. On a family outing to Alvarez Canyon, Ruth again sees the blond German and experiences a series of frightening events, culminating in a horrifying forest fire (142-43).

The description of Ruth's vision, reminiscent of the legions of the damned in hell, is a vision of the holocaust which is beginning in Germany. Like that historical holocaust, this fictional one goes unnoticed: "no one saw it [...] Or, so they all claimed. Everyone heard about it, of course, but afterward. In the reports" (143). Ruth's family tells her that she imagined it all: "It's only in your mind [...] You dream too much" (143). And eventually Ruth gives up trying to talk about it: "she maintained her silence, which was rather like sucking one of Miss Bonkers's comfits. The longer it nested on her tongue, the deeper the flavor became. And the comfort" (144). Without an audience, the story cannot be told; silence becomes a habit.

Even Findley seems to suggest that these horrific incidents take place only in Ruth's mind. Although the crimes and fires during the outing to Alvarez are narrated omnisciently, without being restricted to Ruth's point of view, there are several hints that the events narrated are not "real." Naomi escapes the fire, for example, because "those who take part in others' dreams are always safe" (136). And the mutilated body of Clara Box, which is seen

by Miss Bonkers in "The Chronicle of Alvarez Canyon" (131), is later said to have been discovered by Ruth, "the only witness in the matter" (229). These hints cast doubt on the ontological status of Ruth's experience. Similarly, Ruth's experience in Germany, told in "The Chronicle of the Nightmare," is the only first-person narrative in the novel, suggesting that the coming holocaust is a private nightmare. Ruth's apparent clairvoyance and her inability to tell of her visions mark her as another of Findley's Cassandra figures. Findley's narrative technique parodies the methods of those who would silence her by denying her witness.

Findley's use of the chronicle form underlines his ongoing themes of prophecy and the moral responsibility of the witness who sees the signs of impending disaster. A chronicle, supposedly, is merely an objective record, written as historical events occur. Thus it promises to avoid the narrativization of history. A chronicler is simply an observer, an "innocent" bystander, who cannot be blamed for the unforeseen consequences of the events recorded. Nobody in the novel speculates on the possible outcome of the pre-war hysteria which it depicts. Because the story takes place before the official declaration of war, and the reader necessarily exists after the war, any narrativization of historical events is the work of the reader who, unlike the characters, can see into the "future" of the past. While Findley's depiction of Hollywood

suggests that narrativization can be dangerous and restrictive, the many clues to the coming historical holocaust invite the reader to engage in the kind of plot-making processes which the novel seems to warn against and to conclude that the failure to narrativize events can be equally dangerous.

The Butterfly Plague seems to be structured by a paradoxical desire: to impose a coherent narrative structure on events, with logical cause and effect, and formal closure, and to resist such an imposition. The chronicle form reflects this ambivalence toward narrativization. As an historiographical genre, the chronicle falls somewhere between the bare outline of events found in the annals form and the full-fledged plot found in the history proper, which historians consider to be the superior form (White 16). Hayden White describes the chronicle in terms which depict it as a model of unfulfilled narrative desire:

[...] the annals form lacks completely this narrative component, since it consists only of a list of events ordered in chronological sequence. The chronicle, by contrast, often seems to wish to tell a story, aspires to narrativity, but typically fails to achieve it. More specifically, the chronicle usually is marked by a failure to achieve narrative closure. It does not so much conclude as simply terminate. It starts out to

tell a story but breaks off in medias res, in the chronicler's own present; it leaves things unresolved, or rather, it leaves them unresolved in a storylike way. (5)

So too, the narrative in Findley's second novel often seems to desire to tell a story, yet does not do so. Instead of the chronologically linear, cohesive and consecutive narrative of The Last of the Crazy People, Findley creates what he calls "an accumulation of scenes" (Papers 35.6). In his notes for a later novel, Findley recalls his technique in The Butterfly Plague:

[...] the overall form was that of chronicles: each chronicle being made up of clusters of scenes [...] Thus time was displayed in a helter-skelter fashion -- back and forward -- sideways, etc. -- also filmic sequences [...] (Papers 35.6)

The concept of a cluster of scenes, rather than a progression, suggests a reluctance to impose narrativization. Many of these clusters consist of unfinished stories -- subplots which are never fully developed, but only noted, as though recorded by a diligent chronicler who failed to bring them to closure.

In sharp contrast to Findley's first novel, The Butterfly Plague allows in an astonishing number of characters and settings, including several crowd scenes. In his "Preface" to the second edition, Findley gives his own

description of the "neophyte writer" who created the first edition:

He had ten thousand ideas and a million theories and he kind of wrote like that, too, in tens of thousands and millions. Every paragraph was twice as long as it needed to be. The characters, not unlike the butterflies, arrived on the pages in droves. The events were about as large as events could get: there were murders, flaming forests, movie making, the Olympic Games and -- not to be outdone by a number of other writers writing then -- I threw in World War II. (iii)

Although Findley makes this statement in the context of explaining why he rewrote the book, it is interesting to note that every one of these elements remains in the text and that murders, fires and wars continue to appear in his following works.

The characters do appear in "droves" in this novel -- and many of them seem to be left hanging without the loose ends of their stories wrapped up. Although most of the major characters -- Naomi, George, Letitia and Adolphus -- die, and in their deaths represent various aspects of the ongoing plague, many of the minor characters are involved in stories which are not so much told as merely suggested. Myra, for instance, is involved in some murderous scandal which is never explained. There are only two hints of this

event in the novel. Myra's maid Ida refers to it: "she always talked about 'us killing Mr. Danton' (a perfectly ordinary scandal) in 1936 (hushed up) [...]" (209). And Naomi recalls it briefly, while remembering another incident, as "one of those scandals of silence, in the same vein as Myra Jacobs's shooting Mr. Danton" (260). But other than these two mentions, the murder is never described or explained. Perhaps the narrative "hushes up" the murder in an imitation of the Hollywood cover-up, but in the context of the other unfinished stories in the book, Myra's crime seems like only one of many, many stories which the narrative desires to tell, but does not. What happens to Mr. Cohn? What happens to Edwina Shackleton? to Evelyn de Foe? the Trelfords? The Trelfords, Ruth suggests, will "survive" (353), but the narrative notes, while describing the eldest daughter's blouse, that "(Four years later, in January of 1943, she died in this same blouse when a car she rode in fell from a cliff in Mexico)" (350), with no further elaboration.

The historical chronicle "fails" to tell a story because it typically leaves off when the chronicler dies or stops recording. It can therefore not see into the future. But the narrative of the novel, although it also leaves several stories incomplete, seems restricted by some other reason. References to what happens "Four years later" and huge geographical leaps suggest an omniscient over-view

which is impossible in the historical chronicle. In a collage of texts, similar to passages in Joyce's Ulysses, the narrative includes items from the "Bozo Bulletin" (224) and various newspapers (221-22; 240-41), the texts of city ordinances (283-85) and a "Scientific note" (270-71), none of which is "read" by any identifiable character. The narrative seems capable of completely unrestricted vision, narrating the solitary flight of a butterfly (61-62), events as far afield as Germany and China (228) and the inner thoughts of even the most minor characters. Yet no direct mention is ever made of the future events which hang so ominously over the world of the text -- the holocaust and eruption of almost world-wide war. The free-floating focalization creates an open structure in which, it seems, any story could be told, but structural closure is not imposed in every possible place.

In his notes for the novel (c. 1966), Findley records: "The writing is intended to convey a sort of science-fiction-mad possibility of reality. Only, it looks -- ostensibly, backward, instead of into the future" (Papers 6.3). This "mad" reality is very close to magic realism at times -- the scene at Fringes Field, for example, when the people are virtually attacked by a swarm of butterflies, certainly moves the novel out of the realm of realism (280-83). The narrative shifts its tone frequently, moving from serious, dramatic realism (such as Naomi's death-scene) to

highly exaggerated comic parody (such as "The Chronicle of Evelyn de Foe"). Findley's notes describe this technique well:

[...] there are many deaths in the book -- and they are treated with a mixture of reality and slap-stick that is typical of 1930's films [...]. Some of the characters are treated as pure slap-stick. Ida, Harold [,] Miss Diblee (as servants were in 1930's comedies [sic]. All are treated as acceptably larger than life. [Miss Diblee was the original name of Miss Bonkers] (Papers 6.3).

Metafictional elements, as well, serve to undermine the novel's occasional attempts at realism. The narrative remarks, for instance, on the implausibility of its own plot:

In one of those unlikely coincidences that plague the chronicler of history (the writer of fiction usually doesn't dare employ them), it so happened that, besides the Damarosch group on that Sunday, not only the whole Trelford family, but Octavius Rivi, as well, decided to travel to Fringes Bay to see the Trees. (272-73)

The effect of this narrative technique -- to which Findley has never (yet) returned -- is that of an almost uncontrollable plethora of scenes and stories which branch

off in a variety of ways, suggesting that there are many possible endings or even non-endings to stories.

Chronicles don't have endings. They just end. But in the narratives of the Hollywood film, endings are indispensable. Interestingly, Hayden White identifies elements of narrative closure as elements of moralization:

When it is a matter of recounting the concourse of real events, what other 'ending' could a given sequence of such events have than a 'moralizing' ending? What else could narrative closure consist of than the passage from one moral order to another? [...] for we cannot say, surely, that any sequence of real events actually comes to an end, that reality itself disappears, that events of the order of the real have ceased to happen. Such events could only seem to have ceased to happen when meaning is shifted, and shifted by narrative means, from one physical or social space to another. (23)

These moralizing elements, White notes, are generally linked to notions of authority and the restoration of order (13, 23). And while the "chronicles" of the 1938-39 butterfly plague themselves resist moralizing endings, they document Hollywood's obsession with them. The fictions of Hollywood use the power of narrativization to seduce their audience with the meta-narratives of masculinity,

femininity, racial hierarchy and patriotism. Like the fully narrativized history, the Hollywood film of the thirties has an agenda, closely linked to issues of authority and the restoration of order.

Findley's novel focusses on a family deeply involved in "the business." It makes reference to many movies, but it goes into detail on two in particular: "Hell's Babies," and "America -- I Love You." While Findley's parodic accounts of these productions are extremely humorous, they are also tinged with cynicism. The movies, though laughable from one perspective, are sinister and frightening from another.

"Hell's Babies," set in Chicago, is "the story of a floozy's rise to fame" (164), directed by Adolphus Damarosch and starring the bodies of Myra Jacobs and Ajax Apollo. For a scene in which Myra and Ajax are to swim in the nude and appear to make love under water, a simulated jungle pool has been constructed, complete with rubber rocks and potted palm trees. When Adolphus describes this set to his mother, Naomi, she questions the appropriateness of a South Pacific pool in the middle of Chicago. But the conventions of Hollywood film are established firmly enough to make such a scene appear perfectly normal, at least to some people: "'Well -- it's a musical, Mother,' said Dolly -- incredulous that she should have to ask" (165).

The ludicrous and lurid love scene turns out to be fatal for Myra. Forced to appear naked, she reveals her

imperfect figure and is found wanting by the New York executives who are funding the film. Following this humiliation, Myra sinks into a depression which quickly kills her. In Hollywood, the image is everything; human beings can go out of style with as much suddenness and finality as a piece of clothing. For example, one up-and-coming star is described as "very much the new style of girl, the style just coming in, with square instead of round shoulders, and bosoms and bottoms instead of hands, feet, and face" (200). Myra dies, Adolphus eventually concludes, because she believes in the Hollywood image more than she believes in herself:

That was why Myra had died. She hadn't believed. She hadn't believed in what she was -- in the fat lady -- in Old Fat. She had only believed in what she thought she was -- in what she thought she ought to be -- in what was expected of her -- and, finally, demanded.

You die when you can't be real, Dolly thought. When you can't see who you are and when you cannot see what is. (303)

"What is" is imperfection, incompleteness. Myra's ill-timed death forecloses the making of the film, leaving Adolphus to struggle with the question of how to end it, how to make that "vital" last scene (265). The narrative structure of Myra's life contrasts sharply with the narrative structure

of the film, suggesting that "real life writes real bad," as Findley puts it elsewhere ("Real Life Writes Real Bad" Stones). But Findley, it seems, cannot resist the temptation to bring Myra's story to closure. The story of Myra's death closely mirrors a powerful Hollywood myth -- the death of Marilyn Munroe. Like Munroe, Myra dies of a drug overdose, just as she is reaching for the telephone (221-22). As Myra "dies" in 1938, she is not imitating Munroe. Findley is. Findley repeats the pathetic gesture of the helpless beauty who reaches out for help too late in a cold, cruel world. And in doing so, he closes the story of Myra's life with a moralizing ending.

In contrast to "Hell's Babies," which fails to close, Letitia Virden's film, "America -- I Love You," comes to a triumphant ending designed to reinforce the values which it propagates. The film tells the story of an American victory over "dirty little Mexicans" on a Texas battleground "with California's mountains unaccountably visible in the distance" (331-332). The star of the film is Letitia Virden, playing:

Virginia Mary Washington, defiled by Mexicans and consequently unfit for marriage to her lifelong hero [...] Unable to become a bride, Virginia Mary had nobly devoted her life to the founding of a convent, which even now was being raised on the field of battle. (332)

The film ends with a scene of Virginia Mary bidding a brave farewell to her hero in front of the convent, while church bells chime, the music swells, and the sun (of course) begins to set (332). The ending is so sentimental that even the composer, projectionist and producer are moved to tears while viewing the rough-cut (331). Findley's parody of the sappy western, however, is not confined to a criticism of its lack of artistic merits. The film is portrayed as a piece of political and social propaganda, promoting patriotism through racist stereotyping and the essentialization of gender roles. The film ends on a note of sexual frustration, which is held up as the ideal American condition. Virginia Mary will not even allow her hero to kiss her "defiled" hand, but sends him on his way while she prepares to join the nuns who await with "their gaze averted from the sexual implications" of the scene (332). "The little Virgin" is making her comeback while trying to revive an American myth which is threatened by the growing emphasis on sex in Hollywood. George Damarosch, who desperately wants to produce the Virgin's comeback film, explains:

I tell you, every man, woman, and child wants to get back their virginity. They don't know it, but they do. The Virgin Image [...] The Image of the Virgin. This once was known as the Virgin Land [...] Let it return to that. Let it go back from

prurience to purity. I tell you, that is the American Dream -- not some babe in slacks and a sweater. (174)

The Hollywood films of the thirties, one critic maintains, were popular because they presented their audiences with the images of "things lost or things desired" in a time of deprivation (Bergman xii). The Virgin's films seduce their audience with the desire for uncorrupted, originary purity, a nostalgic desire which can never be fulfilled but which serves to promote racism, sexism, and a desire for perfection which mirrors the desire of fascism. Ironically, the Virgin is promoting the very ideals which have forced her to renounce her own son, Octavius, who lives in isolation acting out a perverted imitation of another American Dream -- the perfect mother (186-90).

Letitia herself is finally moved to tears when she "realizes" what the music for her film's important finale will be: "'America the Beautiful,' of course," she says. And her producer answers, "Of Course [...] How else could it end?" (336). The film is now a perfect package, wrapping up by associating America with a clean new start, a return to the Virgin Land now possible, with the dirty Mexicans all dead, defiled womanhood locked safely away, and American masculinity riding off on a horse, free to seek adventure. How else could it end? Only that one way.

Findley clearly means to draw a parallel here between the sexism, racism and nationalism of American culture and that of the Nazi regime. The focus on the ending of the film emphasizes the utopian dreams of both. In The Last of the Crazy People, Hooker's desire for apocalyptic closure is constructed by the apocalyptic closure of the narratives he encounters. Letitia's film seeks to impose utopian closure, and thus it serves to construct utopian desire. This kind of unofficial propaganda was still prevalent in 1969, and is still prevalent today. By setting it against the fascism of pre-war Europe, condemned in the eyes of the post-war reader, Findley not only indicts the social mores of North America in the thirties, but in the present as well. The Butterfly Plague is a kind of prophecy, warning of the powerfully seductive nature of narrative desire.

Much attention is paid to a mole on Letitia's neck which, unlike Myra's fat, can be edited out of the film's final version. Letitia insists on this cinematic surgery, even though the re-shoot will cost twelve hundred dollars. Her producer agrees, because: "Madonna ha sempre ragione. Mussolini is always right" (330). The comparison of Letitia to Mussolini underlines the link between artistic and political power which runs throughout the description of Letitia's film. Like Madonna (the "Little Virgin" of the nineties), Letitia maintains complete control over her own image. As this scene suggests, her control is a kind of

dictatorship, less violent than Mussolini's, but powerful nonetheless. Letitia and her producer discuss their coming success in terms that foreshadow the coming to power of the Reagans in America. Although Findley could not have foreseen the inauguration of that particular president, this scene points to a trend in North American politics which was beginning, along with the growth of the television industry, at the time he was writing. In this trend, which has not yet passed, political issues are ignored. Politicians are packaged like commercial products and power is granted to the individual who constructs the most attractive public image. Letitia and Cooper watch themselves in the mirror, obsessed with their own images; "One day," Letitia says, "that glorious head of yours will adorn the coin of the realm" (335). "With your image and my empire," he answers, "what we have now is the freedom to seize power" (336). The film, like the propaganda of Mussolini's Fascists, is designed to make their dreams come true.

Letitia's desire to define and to promote a perfect image of the human body is similar in structure to the Nazi desire to create a perfect race. Both desires operate by a process of elimination, the process which rid Hollywood of the aging Myra Jacobs/Marilyn Munroe. This aspect of the movie-making business is not confined to the thirties either. For decades, the powerful imagery of Hollywood has maintained significant control of the definition of

perfection in human form, and thus control over the construction of desire. Feminists have struggled against, but are still far from escaping, the unspoken totalitarianism of the body beautiful. As Findley points out in his novel, women are not the only ones affected by it. In her last visit to Adolphus's house, after his death, Ruth is shocked to discover the photographs which he had kept -- posed scenes of male homoeroticism. The pictures are represented as pathetic in their sterility:

The faces of the models were odd. Neither handsome nor ugly, they seemed like the faces of automatons. Their eyes held no expression whatsoever. Occasionally, one appeared to be smiling, but, studied more closely, it could be seen that the smile was superimposed, not conjured the way an actor might conjure an expression contrary to his own emotion, but literally laid on, as though, just before the photo was taken, the photographer had rearranged the facial features with his fingers.

They were tragic.

Ruth wept for them.

Life was a posture, forever. (326)

The perfect automatons represent the possible future for those who take their place in the new order: a future devoid of spontaneity, emotion, and difference. Homosexual

erotica, like the "wholesome" heterosexual Hollywood film, is plagued with utopian desire. Focussing on the artificiality of the photographs, Lorraine York interprets Ruth's decision to burn them as "an attempt to cleanse and purge the world of the photographic lie and [...] the drive for perfection within the Damarosch family" (York, The Other Side of Dailiness 72). Ruth's recognition that the photographs represent a future in which "life is a posture" suggests that this is true. Yet Ruth's reaction is, in itself, motivated by a desire for perfection.

Despite Ruth's gradual recognition of the dangers of the plague of perfection, she is never completely "cured" of it. Her desire to burn the photos seems motivated by shame over the nature of her brother's sexuality. Adolphus kept his photographs tucked inside the pages of children's books (with a terrible pun on "fairy tales"), and it seems to Ruth that the books are "devoid forever, now, of loveliness and innocence" (326). For Ruth, the sign of Adolphus's homosexual desire interrupts and corrupts the "simple make-believe" of childhood stories (326). Her fire is referred to as a "holocaust" (327), associating it with fascism and recalling the Nazi persecution of homosexuals. The fire erases all traces of Adolphus's unfulfilled and "horrible" (326) desire. After setting the fire, Ruth "opened the door, stepped out, murmured, 'He is gone,' and shut the door behind her" (327). Ruth performs an act of

closure, leaving the record of the past undefiled and clean. Like Letitia, she eliminates all elements which might contaminate the purity of the story of her brother's life.

Ruth's mother Naomi stands out as one of the few characters who questions the edict of perfection which seems to plague the world of the novel. Naomi knows that perfection is paradoxically "what we all want" and also the "cause of all human pain" (156). Naomi chastises Ruth for not accepting "reality as it is," including the "flaw" of her own blood -- hemophilia (156). Naomi's "tainted blood," as George calls it, has been passed on in its symptomatic form to Adolphus, and in its dormant form to Ruth. Ruth, like her mother before her, struggles with the decision to have children: should she give them life, only to risk passing on the condition to them?

Ruth forms a plan to conceive a child with the blond "messenger of race" who has followed her to America. In "The Chronicle of the Wish," Ruth confides this desire to her mother. "And your child?" Naomi asks, "Wouldn't it kill you?" Ruth replies "I don't know. Not if he was perfect" (155-156). She seems to believe that the sperm of the blond avatar can infuse her with perfection. Ruth is not unaware of the dangers of the plague -- she has not forgotten what she witnessed in Europe. She tells her mother about Germany:

"I watched people. I saw things. I listened to things. Unspeakable things."

"And ...?"

"And yet, in spite of reading and listening and watching; in spite of overhearing and secretly seeing; in spite of knowing..."

"Yes."

"I still want."

"Want?"

"Race." (155)

Ruth finally seduces the blond man (or allows him to seduce her) during a fire in the Hollywood Hills. Believing that she has conceived a child, Ruth escapes the fire, and revels a moment in the dream of desire fulfilled: "fire and smoke could never frighten her again. The smell of them was the smell of imperfection burning -- of imperfection being burned away forever" (240). Seduced by the story of fascism, with its relentless desire for closure, Ruth believes in the possibility of total destruction and the return to a virgin state.

As Ruth plans the story she will tell her child, she plans a future of nostalgia:

When I am old and he is my age, what a wonderful thing it will be to look back and to say, it never happened. The dreamers did not die; Bruno did not exist; the butterflies were

beautiful -- whole treefuls of them -- loved and applauded by everyone who saw them; Hitler is dead. No more wars. No more threat of wars. No torment. No apprehension. And a cure for every disease....

She smiled. She even laughed out loud.

She was dreaming everyone's dream (344).

"Everyone's dream" is the perfect story -- a rewriting (in advance) of history, driven by desire. That Ruth can "still want" racial perfection, even after witnessing the torture and murder by which it is accomplished, suggests that the desire is insatiable.

Ruth's obsession with perfection as an athlete is also linked to fascism, not only because she is used by the Nazis as a showpiece in demonstrations of physical endurance (103-106), but because of her own desires as well. This aspect of Ruth's career is made most explicit in Findley's notes for The Butterfly Plaque in which Ruth's motivation for competitive swimming is compared to Hitler's lust for power. While watching Hitler's performance before the adoring crowd on the last day of the Berlin Olympics, Ruth realizes that his victories are similar to her own:

her victories the same calculation of strokes that would land her just so, at the feet of her people. She had wanted the same thing -- the very same -- the same violent arrival at a point of unmatched

fame -- the same jubilation -- the same welcome
into human memory [...] (Papers 5.3)

Letitia, Ruth and Findley's Hitler are all involved in the careful crafting of a pattern designed to culminate in a perfect performance, a structure in which the performer will gain control of, and power over, the audience. Each of them pays special attention to the finale -- the tear-jerking patriotic close of the film, the triumphant landing after the swim, the appearance of the "Master Leader" after the spectacle of the Olympics. Each must have its moralizing ending, in which the restoration of order and the reinforcement of authority are made complete.

But the control of others is not the only motivation for the making of patterns. The novel inscribes also the desire to construct a coherent story out of the chaotic flux of events in order to be able to predict the future. The exploration of this desire reveals that narrative structures -- like power -- may be dangerous, but they are ultimately necessary.

In the novel, a rash of fires, rapes and murders in California puzzle the police. The dates of the crime wave correspond to the date of Kristallnacht in Germany. Although no character mentions the historical anti-Semitic riots, the date is no coincidence. Findley consulted a historical chronology of pre-war events when dating his chronicles (in conversation, August 1990). He leaves to his

reader the task of discovering the temporal correspondences (a task performed in detail by Jeanne Yardley in her Master's thesis). The California crime wave has anti-Semitic overtones, though these are overlooked by the police. The police attempt to solve the mystery by discerning the underlying structure of the series of crimes:

If they eliminated Mipsy Peterson (characterized by some as "a liar"), there was indeed a pattern: a pair of murders, a rape, a murder. A pair of rapes. Now, they wondered, would there be a murder and a rape? If that occurred, in that order, the pattern would be firmly established. (229)

The next event, as it happens, is a murder, and the "theorists sighed in relief. For the time being, their positions were secure" (230). This is followed by a rape, and "Congratulations and promotions were spread far and wide. Lotteries were won. Fortunes on a minor scale were solidified. The pattern theorists had been proven incontrovertibly correct in their assumptions" (232). In order to "find" their pattern, the theorists had first to eliminate the testimony of one witness, and make the crimes fit the story they were making. More obviously, they had to ignore a series of other events which do not fit into their structure: among the buildings torched were "five synagogues" and "eleven delicatessens" (232). The

description of the police investigation suggests that the failure to narrativize events correctly can be dangerous. The police are caught up in a pattern of their own making. Their lack of concern over the burning of synagogues mirrors the historical lack of reaction to Kristallnacht and the warning that it could have provided, if it had been heeded. In hindsight, the unchecked violence of November, 1938 was a clear sign that the impending holocaust was already beginning. Findley's parallel police investigation suggests that the world at large, obsessed with other things, failed to read it correctly.

In a draft of The Butterfly Plague (c. 1966), the chronicler (who has a clearly discernible personality in some of the early drafts) remarks that:

Since I believe that we shall not survive this present plague [...] I am prompted to record the history of that other [i.e. the butterfly plague] so that one day someone shall be able to read of it and conclude, as we do, that one thing leads to another (My emphasis; Papers 6.3)

Findley also says that he uses the device of exact dates and times, to mark many of the novel's events, in order to "lay on a kind of precision that tells you that one thing leads to another" (in conversation, August, 1990).¹ Although Findley cut less from the original version than he suggests he did in his "Preface" to the second, one major cut was

made which changes the impact of the ending considerably. Findley removed the last chronicle, "The Fire Chronicle," in his revision. According to Findley, this cut was made because "one doesn't want to do all the work for the reader" (in conversation, August, 1990), suggesting that "The Fire Chronicle" wraps things up a little bit too neatly in his opinion. Findley wants to make the point that "one thing leads to another," but he apparently wants the reader to reach that conclusion independently

The excised "Fire Chronicle" quickly (in three pages) tells what happened to many of the characters, a list of the various ways in which they died, bringing to closure the loose ends which the second edition leaves open. "The Fire Chronicle" also documents the end of the butterfly plague in terms which closely align it with World War II:

The plague lasted seven years. In the spring of 1945, it was over. The remnants were sprayed out in August of 1945, and one or two pockets of resistance were wiped out in 1946 and '47. (first edition 374-76)

"As for the butterflies," the chronicler notes, "they continue to breed." The statement recalls the ending to Albert Camus's The Plague:

[Dr. Rieux] knew what these jubilant crowds did not [...] that the plague bacillus never dies or

disappears for good; that it can lie dormant for years and years [...]. (278)

Dr. Rieux is sceptical of the town's celebration at the end of the plague (which Camus, like Findley after him, uses as a metaphor for fascism). Dr. Rieux recognizes that the townspeople, in their desire to believe that the plague is over, are imposing narrative closure on events -- a closure by which he, with Camus, refuses to be seduced. The ending of Findley's first edition also resists the desire for the kind of closure which purges the text of all problems and thus the possibility of further narratability. But it does not resist the temptation to spell out, quite explicitly, the metaphorical link between the fictional plague of butterflies and the coming violence of the war. By cutting this section, Findley leaves that connection for the reader to make.

The narrative of the second edition never moves out over and above Ruth's point of view, nor does it make any mention of its own chronicling activity. Although it suggests that plagues may continue -- the butterflies and fires may only be extinguished for "a while" (374) -- it makes no direct mention of the coming war. Given that the reader will recognize the date of the last day chronicled (April 1, 1939) as preceding American military involvement in European hostilities and as April Fool's day, the end of the second edition implies that only a fool would surmise

that this is the ending, even for a while, of anything. But it resists the temptation to narrate beyond this day and to see into the "future." It leaves that task up to the reader, for whom the future has already become the past. While the narrative clearly warns against the imposition of logical narrative structures, it refuses (in the second edition at least) explicitly to spell out the logical outcome of the rows of dreamers in Europe, the Olympic Games, the growing patriotism in both Germany and America. Thus the reader is left to complete the narrativization and to impose the moralizing ending.

The narrative of The Butterfly Plague displays an ambivalence toward closure which, in the context of the novel, can be read as an ambivalence toward power. Narrative closure has the power to convince and to seduce. It has the power to eliminate all challenges to its authority, eradicate all difference. It has the power to dream of desire fulfilled, to silence all further narratability. Closure returns all stories back to the realm of the nonnarratable. What else can be told after the sun sets over the perfect vision of "America -- I Love You!?" What else can be told after the Nazi utopia has been achieved? After imperfection has been "burned away forever," what need would there be for stories?

It is not simply story-telling which is a suspect activity in this novel -- after all, the novel tells

hundreds of stories itself. The novel suggests in several places that the failure to tell stories can be equally suspect. The novel does not condemn stories as artifice -- and hold "reality" up against them. Rather, it recognizes that all representations of reality are narrative structures, and it investigates the operation of the desires which construct them. It also recognizes that all narratives are potential power structures. Traditional, complete narratives -- like those of Letitia's film -- have power over their audience, seducing them with the desire for closure which is "everybody's dream." Yet open, self-reflexive narratives -- like most of the "Chronicles" themselves -- can empower their audiences by letting them participate in the story-making process. The Butterfly Plague, like most of Findley's novels, is warning us to "pay attention." We need to make stories, the novel suggests. We need to look to elements of our culture which are potentially fascistic, to read the writing on the wall and to rewrite it.

Chapter Four

Repetition and Double Desire:

The Wars

The Wars (1977) was the first novel to bring Findley fame as a writer, winning him several honours, including the Governor General's Award. Together with Famous Last Words (1981), it also served to cement his reputation as a postmodernist. Critics now frequently place Findley among other postmodern Canadian writers. For example, Eva-Marie Kröller compares Findley's use of photography in The Wars to that in Michael Ondaatje's The Collected Works of Billy the Kid (1970), Robert Kroetsch's Badlands (1975) and Rudy Wiebe's The Temptations of Big Bear (1973) among others. Kröller argues that "Photography appears to be one of the typical metaphors and devices employed by post-modernist writers to expose the restrictions of any prefabricated aesthetic order in rendering truth" ("Exploding Frame" 68). And Findley's technique of mixing history with fiction, particularly his mixture of historical and fictional characters in Famous Last Words, prompts Linda Hutcheon to classify his work along with George Bowering's Burning Water (1980), Rudy Wiebe's The Scorched-Wood People (1977) and Chris Scott's Antichthon (1982) as "historiographic

metafiction" (Canadian Postmodern 61-77). Hutcheon argues that such work is postmodern in that it "thematizes its own interaction both with the historical past and with the historically conditioned expectations of its readers" (65).

Findley is indeed postmodern in his emphasis on narrative as process rather than product, his questioning of aesthetic or narrative order, and his self-conscious exploration of the relationship between history and fiction, all of which tend to throw the value of coherence and closure into doubt. Yet interestingly, although one might expect Findley's novel to reflect the celebration of fragmentation and of open-endedness associated with the postmodern, it does not clearly do so. The Wars, with its double narrative of Robert Ross and of its nameless historian, seems both to fear and to desire knowledge of the truth about events in World War I. Kroetsch's Badlands and Bowering's Burning Water deal with the textuality of history in a playful, often comedic manner, rejecting altogether the notion that historical truth exists. In Daphne Marlatt's Ana Historic (1988), the gaps and inconsistencies in official history provide a space in which a liberating rewriting can begin. But The Wars seems to be structured by anxiety about the unknowability of the past. The figure of Robert Ross lying in his hospital bed, his scarred and blinded face an image of his obscured identity, is a tragic

figure. Our inability to know him suffuses the text with a sense of loss.

Although historiographic metafiction is a term more relevant to Famous Last Words, The Wars does have affinities with the genre. Like most historiographic metafiction, this novel throws official historical narrative into doubt, continuing the interrogation of fiction, history, and the problem of narrativization which Findley begins in The Butterfly Plaque. The novel purports to investigate the story of Robert Ross because the official history is unsatisfactory. The closed structure of the patriotic, military narrative of Canadian history threatens to silence forever the story of Robert Ross. Robert's treasonous actions -- shooting two Canadian officers in order to save a herd of horses -- result in a court martial. He only escapes punishment because he is dying of the wounds he sustained in the process. The researcher who tries to uncover this story sixty years later is blocked in his quest for information by people who will not speak about this "bastard" of a traitor and what he did (10). Even Robert's own brother, Stuart, refuses to speak about him (100). As a child, Stuart acts out a Boys Own Annual version of war, and cares more about his own status as brother of a war hero than whether Robert lives or dies (70, 179). As an adult, he has not, apparently, changed his views. Had the official version labelled Robert a hero, Stuart undoubtedly would

have repeated the closed story of heroism over and over. But Robert's actions raise questions which threaten to disrupt the meta-narrative; and so Stuart, along with the other reticent witnesses, conspires to remove his brother's name from history. The researcher can find only two people willing to fill in some of the gaps in the story. He relies heavily on the reports of Juliet d'Orsey and Marion Turner who neither subscribe to nor wish to perpetuate the official version. By refusing to accept the validity of official history, they help to keep the question of Robert's heroism open and therefore keep his story in the realm of the narratable. Thus the novel demonstrates how history, in this case war propaganda, can impinge on people's ability to tell stories. The effect is to foreground the narrative structure of history, to reveal it as a textual construct, one story among many.

Despite sharing this effect with historiographic metafiction, The Wars has more in common with a related genre which might be called the research novel. A growing number of novels in Canada feature characters engaged in research projects. Some of these novels overlap with Hutcheon's category of historiographic metafiction, but many do not. For example, in such novels as Katherine Govier's Between Men (1987), Jack Hodgins's The Invention of the World (1977) and Clark Blaise's Lusts (1983), the objects of research have fictional names (although they may be based on

composites of historical people and events). Unlike George Vancouver, Giordano Bruno or the Duchess of Windsor, their names do not figure largely, if at all, in historical texts. The Wars does not deal with famous historical persons either, except in incidental ways. The central figure, Robert Ross, never lived, although he takes his name from history¹ and many of his experiences are similar to those of the young soldiers who fought in World War I. If Robert Ross had lived, his name would not likely appear in the history books. Like the fictional Robert Ross, any soldier who had committed treason on the field of battle would be forgotten by official history. The novel of research does not necessarily have as its focus identifiable historical individuals. In fact, these novels often purport to be researching a story which has been erased by history. Thus, while a lot of historiographic metafiction seems to dispense with the desire to know the true story of the past, the research novel focuses on that desire.

The structure of the research novel is similar to that of the detective novel; Carol Shields's Swann: A Mystery (1987) draws this parallel clearly. The researcher, like the detective, is driven by the desire to create a coherent pattern out of the events of the past. This desire is extremely strong; its intensity is never explained simply by the researcher's career aspirations. Protagonists in these novels become obsessed with their projects. In The

Studhorse Man (1970), Kroetsch's Demeter Proudfoot seems to link the desires of research with sexual desire when he covers his penis with one of the note-cards he uses in his research: "Sometimes of a morning I fold a three-by-five card into a little triangular hat and set it square on my perky fellow's noggin" (45). The researchers in Between Men and Ana Historic begin to identify with the objects of their research to the point where they use the women of the past in order to work through problems in their present lives. Many of these researchers, like the researcher in The Wars, are driven to invent narrative segments in order to bridge the gaps found in the documents they peruse.

The desire of the researcher, however, is never completely fulfilled in these novels. Desire in the research novel, insatiable though it may be in the researcher, is always ambivalent in the narrative. These novels are structured by double desire. Despite the desire to tell the story of the past, there is at work an equal and opposite desire to keep that story untellable. The conflict is evident in the failure of the various research projects. These are postmodern researchers, more like anti-detectives than detectives, whose projects always end up demonstrating the impossibility of knowing or ordering the story of the past. In some of these novels, the stories under research break off in ways which seem to suggest that no story moves coherently from beginning to end. In Michael Ondaatje's

Coming Through Slaughter (1976), Aritha van Herk's No Fixed Address (1987) and Findley's The Wars, the research projects are ultimately unfinished. Ondaatje's Buddy Bolden, van Herk's Arachne and Findley's Robert Ross all recede into an unreachable realm before their life stories come to a close -- Bolden into madness, Arachne into amnesia, Ross into blindness and silence. Yet the inability to uncover the past is not solely a function of physical impossibility. The conflict is also evident in the novels' double structure; the novels alternate between the story of the past and the story of the research, as though unable or unwilling to narrate the story of the past directly. The conflict is characterized in a variety of different ways by different writers. In several of these novels, including The Wars, the conflict is associated with anxiety, fear, often violence. In Coming Through Slaughter, Ondaatje produces an image of the paradoxical and dangerous task of research. In a fit of anger, Buddy Bolden lashes out to strike his wife, but realizes that he is going to miss her and smash his hand against a window pane. He tries to stop himself in mid-blow, and the result can be read as an image of double desire in action:

For a fraction of a second his open palm touched the glass, beginning simultaneously to draw back. The window starred and crumpled slowly two floors down. His hand miraculously uncut. It had acted

exactly like a whip violating the target and still free, retreating from the outline of a star. (16)

The breaking of the glass stands as a metaphor for the task of the research novel. The narrative must break through the window of the past -- without getting hurt. In Coming Through Slaughter, Bolden manages to break the glass and yet remain unscarred. The researcher who narrates his story is not so lucky. His entrance into the story of Buddy Bolden leaves his own identity shaken. Near the end of the novel, addressing the absent Bolden, the narrator asks, "What was there [...] that made me push my arm forward and spill it through the front of your mirror and clutch myself?" (134). In The Wars as well, it is impossible for the narrative to "violate the target" and still remain "free." As in many novels of research, The Wars vacillates, moving back and forth between the story under research and the story of the research process, often swerving away from the story of Robert Ross at crucial moments, as though afraid of being cut.

The Wars attempts to tell the story of Robert Ross and yet, as I shall discuss, never manages to get close enough to that story to tell it whole. Paradoxically, the novel desires both to continue and to conclude its story. One could argue that this is a condition of all narrative (or even, as Freud has done, that this is a condition of human existence). But The Wars is remarkable in that it seems,

through its self-consciously incoherent structure, to thematize the movement of its double desire, displaying an awareness of its own split position. In The Pleasure of the Text, Roland Barthes contrasts the text of pleasure, which "contents, fills [and] grants euphoria," with the text of bliss, which "imposes a state of loss [and] discomforts." The subject "who keeps the two texts in his field," paradoxically "enjoys the consistency of his selfhood (that is his pleasure) and seeks its loss (that is his bliss). He is a subject split twice over, doubly perverse" (14). Barthes is proposing the existence of a doubled desire (similar to that explored by Freud, to whom I shall return) -- a desire for coherence and a desire for loss of coherence.

In The Wars, the desire for coherence is linked to the pursuit of knowledge -- the drive to see clearly and to impose a logical structure onto the object of desire. Desire for loss, however, also operates in the novel. This is the desire of the narrative to be blind, to obscure, to distance itself from its object, to resist imposing a structure onto it. Much of the critical commentary on The Wars tends to focus on Robert Ross as the "object of desire" (Vauthier 17) in the novel. And in order to identify Robert as the object, critics attempt to locate the subject, or source, of desire. Most frequently, this is accomplished by assuming that the researcher in the novel, the one who

examines photographs in the archives and interviews witnesses, is the narrator and creator of those undocumented scenes which recount Robert's childhood and war experiences.

The gaps between separate photographs, their discontinuity in time and space pose a challenge to their observer to create speculative connections between them [...] His role is that of a sleuth who tries to piece together the evidence leading to an 'arrest.' (Kröllner "Exploding Frame" 73)

This "researcher-narrator" (Hulcoop 33) attempts "to recreate the past" (York, "Shout of Recognition" 225). He "pieces together a version of history as collage" (Brydon, "Devotion to Fragility" 76). "His problem is to understand the actions of Robert Ross" by which he is "haunted" (Klovan 58).

His task [...] is to take those few facts and pictures and find their meaning [...] the storyteller must be master of [...] principles which give shape to human experience, and which are as old as myth and legend. (Pririe 79)

One critic even suggests that it is Findley himself who seeks knowledge of Robert Ross, as though Robert and the archival traces of his life were not even fictional: "The problem for the novelist is how to make the story, out of

the mass of archival materials available nearly sixty years later" (Howells 132, my emphasis).

Simone Vauthier posits a highly complex narrative structure, including "a nameless I-narrator" (although there is not a single instance of an unidentified "I" in the novel), and a "You"-narratee. These two entities sometimes merge in her argument to become "the I-You historian[s]" (27, Vauthier's brackets). She also posits a "scriptor," who is "only the deployment through the text of some of the enunciator's activities, and can only be personified through poetic license" (26). While Vauthier makes many excellent points in her article, her categorization of narrators seems overly complicated; eventually she ends up demonstrating her own assertion that "to generalize about the 'narrator of The Wars' is a risky business" (18).

These attempts to solve the problem of the elusive narrator in The Wars only prove the difficulty of the task. Ultimately the task itself is revealed as futile. There is little evidence in the text to suggest that the researcher "invents" the undocumented sections of the novel.² One could just as easily suggest that the researcher and Robert are on the same ontological plane throughout, "invented" by a source which stands "behind" both of them -- perhaps Vauthier's "implied author," who "shapes a fiction" (26). But to decide on one theory or the other seems counterproductive. For if we personify each narrating

instance, we succeed only in smoothing over the rough edges of the text, rather than investigating them. The medley of critics quoted above all try to answer the question, "who is speaking?" To avoid asking the question, as I do in this analysis, is not to give up on the problem in despair, but to recognize that the text itself resists the question. The lack of a coherent narrative structure in The Wars is a central element of the novel. The very unlocatability of the narrative drive is what allows us to observe its double nature.

To illustrate my point, I will perform two brief analyses in which I do locate the source of desire. First, I will locate it within the researcher. If the researcher is trying to fill in the gaps of his research and to make sense of the disconnected facts that he has found, then it is he who creates the discourse that tells Robert's story. It is he who ascribes motivation to Robert. For example, before Robert shoots Captain Leathers, Robert supposedly thinks, "If an animal had done this -- we would call it mad and shoot it" (178). This private thought, revealed to us only by the discourse, imbues Robert with reason and his action with rational cause. Within the story, nobody can know this thought. After these last few scenes are played out, Robert is no longer capable of communicating it. In the world of the story, Robert's motives remain unknowable and untellable. It is the researcher's discourse which

performs the narrativization of history, imposing a logical structure onto Robert's actions. Thus, we can see the desire for coherence at work in the text.

Second, I will locate the desire not within but "behind" the researcher. If the researcher and Robert both exist within the same story, the discourse must be ascribed to some external source, such as an "implied author." From this point of view, the desire at work will seem to be of a different nature. Why, for example, include the researcher at all? During the long undocumented scenes of Robert's life, the reader may well forget about the researcher. But he always intrudes again, particularly at crucial moments. The novel opens with a scene narrated in the conventional omniscient manner. Then the interruption comes -- "All of this happened a long time ago" (10) -- followed by a discussion about the difficulty of documenting the entire story. Later, when this opening scene is repeated verbatim (181-183), the discourse again veers away from it, immediately bringing the researching activity into focus again: "Here is where the mythology is muddled. There are stories of immediate pursuit. But these are doubtful. Some versions have it that Robert [...]" (183) etc. If the source of the discourse is located "behind" the researcher, it seems that the desire is not for coherence, but for loss. The object of desire (the story of Robert Ross), is kept at a distance, obscured by a willful blindness, as the

discourse repeatedly swerves away from Robert Ross, leaping over a series of sixty-year prolepses in order to avoid him.

From either of these two points of view, the source of the discourse is fixed and therefore only one desire can be identified -- either desire for coherence (located within the researcher), or desire for loss (located within an "implied author"). Each fails to account for all of the elements in the text -- in this or other postmodern novels of research -- and results in a reductive reading. In order to observe the operation of desire in the novel, it is necessary to abandon the search for its source. In The Wars, desire is both doubled and intertwined. It is therefore related to the unlocatable identity of Robert Ross. It is impossible, the novel seems to say, to fix identity or to locate any first cause.

The structure of the novel raises socio-political as well as epistemological issues. As a text which subverts the meta-narratives which glorify war and military heroism, it follows in the tradition of protest literature established early in the twentieth century. The Wars has been compared to the First World War writings of Robert Graves, Sigfried Sassoon and Wilfred Owen, intertexts which play a significant role in the novel (McKenzie). Yet The Wars, of course, is very different in effect. Graves, Sassoon and Owen provide eyewitness accounts, however fictionalized, of the slaughter and destruction of battle.

They are highly significant to their time because they disrupt and undermine the as-yet-unchallenged patriotic idealism that glorifies war. Owen's "Dulce et Decorum Est," for example, launches a direct attack on the ideology of heroism prevalent in his day. By the time Findley writes The Wars, considerable work on this project has already been done. The Wars is not an exposé of the horror of the battlefield, except perhaps for some extremely naive readers. By the time The Wars is published, Findley can reasonably expect the majority of his audience to be aware of, whether or not they agree with, the sixty-year-old anti-war tradition, especially with the highly publicized protests against the Vietnam War fresh in public memory in 1977. Findley's battle scenes -- the mud, the corpses, the sickening wounds and lack of medical care, the explosions, fires, madness and suicide -- are horrific. But they are not news. The "moral" of Findley's novel is not that "war is hell." For by 1977 we know that already. What Findley brings to light, through the figure of the researcher, is the long aftermath of that hell. Findley's violent scenes of battle have been dealt with by many of the critics I quote in this chapter.³ What interests me here are the scenes of civilian violence and the narrative structure of this novel which, together, suggest that the conflicts of the battlefield seep out far beyond their geographical and temporal boundaries.

The trauma of war lives on long after a war is officially over, not only in the minds of its immediate victims, but for generations to come. The conflicting desires of Findley's narrative create a structure which is marked by gaps and by repetitions, as the narrative continually leaves and returns to the scenes of war which constitute the story of the past. The fractured structure of the novel metaphorically mirrors the violence that, years after the fact, disrupts the memories of its victims with gaps and repetitions, amnesia and flashbacks. Although the horror of the original experience is now widely accepted as fact in our culture, the eerie recurrence of war trauma which plagues the veteran is still rarely grasped in its full implications and is often dismissed as a character defect in the veteran. For an example from the field of Canadian literature, witness W. J. Keith's criticism of George Payerle's Unknown Soldier (1987). Keith claims that this novel fails to achieve "major" status mainly because Payerle's character, a veteran of World War II, remains traumatized by his battlefield experiences thirty years after the war. Payerle's character, Keith suspects, "uses the War as an excuse for his deficiencies" (180). Echoes of Keith's attitude toward this fictional character may be found in abundance in the sociological literature that deals with rehabilitation, where it is directed against actual veterans with this invisible disability. The Wars contains

no such character -- Robert Ross's state of mind is not available to us after he is wounded. But the structure of the narrative mimics the recurring war trauma not only of the veteran, but of society at large. The seemingly endless representations of military violence in comic books, television, film, and novels like this one, suggests a compulsive fascination with the subject. These constant reminders apparently do little to reduce the appetite for real war when political conflicts arise. The researcher obsessed with the past represents a society that has never recovered from this war, nor from the intervening wars which are themselves perhaps symptoms of its brutal legacy.

The double desire of the discourse -- to know and not to know -- is active in the story as well. As Kroetsch puts it, "form and content speak each other's plight in The Wars as the traditional authority of the novel itself begins to falter" (Lovely Treachery 23). In the story of Robert Ross, the act of knowing, often imaged through the metaphor of vision, is frequently associated with violence. Seeing a thing, fixing it, is a form of death. The epilogue offers this quotation: "the spaces between the perceiver and the thing perceived can ... be closed with a shout of recognition. One form of a shout is a shot. Nothing so completely verifies our perception of a thing as our killing of it" (191). The metaphor of vision, encompassing blindness, violence and voyeurism, forms a narrative thread

throughout the novel. The act of seeing is fraught with ambivalence and anxiety, and those who see often get more than they bargained for, or can handle.

The desire to see is rarely present without its opposite. Robert's attraction to Taffler, for instance, is paradoxically accompanied by a desire to keep Taffler at a distance. Although Robert desires to know a man whom he can emulate, he is wary of coming too close: "He watched the men around him from a distance [...] found excuses to keep them at bay. He wanted no attachments yet. What he wanted was a model" (28). As Clifford and Robert first approach Taffler on the prairie, they have difficulty making out his image: "'What is it?' Clifford asked./ 'That's what I want to know,' said Robert" (33). But he also doesn't want to know. From a distance, Robert notes that "Taffler was just a dot on the horizon. Dots were anonymous. Don't ask questions. Distance was safety. Space was asylum" (35). As Robert and Clifford ride away from Taffler, Clifford wants to turn around, to watch the setting sun. In contrast, Robert "was afraid to turn and look, though he didn't know why. It just seemed dangerous" (35).

Whether Robert wants to see or not, the things that he does not see are conspicuous in number. These include Rowena's fatal fall (21); his mother's face on his last day at home (27), and when she comes to see him off in Montreal (50, 69-70); the crows who feed on the dead bodies in the

battlefield (81); the innocent movement of the German soldier he kills (131), and many less significant things. He is alarmed at himself for "having been so blind" as to get lost in the fog (78). He is temporarily "blinded" by the chlorine in the mud (81). And in the bathhouse where he is raped by unseen attackers, it is so dark that "Robert was blind" (167). These moments of blindness foreshadow Robert's eventual physical and permanent blinding by fire. They also mirror the blindness of the discourse at those places where it veers away from the story, refusing to look at it.

In a sense, Robert's moments of blindness throughout the story are moments of deferral. As the story of a young boy's coming of age on the battlefield, The Wars promises, like so many other novels of World War I, to tell the story of innocence destroyed by sex and violence -- innocence "vanished in bombardments, in despair, in brothels" (Remarque All Quiet on the Western Front 295). Sexuality and violence are often, in Findley's fiction, the means by which the child gains knowledge of the adult world and is forever separated from his or her former self. Yet although Robert seems always to be approaching this loss of innocence, his blindness repeatedly delays the expected moment of insight and corruption. Robert seems continually to repeat the gesture of innocence poised for a fall -- but never to complete it. Like the split subject described by

Barthes, he both "enjoys the consistency of his selfhood [...] and seeks its loss" (Barthes 14).

Robert's blindness toward his mother and toward Rowena, whom in infancy he believed to be his mother (14) suggests a blindness toward his own origins -- the place from which he was "cut off at birth with a knife" as Mrs Ross puts it (28). The female body is not something Robert wants to look at. In the brothel scene, Robert is startled by the revelation of the women's bodies:

It was not until his eyes had adapted to the golden glow of the lamps that Robert realized he could see right through the dresses and the shadows weren't shadows but the shadings of hair and of nipples rouged with henna. (39)

Robert is "alarmed" and "frightened" by these sights (41). The contrasting desire is again provided by Clifford Purchas, who

lay on his back -- with his eyes wide open -- gazing upward, ecstatic. 'I can see it,' he said as the women stepped above his face. 'Lordy, Lordy! I can see it! Look at that!' (40)

When alone with a prostitute, Robert will not look at her, but lies "with his arms across his eyes" (42). Robert's reluctance forestalls the loss of virginity which this scene promises to deliver. He keeps his virginity intact and his sexuality contained -- literally -- in his own pants (42).

Yet by maintaining his "innocence," Robert continues to leave himself open to desire and to future loss.

Death is also an occasion for blindness in this novel. One of Robert's early experiences with violence occurs in the dark and rat-infested hold of the ship that is carrying him overseas to see "action." Robert is ordered to perform the mercy-killing of a horse with a broken leg (62-66). The act is a classic masculine rite of passage. Robert performs it in the dark, trying not to see the suffering horse (64), and forcing his eyes to open in order to aim the gun (65). Robert has two assistants in this task, who seem, by their contrasting levels of experience, to emphasize the initiatory aspect of the event. One is an older Sergeant-Major, scarred from a previous war. The other is a young soldier who "could not have been more than sixteen" (63). After Robert kills the horse, he stands with the boy in the dark hold. The boy offers a lantern, but Robert says "No [...] Not for a moment, anyway." Robert "didn't want to see the other man's eyes just yet -- though he didn't know why" (66). Perhaps Robert wants to delay the moment in which he might see reflected in the boy's eyes his own loss of innocence, the change that has come over him now that he has become a "man."

As a child, Robert had once seen himself change after a brush with death. Recovering from a life-threatening case of jaundice, Roberts stands "in front of the old dark

mirror, slipping out of his pajamas and seeing that his skin was different now" (48). The twelve-year-old Robert is pleased to bear this mark of his rite of passage. His battle with the illness, which comes on after a brave athletic feat, is closely associated with the forging of his masculinity. While Robert is sick, his father spends hours with him, telling "tales of voyages and ships and how to ride a horse. This was the binding of the father to the son" (48). But those very tales which told Robert how to be a man, along with the Chums cowboy story from which Robert learned how to kill a horse (65) seem different now that Robert is a man. Voyages, ships and horses are no longer elements in an adventure story, but have become part of a horror story which Robert must act out -- with the gun that his father gives him.

The acts of war to which Robert is an unwilling witness are too numerous to discuss here in detail, but almost every battle scene involves the paradoxical blindness and vision implied by one description of the front after a raid: "All of this could be seen and not seen" (114). Robert never becomes inured to violence because he never fully sees it (and this, perhaps, constitutes his heroism). Robert's decision not to turn on the light "just yet" speaks of his desire to remain blind to manhood -- and death -- just a little longer. And when Robert finally is near death, physically blind, wounded and suffering, he repeats his

desire to delay. To the nurse who offers him euthanasia, Robert replies simply, "not yet" (189).

Photography in The Wars further emphasizes the theme of vision. The frequent use of photography in Findley's work has given rise to a considerable amount of critical commentary. There seem to be two schools of thought on this issue; photographs in Findley's work are interpreted in a positive way by some critics (Ricou, Hulcoop) and in a negative way by others (Hutcheon, Kröller). These latter critics see photographs as symbols of stasis and rigidity which they feel Findley repudiates with a postmodern privileging of dynamics and freedom. In her chapter on Findley in The Other Side of Dailiness, Lorraine York argues that photography goes through a progressive transformation in Findley's work.

Findley emphasizes, especially in earlier works, the darker elements associated with the camera image: artificiality, lies, stifling fixity, and even fascism. Only in more recent works, beginning with Can You See Me Yet? and The Wars (1977), has Findley come to appreciate the photograph as an invaluable preserver of the past as well as an image of what he called "violent stillness" [in The Last of the Crazy People].
(51-52)

York's interpretation of photography in The Wars differs in an interesting way from Krölller's. York argues:

Krölller sees photography in The Wars as an image suggesting threatening enclosure [...] Yet I would argue that photography in The Wars becomes humanity's weapon against the loss of the all-important memory -- the memory of the misery and futility of the wars. (81)

It seems that Krölller and York each pick up on opposite aspects of the photography, both of which are present in the text. The preservation of the wars represented by photography is both threatening and invaluable. Its double nature is a further sign of the double desire of the narrative. The photographs serve, paradoxically, both to bring the wars closer and to keep them at a distance.

The novel portrays a persistent desire to identify all elements in the photographs. Only "Part of what you see you recognize" (11), but "you" keep looking. One photograph bears the question "in bold, black ink": "WHAT IS THIS?" (15), underscoring the drive for information. Intriguingly, "THIS" is an iceberg -- a phenomenon notorious for being both seen and unseen at the same time. Considerable effort is expended on trying to discern obscure details, such as one object in Robert's hand:

The object must be delicate. Robert's fingers are poised in such a way that you think he might be

holding something alive or made of glass. But the object -- once you have made it out -- is nothing of the sort. It is white and slightly larger than his fist. Magnification reveals it is the skull of some small beast [...] (190)

Yet while the observer of the photographs wants to get closer to the object of desire, the presence of the photographs themselves creates distance.⁴ They are only images of the object, and as such they stand between "the perceiver and the thing perceived." The ambivalence about seeing, signified by the photographs, does not resolve itself, but carries through to the very end of the novel: "the last thing you see" is a photograph of Robert, Rowena and Meg. The last words of the novel are "On the back is written: 'Look! you can see our breath!' And you can" (191). The emotional poignancy of this ending rests on the double desire to see and not to see. Here is breath, the sign of life, the very sign of metaphysical presence, as Derrida might say,⁵ yet it is absent, distanced by the fact that it is only a photograph, only a deferral of the "real" thing. Like a great deal of the story of Robert Ross, it is both present and absent.

Vision is central to two parallel scenes in the novel. In one scene, Robert, peering through a hole in the wall at the house of prostitution, observes a sado-masochistic scene involving Taffler and "the Swede," a male employee of the

house (44-45). In the other, twelve-year-old Juliet d'Orsey peers through a door and witnesses Robert and her sister Barbara engaged in a seemingly violent sexual act (156). The parallels are numerous. Both Robert and Juliet are unwilling voyeurs -- they see and yet do not want to see. Both are unable, at first, to identify what they are seeing. Robert is "confused" and "desperately trying to comprehend. There were certainly two naked people -- but all he could see at first was backs and arms and legs" (44). Juliet reports that "the shape of it confused me" (156). Both are convinced that they are witnessing acts of violence. Robert had "never even dreamed of such a thing -- of being hit and wanting to be hit. Beaten" (44). For Juliet, "This was a picture that didn't make sense. Two people hurting one another," and she cannot reconcile this picture with the phrase "making love" (156). Images of the incoherence of the self follow both Robert's voyeurism (the shattered mirror, 45), and Juliet's (the unravelling of her childhood doll, 157). Both voyeurs also retain an afterimage, repeating in their minds the scenes they have witnessed. Robert "went on hearing and seeing everything he'd heard and seen in his mind" (45). Juliet says, "the things inside my head were the shape of Robert's shoulders and the whiteness of Barbara's skin" (157).

Both of these scenes associate sexual desire with pain, and both have interesting intertexts. Juliet's voyeuristic

experience is reminiscent of the kind of "primal scene" described in psychoanalytic case studies, where a child interprets its first, usually inadvertent, sight of sexual intercourse as a scene of violence. Regardless of whether Robert and Barbara experience physical pain in this scene, Juliet's interpretation of their intercourse as "people hurting one another" is apt. Barbara's affair with Robert is only one in a long line of painful experiences. Barbara's desire to have a war hero as a lover is continually disrupted as her heroes are maimed and killed in battle. Barbara replaces Jamie Villiers with Eugene Taffler when Villiers is wounded, and Taffler with Major Terry when Taffler is wounded. By the time she takes up with Robert Ross, the reader recognizes her attentions as the kiss of death. Barbara is both sadistic, in the blatant cruelty with which she rejects her wounded lovers, and masochistic, for she continues to fix her desires on the men most likely to be destroyed. Barbara's behaviour forms a pattern, as Juliet says (104). Juliet compares Barbara to Ariadne of mythology: "Deserted by one god -- she took up another. Every year, Dionysus was destroyed and every year he was born again from ashes" (105).

Robert's voyeuristic episode in the brothel recalls a scene from Proust in which Marcel spies on de Charlus. The name of the madam at the brothel in The Wars is Maria Dreyfuss, who has read Zola's "J'Accuse." This reminder of

the Dreyfuss case, which figures prominently in Remembrance of Things Past, seems to point the reader in the direction of Proust's work, although Findley denies he was thinking of Proust while writing this scene (in conversation). Marcel, like Robert, watches unseen from a room in a bordello while, in an adjoining room, a scene of homosexual sado-masochism takes place. Marcel's whole relationship to de Charlus and his homosexuality is one of voyeuristic horror and fascination (Sedgwick 200-20), and the Proustian intertext underlines Robert's ambivalence toward sexuality. The intertext is also illuminating in that it links sado-masochism to a kind of super masculinity, which is also a recurring theme in Findley's work. Marcel interprets the scene he witnesses as illustrating "M. de Charlus's dream of a virility proven by brutal tests, if need be" (972). In Robert's mind, Taffler's encounter with the Swede is an encounter with "Goliath" (45), for Robert previously viewed Taffler as "A man to whom war wasn't good enough unless it was bigger than he was. [...] A David" (35). The theme of sado-masochism appears also in Famous Last Words, where it is again linked to war and to a masculinity so strong that it can create "an imbalance in the atmosphere" of a room (91). It is also the focus of "Losers, Finders, Strangers at the Door," a story which is extremely self-conscious about its narrative structure and seems to link sado-masochism with anxiety about the beginnings and endings

of stories. Narrative desire, as well as sexual desire, is associated with pain. Knowledge of sexuality and death must be continually deferred, even in the midst of war -- even in the midst of a war novel! These two scenes keep sex and violence at a distance, glimpsed only partially through the eyes of naive voyeurs.

These two scenes foreshadow the bathhouse scene in which Robert is raped by a gang of Canadian officers. This scene is linked to the previous two by numerous similarities. In this case, the reader is the voyeur -- often an unwilling one, judging by readers' reactions (Inside Memory 150-51). Sex and violence are finally revealed to the reader, giving the impression that the previous two scenes were a kind of stutter produced by the narrative as it began to approach this violent story which it both desires and fears to tell. Rather than smashing a mirror, this time Robert burns his sister's picture (172), repeating again an image of the incoherent self. Rowena's face, recalling Robert's own, previously unknowing self, is erased by fire. While each of these scenes is followed by an image of self-erasure or unravelling, each is preceded by an image of wholeness: a person looking in a mirror.⁶ Ella, the prostitute who encourages Robert to peek through the hole in the wall, looks in the mirror first (41). Juliet, dressing up as Lady Sorrel, looks at her own image before "blundering" upon Robert and Barbara (156). And Robert

studies his own reflection with some attention on the night before he is raped (163). As well, Robert smashes a water jug after both his voyeurism and his victimization (45, 170), and after both events his mind begins to "stammer."

In each of these scenes, an unwilling witness or victim moves from a unified, coherent state to a condition marked by disintegration and repetition. The pervasive presence of such a figure in the text invites analysis in relation to the experience of war. Thousands of the young men sent to the battlefields of World War I were unwilling, naive witnesses to violence. They were sent to their doom by a myth of heroism that put their masculinity to the test, and they were violated by it, as Findley clearly intended to imply. Despite pressure from his literary advisors to cut the rape scene from the published version of the novel, Findley refused to omit it. He insisted that the scene was necessary to emphasize that "Robert Ross and his generation of young men were raped, in effect, by the people who made that war. Basically, their fathers did it to them" (Inside Memory 151). Some of the traumatized survivors retained, for the rest of their lives, the kind of afterimages that Juliet and Robert experience. Their minds stammered; they became unravelled; they smashed things.

The "stammer" that occurs in Robert's mind "whenever it was challenged by something it could not accept" (45), is similar in form to the compulsive repetition that is the

mark of trauma. The narrative of The Wars also has a "stammer." Simone Vauthier compares Robert's stammer to the "faltering" of the narrative when, at several points, it is reproduced in short, double-spaced, one-phrase paragraphs (21, 169). Vauthier suggests that the narrator feels as if "in order to deal with so many atrocities, it were safer to look at things separately, to isolate actions, to fragment observations [...]" (25). Vauthier's analysis recalls the conflicting desires worked out in the text through the metaphor of vision -- to see and not to see -- and links them to conflicting narrative desires -- to say and not to say. Repetition in the text takes numerous forms, not only the stammering that Vauthier points out, but also the repeated movement away from the story of Robert Ross and the repeated return to that story; the significant verbatim repetition (9-10, 181-83); Barbara's repetitious tragedy; and the compulsive repetition of details, particularly in the three scenes of loss which I have been analyzing. The repetition of details such as mirrors and water jugs suggests an intense desire to return to the scene of the crime. It seems as though the crime of loss is an obstacle which the discourse cannot overcome. As a consequence, it cannot move forward, but can only retrace its own path. Like Robert, who is repeatedly blinded in a motion which defers his loss of innocence, the text is constantly moving

toward its own loss of innocence, but can never get beyond it and so is condemned to repeat the loss over and over.

In Freud's analysis of repetition compulsion, he was puzzled as to why patients would continually repeat unpleasant experiences. This seemed to him a contradiction of his "pleasure principle," which he subsequently had to rethink in Beyond the Pleasure Principle. The patient with a repetition compulsion, "is obliged to repeat the repressed material as a contemporary experience instead of, as the physician would prefer to see, remembering it as something belonging to the past" (12). The result is that treatment cannot proceed. It occurs to Freud that there is perhaps at work something other than an urge to change and progress, that there may be at work "an urge inherent in organic life to restore an earlier state of things" (30). This conservative force endeavours to return the organism to its (assumedly former) inanimate state. At this point Freud proposes that "the aim of all life is death" (32), and goes on to conclude that the organism embodies an opposition between life instincts and death instincts (47): double desire.

In his essay "Freud's Masterplot," Peter Brooks reads Beyond the Pleasure Principle as a model for textual dynamics. Like the organism, which Freud imagines as existing in a motionless state before its life begins, "story" must be stimulated out of quiescence "into a state

of narratability" which marks its beginning (Brooks 103). And, like the organism, narrative desires to return to that originary quiescence. Brooks superimposes Freud's notion of psychic repetition onto textual repetition. Brooks sees repetition as an integral element of literary texts -- not only because "narrative always makes the implicit claim to be in a state of repetition, as a going over again of a ground already covered: a sjuzet repeating the fabula" (97), but because "rhyme, alliteration, assonance, meter, refrain, all the mnemonic elements of literature and indeed most of its tropes are in some manner repetitions [...]" (99). Here Brooks ignores the very aspect of compulsive repetition which puzzles Freud, and in fact is the impetus for the model outlined in Beyond the Pleasure Principle -- the aspect of pain. While rhyme and meter may be repetitious, they are (if skilfully applied!) usually pleasurable repetitions. Freud's problem with his patients -- and my problem with The Wars -- is that they repeat unpleasurable experiences. In fact, many of Freud's patients were victims of war trauma.

Brooks argues that repetition in narration is a means of delaying the end -- and I agree. But Brooks also argues that these delays are motivated by a desire to reach the correct ending:

Freud seems [...] to imply that the two
antagonistic instincts serve one another in a

dynamic interaction that is a complete and self-regulatory economy which makes both end and detour perfectly necessary and interdependent. The organism must live in order to die in the proper manner, to die the right death. One must have the arabesque of plot in order to reach the end. (107)

Closed, coherent narratives, such as The Last of the Crazy People, may follow this pattern -- desiring only one "perfect" and "proper" path to the "right death." The Wars suggests a resistance to that desire. In this novel, double desire does not suggest a "complete and self-regulatory economy" but an ongoing, unsolvable and painful conflict -- particularly when it causes the continual return to scenes of trauma.

Earlier, I identified the opposing desires in the novel for coherence and for loss. The researcher seems to embody the desire for a coherent, knowable story. Yet the very presence of the researcher within the text signals a desire to keep the story at a distance, to keep it unknowable. It is this second desire which keeps the discourse going. As Jonathan Culler has shown in his analysis of story and discourse (169-187), the goals of story and discourse do not always synthesize harmoniously. What keeps the discourse going in The Wars is the fact that the story cannot be told. There are only traces (i.e. photographs and memories) of the

story. Thus, the discourse can continue. It is interesting to recall here the words of Nicholas Fagan, quoted above: "Nothing so completely verifies our perception of a thing as our killing of it," as well as the opinion of Eva-Marie Kröller that the researcher is similar to a sleuth, seeking an "arrest," i.e. a cessation. If the story of Robert Ross were tellable, the discourse -- or research -- would come to an end. Like most postmodern novels of research, this one resists closure. "The last thing you see" only reminds you of the impossibility of unmediated vision and returns you to the research process.

The Wars is postmodern in that it seems to privilege a notion of narrative as process rather than as product and also because it seems to suggest that identity is ultimately unknowable. It indicts the closed, coherent stories of heroism, patriotism and masculinity. It refuses to tell a story which would construct Robert whole, heroic and explained within a context that justifies the war. But it cannot seem to complete any other story either. It is difficult to see much of a celebratory attitude toward open-endedness in this novel. Open-endedness seems produced not by refusal to close, but by a painful inability to close. While The Last of the Crazy People single-mindedly desires narrative coherence, and The Butterfly Plague throws the value of coherence into question, The Wars seems painfully unable to achieve coherence, despite the desire of

the researcher. Simone Vauthier makes an important point when she suggests that a certain "distancing" effect created in the narration of the battle scenes, "betrays the narrator's fear of being too close to the violence which he describes" (24). Yet the violence also fascinates and obsesses the researcher, for he continually attempts to return to it. The repeated return to violence seems to reveal a desire to "get at" the core of the story, and deal with the trauma once and for all -- to finally tell it, and thus arrest the discourse, as Freud believed that remembering and talking through traumatic experiences would cure the patient's illness. Perhaps it would be too pessimistic to interpret the discourse of The Wars as a symptom of pathology. But its failure to close seems a tragic failure. Even if we are satisfied, and I'm not, that the novel has revealed for us an alternative kind of heroism to the military notion, we still cannot read in any end to the violence of this "war to end all wars." Like Findley's violent openings, which are surely partly motivated by the knowledge that violence attracts readers, the novel seems to suggest that, as a society, we are still obsessed by our violent history and are doomed to repeat it. The Wars does not deconstruct the notion of history, but documents its power. The effect is less liberating than tragic. In fact, even the life-affirming epigraph from Euripides, "Never that which is shall die," can take on a terrible irony when one

focuses on the seemingly immortal violence that the novel resurrects. Like the plagues of Findley and Camus, the war "never dies or disappears for good" (Camus 278). The end of the novel with its return to the researching process, suggests that the discourse will continue. The end of the horror story will be indefinitely deferred. Just as Robert Ross -- saying "not yet" (189) -- prolongs his own suffering by dererring his own death, the discourse of hell lives on, repeated from one generation to the next.

Chapter Five

Coherence and Narrative Seduction:

Famous Last Words

The reader's first and simplest test of an author will be to look for words that do not function; that contribute nothing to the meaning OR that distract from the MOST important factor of the meaning to factors of minor importance.

-- Ezra Pound, ABC of Reading (63)

Findley takes the question of identity further in Famous Last Words than he does in The Wars. The novels are similar in that Lieutenant Quinn and Captain Freyberg, like the researcher in The Wars, try to construct the identity of a dead person. But Famous Last Words differs in two major ways. First, by splitting the role of the researcher in two, Findley focusses our attention on the way in which readers construct the texts that they read. Quinn and Freyberg produce two very different readings from the same text. Second, by allowing Mauberley to tell his own story, Findley focusses our attention on the desire for coherence of the self. In The Wars, the desire to construct the story of Robert Ross does not emanate from Robert. But in Famous Last Words, it is Mauberley who performs the work of constructing himself. The desires for coherence and closure in Mauberley's narrative are desires for self presence. Yet

the gaps and evasions in his narrative signal the impossibility of his goal. As Donald Hair has pointed out, the "oscillations and reversals, the doublings and ironies" in his narrative suggest that perhaps "Mauberley has been reading the Yale critics" on deconstruction (14).

Findley's novel exemplifies the growing focus on the role of the reader in postmodern fiction. Of all the embedded narratives in Findley's fiction, the one which most dominates its own frame is the story written by Hugh Selwyn Mauberley on the walls of the Elysium Hotel in Famous Last Words. Mauberley's story comprises the main plot -- the "gripping international intrigue" which made this novel a best-seller -- and relegates the framing narrative to the status of a subplot. Nevertheless, this subplot is a crucial part of the overall structure as it involves the reading, and thus the interpretation, of Mauberley's story on the walls. "In modernist texts," Hutcheon writes, "the writer tends to be the main focus of self-reflexivity; in postmodernist ones the reader is added" (75 n.11). The reader may be added in a variety of ways. In some works, such as Italo Calvino's If On a Winter's Night a Traveller (1979) and Julio Cortázar's "Continuity of Parks" (1967), readers actually seem to enter the world of the texts they are reading. Other works, such as Manuel Puig's Heartbreak Tango (1969) and David Lodge's Small World (1984), focus on the obsessive desires of readers. In many Canadian novels,

as well, reading becomes "an act of co-creation," foregrounding "the politics of how and why we read" (Hutcheon, Canadian Postmodern 208), particularly those works of historiographic metafiction and novels of research discussed in the previous chapter. In Famous Last Words, Findley draws attention to the reading process by the presence of his two narratees.

The presence of a character-narratee¹ within the text serves to illustrate the process by which a reading becomes a rewriting. Such a narratee rewrites the story from within the text, allowing the reader to observe the process. The narratee can also serve as an instructive model, an example to the reader of how to read the narrative -- or how not to read it. A good example of a narratee as negative exemplum is Padma in Rushdie's Midnight's Children. Rushdie's narrator reads parts of his story -- the novel we are reading -- aloud to Padma and incorporates her comments into his text. Then he ridicules her naive reading, letting us know that we are supposed to read him with more sophistication, and with more sympathy, than she does. Midnight's Children is a good example not only of a focus on reader response, but on reader responsibility, for the narrator is a slippery character, and in many ways he undermines Padma's reading in order to draw attention away from his own culpability. The reader of Rushdie's novel is faced with two possible interpretations and must choose

between them. The reader of Famous Last Words faces a similar responsibility. Quinn and Freyberg disagree violently about what they read, setting up, for the reader of the novel, two very different models of reading and interpretation.

Interpretation, Quinn believes, is his "forte" (58), but is the reader to trust Quinn's estimation of his own powers of interpretation? Despite the evidence of Mauberley's crimes, Quinn seems determined to view him with respect. Captain Freyberg views Quinn's sympathetic reading with contempt, repeatedly referring to the ability of a writer like Mauberley to "con" his readers. In Freyberg's view, Quinn is a sucker. Quinn defends Mauberley with the simple statement, "He was an artist" (53), apparently believing that this is sufficient reason to respect him. Famous Last Words appears to set up a strict dichotomy between two ways of reading Mauberley's story. Is the external reader meant to choose one or the other, to decide which man is the true "Daniel," master interpreter of the writing on the wall?² As Stephen Scobie has pointed out, the external reader may be easily swayed by the personalities of these two men. Quinn is the eminently rational one, and certainly more likeable. Unlike Freyberg, who is coldly obsessed with the evidence of Nazi crimes, Quinn's "sense of shock had not left him" (47). As well, the reader can more easily identify with Quinn because Quinn

is frequently the focalizer in Findley's narrative, while Freyberg's inner thoughts remain hidden from us. Freyberg is portrayed as a fanatic, while Quinn seems more balanced. Yet, as Scobie argues, surely Freyberg is right in many of his statements (210). Regardless of Mauberley's literary talent, he "befriended a gang of murderers" (149) and even assisted them.

Mauberley's dual role as famous modern writer and fascist sympathizer places the novel in the context of debate over the issue of fascist sympathies among several literary greats of modernism, of whom Ezra Pound is only the most obvious. W.B. Yeats, D.H. Lawrence, Wyndham Lewis and T.S. Eliot were all, at one time, sympathetic to fascist causes. For some critics, for instance Conor Cruise O'Brien, the politics sullies the art. For others, the art transcends the politics; for numerous critical works on all of these authors make no mention of fascism whatsoever. For others still, the combination of great literature and fascist politics is a painful puzzle. Findley himself finds art and evil difficult to reconcile:

the issue of Famous Last Words was the whole question of how artists can ally themselves with the great horrors of their time. How could writers advocate what Hitler was about? [...] These were the questions I had to come to grips with. ("Masks and Icons" 35)

This view, like Quinn's, is informed by a notion of the artist as moral visionary. Findley publicly endorses Quinn's reading: "Mauberley is a hero because in writing what he does on the walls he must condemn himself and everything he stood for" ("Marvel of Reality" 7-8). Yet Mauberley's writing is not wholly convincing. As Donald Hair points out, it deconstructs itself. This deconstruction, and the repeated interruptions of Freyberg, continually disrupt the construction of Mauberley as a wholly redeemed hero, suggesting that double desire is again at work in Findley's fiction.

Perhaps it is helpful to set aside the question of whether Quinn is "correct," and focus instead on the forces which shape Quinn's reading -- why does he read the way he does? Quinn's reading seems shaped partly by his own preconceptions and partly by Mauberley's seductive narrative structures. Freyberg comments sarcastically that maybe Mauberley "can teach you [Quinn] a thing or two about storytelling" (54). Perhaps the reader of the novel, as well, can learn a thing or two by following the process by which Quinn arrives at his reading.

Findley's novel remembers the initial shock of North Americans in 1945 -- particularly the scenes which confront Quinn and Freyberg at Dachau -- and imagines the mind's first tormented attempts at understanding. The narrative structures created by Mauberley, Quinn and Freyberg are set

in motion by the desire to make sense out of madness, order out of chaos. These structures are further shaped, it seems, by the related desire to preserve a stable version of the self.

Mauberley's writing is introduced into the text in a manner which places it within the genres of autobiography and confessional narrative. Quinn and Freyberg, although they have very different expectations regarding the intent of Mauberley's writing, both regard it as evidence. They expect it to dwell on Mauberley's role in ethically questionable acts.

Mauberley's confession is reminiscent of Gide's The Immoralist and of Camus's The Fall, both of which focus on the narratees to the confession. Both French narratives implicate their listeners and, by extension, their readers, forcing upon them the double role of sympathizer and judge. In a study of confessional narratives, Dennis Foster examines the seductive nature of confession. Foster analyzes Augustine as well as such fictional penitents as those in Faulkner's Absalom, Absalom! and Hawthorne's The Scarlet Letter, arguing that confessions evoke in their listeners "a sense of loss that is experienced as a desire for truth" (3). He characterizes confession as a challenge to the reader's "faith in the explicability of the world and, more importantly, in the existence and coherence of the thinking self" (5). This is the unsettling effect of

Mauberley's narrative, which tells an apparently coherent, rational story of the moral corruption of an apparently sane man. For confession moves to build the penitent's sense of himself as whole again. The confessional heroes of Gide and Camus, of William Golding's Free Fall and Saul Bellow's Herzog are engaged in a "search for perception," and "self-understanding" (Axthelm 11). So is Mauberley. The sense of loss experienced by Mauberley, and subsequently by Quinn and Freyberg, is a separation of the self from the comfort of a coherent moral code. It is a sense of separation from order which gives rise to a nostalgic desire for order, a desire to bridge the gap between what is remembered as a past of reason and security and what is perceived as a present of chaos and horror. The act of confession, presumably, will bring about a reintegration into the moral order.

Quinn and Freyberg have very different ways of attempting to close the gap which the events of the war have opened up. Quinn, like Mauberley, has faith in words; language can construct a bridge between the incomprehensible and the comprehensible. Freyberg has no use for words. Perhaps, like George Steiner, Freyberg believes that there can be no language after Dachau and Auschwitz. Yet nevertheless, Freyberg too uses a form of narrative in order to maintain a coherent sense of self.

Freyberg offers objects instead of words as evidence of the horror. Without explanation, without justification, without, as Quinn says, "reason," Freyberg insists that he confronts these objects without mediation. He collects, for instance, the cloth insignias worn by prisoners at Dachau (220), as well as the infamous sign above the gates, "Arbeit Macht Frei" -- not just the recorded words, but the actual metal sign, so heavy that two "lumberjacks" can barely carry it up the stairs (291-92). After Quinn finishes his reading, he must deal with Freyberg and his photographs of Dachau: "'You see this? You see this? You see this? You see this?'" (391).

The point of Freyberg's performance is that these objects cannot be explained (especially not by the literary language which Quinn holds dear). But Freyberg's collection of objects is in itself a narrative structure -- it tells a story, albeit a story of unreadability. By holding on to his argument that language cannot explain events of horror, Freyberg manages to distance himself (and thus keep his "self" intact) from those events. By refusing to allow them to fit within his belief structure, Freyberg manages to close that belief structure firmly and to resist the sense of loss that Mauberley's narrative -- and the war at large -- evoke.

Freyberg is suspicious of the persuasive power of language, the power of "propaganda" (55). But Quinn has

great respect for literature and literary figures. Quinn holds Mauberley in high regard for his past literary accomplishments and has "read every word he ever wrote" (46). Quinn's desire to see Mauberley cleared of guilt directs his reading from the very beginning. Before he begins to read, he is "absolutely certain he [will] exonerate Hugh Selwyn Mauberley" (58). Freyberg is ready to "absolutely guarantee" that Mauberley's narrative will end with an apology, and "because he has apologized, you and twelve million others will all fall down on your knees before these walls and you will forgive him" (54). Quinn believes that Freyberg has lost the ability to reason: "Every route to Freyberg's reason -- and reasonableness -- was mined, and beyond the mines, there was the barricade of Dachau" (47). In contrast, Quinn believes of himself that he "could still look around him and wonder how these things had been accomplished by the race of which he was a part" (47). Quinn's characterization of himself and Freyberg is a perceptive one. It seems that Freyberg has gone beyond reason in the sense that he has gone beyond looking for reasons -- while Quinn still seeks to make some kind of sense out of what has happened, to make it fit within the belief structures he held before the advent of chaos.

Findley's fiction often blurs the borders between beginnings, middles and endings of narrative structures, and Mauberley's story-within-a-story is no exception. Quinn

begins his reading, not where he thinks Mauberley "obviously intended" his reader to begin (59), but at the place where one of Mauberley's epigraphs catches his eye. This epigraph, "All I have written here is true; except the lies," is "set there like a bear trap to catch the reader unaware" (59). If beginning with this section is a "trap" for Quinn, it is a trap for the reader of the novel as well, for this is where the novel begins to record Mauberley's writing. And it is in this "first" section of Mauberley's tale that he hints at his motivation for writing on the walls. Mauberley fills this first section with mythical allusions, the most self-reflexive of which appears to be the allusion to Cadmus. Mauberley finds Dubrovnik a fitting location for himself since it was nearby, according to legend, that Cadmus was transformed into a serpent and became

the guardian of myth and literature [...] the Phoenix, or a sort of lizard-Lazarus, rising from the flames of some forgotten human rebellion; an assurance that, in spite of fire, the word would be preserved. (62)

Mauberley links himself to Cadmus, who is said to have introduced writing to the Greeks. Thus, Mauberley confers great importance onto his own status as a writer.

Mauberley's writing on the wall seems like the word "preserved" in spite of the "fire" of the war. In another

sense, Mauberley himself lies dead across the hall throughout the entire reading, a corpse which speaks, a Lazarus. This connection serves to portray Mauberley as a heroic figure, brave witness to the horrors of the war. The image of writer-as-hero fits neatly into Quinn's own world view, confirming the values of a safer and saner time. The connection between Mauberley and Cadmus is further emphasized by Mauberley's decision to attend a masquerade dressed as a serpent (62). Mauberley suggests that he will narrate the story of the "fire." But, like all of Findley's other fires, that story is unnarratable. And if Mauberley is a serpent, then surely all of the attendant implications of deceit and seduction also apply.

Even when confronted directly with Mauberley's guilt, Quinn finds reasons to excuse him. After reading the segment in which Mauberley visits Charles Bedaux, learns of the fascist cabal, and convinces Wallis to take part in it, Quinn is relieved to have discovered that Mauberley was "only" the messenger (148). This segment contains the first evidence against Mauberley, and in many ways it is one of the most damning passages in the whole narrative. It follows directly after the account of Ned Allenby's refusal to become involved in the cabal and his subsequent fatal "accident" (119). Mauberley sees the same sinister character, Harry Reinhardt, both at Allenby's funeral (120-21) and in Bedaux's office (141). It is obvious to the

reader, and surely to Mauberley at the time, that Harry Reinhardt and Bedaux are connected with Allenby's death. Mauberley also explicitly states in this section that he is aware that the cabal is a faction of the Nazi party (136). Yet Quinn can read this and be "grateful" that Mauberley is not too deeply involved. How does Mauberley manage to convey this impression?

Mauberley's narrative is structured very persuasively at this point. He begins the section dated "Paris: December, 1936" (121) with an account of his victimization (as he sees it) by the reporter Julia Franklin³ who savages him in a New York Times article. Relating in detail his attempts to find a copy of the paper, his nervousness about being seen doing so, and his trepidation on opening the paper, Mauberley manages to portray himself in a very sympathetic light (127-29). It is interesting to compare his comment about Franklin's writing -- "Her deviousness was all confined to method -- never to matter" (122) -- to his own writing in this section. Mauberley glosses over the political and ethical issues involved in this incident (except that he makes sure to paint Franklin red), and focusses on his personal embarrassment and the damage to his writing career that the Times piece may engender. The cool reception he meets with in Paris is interpreted entirely in terms of the machinations of high society; Mauberley does not entertain the thought (at least in writing) that his

lack of invitations might have something to do with ethical principles. Instead, the French are characterized as "the world's worst snobs" (124), shunning him only because they are uncertain as to which way the social tide might turn.

As well, the meeting with Bedaux is glamorized to an extent that obscures its sordid nature. Mauberley finds that the invitation to lunch is worded in a "quaint and charming way"; he is "delighted" to accept and "intrigued by the mystery" which surrounds it (125). The exciting luncheon, he reports, is "all like a scene in a film, and I had the distinct impression that Garbo would arrive at any moment. Garbo -- or a gun" (130). He is impressed by Bedaux's power: "I was fascinated to note how wide-spread the influence of one man could be [...]" (130). The lunch date is introduced in a manner virtually guaranteed to charm, delight and intrigue the reader. This is certainly the effect that it seems to have on Quinn, who is blinded to the extent of Mauberley's guilt.

Mauberley is a master of the art of seducing his reader with the glittering details of the lives of the rich and powerful. Do we care that, during the Nazi occupation of Austria, Mauberley wore "Harris tweed, woollen scarves from Ottingers on the Ringstrasse and a pair of fleece-lined boots that were sold exclusively in a little shop in Linz" (173)? Or that his dinner with von Ribbentrop "consisted of salmon; grouse and pheasant; marinated onions and oranges;

roast suckling pig; an aspic of truffles, garnished with sprigs of watercress and coriander leaves; a coffee and caramel 'custard' the English call a Spanish cream; a water ice of lime [...] and finally, a host of nuts and oranges" (179)? Apparently, Mauberley thinks that we will care, for he includes it all. He is well aware of the way in which one story can silence another, and in fact mentions two examples of how this occurs in the press (119, 129). The sumptuous details are not part of the story which deals with Mauberley's guilt. Instead, they serve to cover over the gaps in that story.

Like the narrative of The Wars, Mauberley's narrative continually thwarts its readers' desire to find out "what really happened" by veering away from its story at crucial moments. Whenever Mauberley is confronted with questions of morality, his reaction is silence. Accused by the idealistic Lorenzo de Broca, Mauberley knows de Broca is speaking the truth, but he finds himself speechless (175). Mauberley also records that Isabella Lovero asks him: "Are you never afraid of what we do?" But neither the Mauberley of the story, nor the Mauberley of the discourse, has a reply. The narrative breaks off here, leaving a visible white space in the text (167), and continues in a different vein, as though suddenly changing the subject.

Quinn is well aware that Mauberley uses dramatic devices. He is an appreciative audience: "he's a good

liberal reader, he knows about truth and lies in fiction" (Scobie 214). He also knows his literary allusions. After reading one scene, Quinn marvels:

How right it was and wonderful that Mauberley should have his king confront himself in a dream. The kings in Shakespeare did the same. They always met themselves in dreams -- as ghosts.

(254)

Here, Quinn performs an important part of the function of narratee, pointing out to us the brilliance of his author's fiction: here is Findley praising Findley! Yet while Quinn points toward technique, he points away from the events in the story. The "king" confronts himself in a mirror during a scene related to the attempted kidnapping which Mauberley helped to arrange and which resulted in the vicious murder of an innocent girl (215-16). Quinn's reaction to this event is never recorded in the text. Seduced by Mauberley's narrative, Quinn seems to have become complicit in the crime by drawing attention away from the murder and focussing it elsewhere.

Walker Gibson has identified a function of narrative which he refers to as the "mock reader": the "mask and costume the individual takes on in order to experience the language" (2). When "we assume, for the sake of the experience, that set of attitudes and qualities which the language asks us to assume" (1), then we are adopting the

mask of the mock reader. Each writer, according to Gibson, creates his or her own mock reader, assuming attitudes and knowledge in the reader which the reader, if convinced, will adopt, at least for the duration of the reading. Quinn, it seems, is quite willing to adopt the attitudes of Mauberley's mock reader. He is already, through his hero-worship of writers, predisposed to accept, and admire, Mauberley's casting of himself as the "guardian" of literature. Because Quinn so reveres the role of writer, Mauberley's focus on his own reputation and career distracts Quinn from the facts of Mauberley's involvement in the cabal. As well, he is easily swayed by the metaphorical language and mythical allusions with which Mauberley opens his story. Quinn feels that mythology contains some truth -- "Mythology can have two meanings" -- but to Freyberg, it's just "Trojan Horse-shit" (150). As Freyberg suggests, using an apt mythological allusion himself, Mauberley's allusions carry with them, like the Trojan horse, the weapons to undermine the reader's defenses -- under the guise of a beautiful gift.⁴ In order to accept the gift, the mock reader of Mauberley's story must accept the conventions that privilege such allusions, and Quinn does. In the act of reading, putting on the mask of the mock reader, Quinn becomes complicit in all of the attitudes which made Mauberley's involvement possible.

The complicity involved in the act of reading is underlined by a peculiar doubling of the figures of Mauberley and Quinn. At one point, Quinn catches a vision of Mauberley in the act of writing, but "perhaps it was his own shadow" (76). The doubling of reader and writer seems a necessary part of the reading process. In order to be able, physically, to read, Quinn must stand exactly where Mauberley stood in order to write.

Mauberley was here; he stood right here, like me; he felt this wax; he could see the same view; he could raise the same dust as he crossed the floor.

(65)

As the novel continues, Quinn seems to fade into the background while Mauberley's narrative takes over, interrupted less and less often by the subplot. But the role of this narratee has made its impact. The reader of the novel is aware of peering over Quinn's shoulder to "see the same view," with faithful adherence to Mauberley's vision of himself, for the rest of the novel.

Quinn's reading seems motivated by a desire to bridge the gap between an understandable past -- in which Mauberley, and other heroes, used the written word to uphold a set of coherent values -- and a frightening present which threatens to scatter those values irretrievably. By standing in Mauberley's footprints, so to speak, Quinn hopes to hold fast to some of the old values. In a similar move,

the young private, Annie Oakley, creates an imaginary world of glamorous stars in the hotel saloon which has become, in reality, a morgue (43, 56, 299-300). The use of Hollywood imagery in Famous Last Words recalls the "perfect" closed narrative structure of Letitia's film in The Butterfly Plague (332-33). Freyberg also connects the desire to believe that "the war never happened" with Hollywood:

"How wonderful. Just to walk out into the lobby and leave it all behind us on a giant movie screen. With the music playing and everyone applauding ... I'd like that. I really would.
[...]

"[The victims at Dachau] were only extras, paid to starve themselves ... paid to lie down and play dead. Yes? Hansel and Gretel lying in the ovens ... and maybe somewhere a gingerbread house. Playtime. Movie time. Make believe." (53-54)

Freyberg's impassioned and bitterly sarcastic speech recalls the revisionist writings of those, such as Ernst Zundel and Malcolm Ross in Canada, who deny that the holocaust took place. Although such denial is generally associated with intentionally anti-Semitic, neo-Nazi thinking, Freyberg points to another possibility -- that such denial is extremely seductive, because we would all rather believe that it never really happened.

The events of the war constitute a break from reason, a rupture in the western world's seamless version of itself. One passage in Famous Last Words describes how such ruptures are mended:

"The War" -- like any other war -- will come and go and be parenthesized by dates in history books. A war is just a noise -- the stench of death -- a view, however wide or brief, of rubble -- and a cause for lamentation.

After the lamentation: praise. Over the rubble: shrines. After the stench of death: the sweetness of flowers. After the noise: the diminishing echo. Then all the shops will open and the first gold coins go down. "One dozen postal cards of war memorials, please. The coloured ones, if possible." And all the figures cut in stone.

A war is just a place where we have been in exile from our better dreams. (176)

If Quinn is to maintain a coherent version of the world, incomprehensible abuses of power, such as those he has recently witnessed, must be bracketed off as a temporary "exile" from reason. And Quinn's reading, his attempts to maintain a version of Mauberley as hero-writer, will do just that. His concentration on Mauberley as a writer is similar

to the collecting of war-memorial postcards. He insists, in an argument with Freyberg,

"I haven't said I think what's on the walls is a pretty story, sir. I've only said I think I understand what he's trying to do."

"Whitewash the truth?"

"Tell the truth. About himself. Including the mistakes he made." (154)

In Quinn's opinion, the important thing is that Mauberley wrote about these "mistakes," not that he committed them. The narrative itself seems to take precedence over what it records. Mauberley is seen from beginning to end as a writer above all else. Thus, despite the evidence of Mauberley's crimes, Quinn manages to maintain a coherent version of Mauberley, a version in which everything Mauberley has done fits a consistent pattern, everything has a reason. This, of course, is nothing more than the version that Mauberley has written himself.

What is the force that motivates Mauberley to write his story on the wall? Freyberg seems convinced that his purpose is to exonerate himself. Quinn imagines that "Maybe he had needed to create another image of the world: innocent and shining" (76). Scobie suggests that Mauberley's confession seems motivated partially by his masochistic desire for humiliation (216). All of these motivations seem to play a part. But perhaps the force which most drives

Mauberley is a desire to create an image of himself that is coherent, if not innocent and shining.

Mauberley's signature is the sign of his "autobiographical pact" with his reader (see Lejeune). Mauberley as writer promises to be identical with Mauberley as written -- in other words, he promises to be self-identical. Perhaps no other genre inscribes the desire for a self-identical subject more forcefully than autobiography. The object of this desire is described in glowing terms by one theorist of the genre:

that ideal state of full and perfect self-consciousness where there is awareness of the total self, physical and spiritual, instinctive and willed, awareness of all the forces of the surrounding universe, including, as well as one can, other selves, awareness of any controlling divine spirit. Such a perfect, hypothetical experiment and experience is another name for self-completion and self-realization on the part of a perfected human become divine: it is transcendent self-awareness, the created universe existing as a thought in the totally self-aware mind of -- call the being what one will -- God.

(Olney 331-32)

It is the desire for just such an unattainable object which seems to drive Mauberley's writing.

Like all autobiographical writers, Mauberley is split between the "I" who acts and the "I" who writes of the action. As a confessional writer, Mauberley is motivated by the desire to reconcile the two "I"s. While he describes Pound as having "one mad eye" (77), Mauberley himself seems to have one mad "I" -- the "I" who acts in concert with the ruthless fascist cabal -- an "I" which seems irreconcilably other to the "I" of writer-as-hero.

Mauberley constructs his own identity through writing. In one scene, while gazing at a prehistoric handprint in a Spanish cave, Mauberley interprets it as a sign of "the heart of the human race -- which is its will to say I am" (173). "Some there are who never disappear" (173) -- those who make their mark on the world. Afraid of disappearing himself, Mauberley goes on to make his own mark on the wall, complete with handprint (76). It is only through writing that Mauberley can assert himself as a discrete and coherent entity. In the midst of his involvement with the cabal, when Mauberley feels that he is losing his sense of self, he can maintain it only through writing: "excepting those moments in which I wrote in my journals, I did not have any contact with myself" (311). Contemplating suicide, Mauberley reflects that perhaps his death would not matter as he had ceased to write, and therefore lost his voice and his "credence" (312). The motivation behind his famous last

words seems to be a desire for contact with himself, to place himself in the subject position.

Despite this desire for self-knowledge and autonomy, Mauberley is very uncertain as to who he is. He continually struggles with a double desire to assert his independence and to meld himself with another. Mauberley desires an "other" to make him complete. Ned Allenby calls him "some kind of pilgrim looking for a faith" (88), accurately describing the way in which Mauberley seems always to be trying to fill some lack within himself, to find some lover or authority figure to worship. He continually professes his love for Wallis. In fact, his love for her is the motivation which he most often cites to rationalize his involvement with the cabal. But although he "loves" her, he lives perpetually in her shadow, much as he lived in the shadow of Ezra Pound. When Mauberley first meets Wallis, he claims, he was at a stage where he was coming into his own: "[I had] begun to know who I was -- independent of my father and of Ezra." But he immediately undercuts this declaration with the self-ridiculing comment, "I had even begun to wear white suits" (69). Mauberley never seems able to feel complete by himself. He is drawn to Wallis because of her statement, "I want my life" (75). Mauberley claims, "since my father died, I had been waiting for someone -- anyone -- to say those words out loud" (76). It seems that Mauberley

cannot say these words himself, but must passively wait for someone else to say them.

The cabal itself serves as another link in this chain of substitutions for an authority which he lacks. Scobie traces this lack back to the loss of Mauberley's father. "Mauberley's attraction to Fascism [...] originates in his psychological need to compensate for his father's abdication of male power [...] (216)" Whatever the source of Mauberley's sense of loss, his desire for a replacement repeats the structure of Lacanian desire in an endless metonymic movement from substitute to substitute in search of an object which can never be fully present. One could (and I do) argue that the fully complete self can never be present in any case. In Mauberley's case, his desire can certainly never be fulfilled through another person because his desire for such a merger is double and paradoxical.

Like Findley's Adolphus Damarosch and Robert Ross, Mauberley is afraid of "physical contact and commitment" (142). He always worships from afar. Although his personal relationships are structured by the desire to fill a lack within himself, he is very ambivalent about actually filling it. He seems afraid of desire itself, feeling "the fear of descent and the fear of being powerless in the presence of desire" (142). Consequently, he is very ambivalent about any figure who (temporarily) stands in to replace that lack. He fears that his control over himself, already weak, will

disappear if he comes too close to the other. So the movement of continual deferral continues on in the process of writing.

Perhaps Mauberley's ambivalence toward others explains the picture he paints of his position in relation to the cabal: one in which he is neither within nor outside of it. He is needed to fulfill minor tasks, but never takes part in any of the planning (a fact he makes sure to point out), and he remains in the dark about a lot of the cabal's workings. For instance, he does not seem to be aware of the amount of killing which is necessary to maintain the conspiracy. He expresses shock at the discovery that his friends Ned Allenby and Isabella Loverso were murdered by the cabal (315, 263- 64). This shock seems to me extremely unconvincing -- could he really be that stupid? Moreover, his discovery does not deter him from further associating with the murderers. Mauberley maintains the fiction that he is at arm's length from the cabal, leaving Quinn with the impression that he is only the "messenger." But it is important to note that Reinhardt the killer also refers to himself as "the messenger," only the "message" he delivers is death (361).

The silence in the text regarding the full extent of Mauberley's commitment to the cabal (a silence in which Findley seems complicit) results in a gap in the story (Scobie 225). Neither Quinn, Freyberg, nor the reader of

the novel can ever know exactly how involved Mauberley was or why. This gap in the "confession" constitutes the opposite to the "whole" story -- and "whole" self -- which he claims to be creating. Mauberley writes on the walls because he wants to "tell it all" (35). His notebooks are not enough. They are only "like the title cards of a silent film -- without the film itself" (35), and must be fleshed out. The notebooks are the silent subtext of Mauberley's narrative. We know that his story is based on them, but how closely? Freyberg interprets the ashes of the notebooks as evidence of Mauberley's duplicity. Quinn, of course, disagrees, assuming that Mauberley burned them merely to keep warm (55). As the reader eventually learns, both men are incorrect. Harry Reinhardt burns the notebooks, ignorant of the existence of the writing on the walls. But Freyberg's suspicion may raise the reader's suspicion as well. What is in the notebooks? They are supposedly written in a "shorthand scrawl, the cipher he had devised of signs and symbols and his own private way of telling the date" (23). But if this is so, then how can Diana Allenby read them (315-16)? The burned notebooks are indeed a "cipher." They signify what is missing in Mauberley's story.

The one point where Mauberley does make explicit the extent of his guilt is when he instructs Harry Reinhardt to murder Harry Oakes. This deed marks the point of no return. He can no longer pretend that his involvement is marginal,

and he is perfectly aware of this: "It was done. My fall was over. All the way down" (375).

Where has Mauberley fallen from? Dennis Foster describes the way in which the language of confession seems always to be pointing at some prior state which is never attainable:

Sin can be spoken of only in symbols of negation, interpreted through what is concretely present. But while the pain of loss is felt by all people, the state of being prior to sin is inconceivable except as the opposite of sin, the negation of a negation: the tortuous road has its referent in life's toils, but where is the life so free of sin that it would correspond to the straight way? So although the confessor hopes to regain his innocence by constructing a wholly comprehensible, coherent representation of himself, he must pursue his goal through the detour of negation: he can only speak of innocence by speaking of sin, reenacting in the language of confession the loss he feels. (16)

The metaphoric "fall" in Mauberley's narrative can be compared to Foster's example of the metaphoric road. Mauberley's metaphor creates (retrospectively) the illusion of "height" which he had always promised himself he would attain before his death (312). When Mauberley uses

Reinhardt as his instrument of murder, he and Reinhardt become doubles of each other (Scobie 218). For Mauberley, Reinhardt has always represented "the fear of descent." Reinhardt is "Inhuman and, therefore, without the impediment of moral choice. There was nothing -- nothing one could not imagine him doing" (142). Mauberley loses his identity when he merges himself with this limitless, immoral force. By describing the merger as a "fall," he implies that he fell from a previous position, that he was formerly an independent individual, and that he was formerly possessed of a clear sense of morality. Yet as his ambivalent relationships with others have shown, he was always flirting with the notion of merging himself with another. One must certainly question, also, whether or not he ever had a clear sense of his own moral code. By characterizing his crime as a "fall," Mauberley evokes an image of himself, albeit a past one, which is autonomous, coherent and comprehensible. Yet it is only through writing (or rewriting) himself that he can accomplish this feat.

Mauberley's choice of metaphor is related to his father's suicide. After witnessing his father leap fifteen storeys to his death, the twelve-year-old Mauberley finds a note from his father which reads: "He who jumps to his death has cause. [...] He who leaps has purpose. Always remember: I leapt" (2). Mauberley characterizes his own fall as a leap, rather than a jump, suggesting that he, too,

has "purpose" (375). He thus manages to make his own "fall" seem analogous to his father's. Yet while the father leapt off the roof in order to preserve his moral integrity, the son has rather less noble reasons. And although Mauberley confesses to the crime of murdering Harry Oakes, instead of glossing over his guilt as he does with his other crimes, he still leaves open a gap in this part of the story -- an escape hatch which he creates with an excuse.

When is a confession not a confession? According to Paul de Man's analysis of Rousseau's Confessions, one ceases to confess when one begins to offer excuses:

The only thing one has to fear from the excuse is that it will indeed exculpate the confessor, thus making the confession (and the confessional text) redundant as it originates. (280)

Excuses are what Freyberg expects. But if Mauberley excuses himself, he does so with narrative technique, rather than any direct denial of guilt. Mauberley arranges the death of Harry Oakes in order to protect Wallis: cherchez la femme. Oakes has guessed at the cabal's plot to spirit the Duke and Duchess away from the Bahamas. Mauberley apparently forms his murderous intent when Wallis asks him, "Do you love me?" (373; see also Findley's explanation of the cryptic nature of their conversation, quoted above 59-60). He then reports the difficult night that followed:

Of course, there was no sleep that night and my room was filled with every ghost I could summon. Every death I had ever seen was played before my eyes. And I thought of Beatrice in Much Ado: "do you love me?" "Yes." "Kill Claudio..." (373)

Here, Mauberley offers literary allusion as excuse, citing a precedent that will convince only the literary reader. He commits his crime for love -- just as a Shakespearean character once did. And although he thinks also of Lucrezia Borgia, Agrippina and Messalina, names synonymous in history with treachery and cruelty, he refers first to Shakespeare, reminding his reader that he is, above all, a writer. This is literature, and good literature at that! As de Man remarks of Rousseau, "there can never be enough guilt around to match the text-machine's infinite power to excuse" (299).

Autobiography involves a split between the two "I"s, but the act of writing is a movement toward reconciliation. It seems that Freyberg reads the "I" who acts, and Quinn reads the "I" who writes, seeing the writing self as somehow transcending the self who acts. The writing self does not, perhaps, nullify the guilt of the self who acts, but it does at least place the self within a narrative structure that appears to lead quite reasonably from one place to another. With mythological and literary allusion; with metaphor; with the allure of glamorous details; and with narrative twists

and turns which avoid moments of ethical incongruity -- not to mention the "gripping international intrigue" promised on the novel's cover -- Mauberley creates an apparently seamless version of himself.

The process of writing a complete narrative structure from beginning to end appears to (re)form a coherent "I," so that, at the end of autobiographic writing, the "I" who is written is identical to the "I" who writes. Early in his reading, Quinn has the feeling that he is beginning a journey: "a door had just been opened way off down a darkened corridor" (64). Aware that, while he is reading, the body of the writer lies across the hallway, Quinn thinks, "the beginning and the ending had already been joined" (65). What has been joined is the Mauberley who acted and the Mauberley who wrote of his actions. Mauberley's narrative has bridged the gap, creating an apparently comprehensible structure which reaches back in time and connects the writing self with the written self.

Mauberley gains a sense of wholeness by writing himself on the walls of the Elysium Hotel. The passages which describe his mood as he finishes this work contain many motifs of closure and completion. "Now would be a good time for music, moving him through to the end" (385); he chooses Schubert's final sonata -- the composer's "last words" (385). The Schubert recording is a sign of perfection. But in the lexicon of Timothy Findley, perfection, especially

perfection in the arts, signifies a dangerous and illusory goal. Mauberley's mother is only one, in a long line of Findley characters, who is broken by her desperate desire to achieve perfection as a pianist.⁵

Mauberley then takes a drink, reads again his own first words, toasts himself, and "Done. He could see himself in the mirror" (386). Scobie comments that this passage "suggests that for Mauberley the writing is a mirror. When it is done, he is able to recognize himself in it as he is [...]" (220). Mauberley can see himself both literally, in the mirror, and figuratively, in the writing on the wall. And the mirror of writing yields not only self-recognition but a coherent self to recognize -- the (full-length) mirror of the writing allows Mauberley to see himself whole, it completes him. Mauberley has come full circle. He stands in the presence of his own first words, after having written his last. He has succeeded in making himself appear whole to himself, in saying "I."

And all this while the perfect music, played by the perfect fingers of Alfred Cortot, made its perfect rhythms and made its perfect impact -- Schubert's last words -- endings.

Summations. Yes. (386)

Then Mauberley writes his epilogue. Mauberley's vision of himself is an illusion -- made possible by his own linguistic structure. He is not complete, any more than his

narrative is complete. Both are full of holes. The continual metonymical movement of desire only stops because death (in the form of Harry Reinhardt) puts an end to it, in cruel and imitation fulfillment of Mauberley's desire -- leaving him with one eye/I at last.

But Quinn, apparently, has been seduced. The sense of wholeness and completion that surrounds Mauberley, as he finishes creating a complete narrative structure, is reflected in the feeling that the narrative evokes in Quinn. At the end of his reading, Quinn opens a window and compares the world outside to the world of Mauberley's text:

Outside, there was a hush, and the air was scented with the smell of freshly fallen snow and the warm green smells from the valley far below. Two worlds: and now the horror was over in both of them. (389)

Quinn's notion that "the horror was over" is perhaps the "perfect impact" of Mauberley's text. The wholeness of the narrative structure accomplishes the same kind of bracketing of horror accomplished by the official dates in the history books (176), as if 1945 saw the final eradication of the incomprehensible and an irreversible return to order.

Freyberg resists this kind of closure and its allure of wholeness; in fact, he snaps in half the Schubert record, symbol of perfect completion (154). Dennis Duffy has

aligned the broken record with an earlier symbol in the novel -- the two halves of a lemon which Lindbergh uses to illustrate his "Them and us" philosophy, a mentality obviously condemned in the novel (112). Duffy interprets Freyberg's act as a representation of "the inadequacies of dualistic thinking" (202-03). But the holistic thinking of Mauberley and Quinn is also inadequate. Freyberg breaks the record in order to illustrate to Quinn that "Half isn't good enough, is it?" (155), implying that Mauberley has not told the whole story, the whole record. Quinn thinks that Freyberg is "obsessed with perfections" (156), but perhaps what Freyberg is trying to destroy is the illusion of perfection. Freyberg may be an unsympathetic character, ignorant of aesthetics, fanatical and single-minded in his reading. Yet his presence in the text serves to draw attention to the seductive nature of Mauberley's narrative. He is trying to show Quinn that Mauberley's seemingly coherent narrative is a carefully constructed one. Freyberg's act is not simple destruction, but deconstruction, a recognition that something has been left out of the structure.

Mauberley's epilogue seems to reinforce his image as writer-hero one last time. He describes an ominous shape rising from the sea, which, ignored by the people on the shore, sinks back beneath the surface "unnamed" (396). The implication is that Mauberley, by naming the shape, has

thwarted the desire to pretend that the surface remains unbroken. But in his act of telling he has not broken the surface of his own self-image; he has, in fact, smoothed it over. And in reading Mauberley's tale of self-completion, Quinn falls into a dream of closure, bracketing the tale off neatly by dating it: "May, 1945," the last words of the novel.

These last words undermine the sense of closure that Quinn feels. As the reader knows, the horror was far from over in May, 1945. August was still to come. The novel's last words remind us of the slang meaning of the phrase "famous last words": an ironic expression used to undermine any overly-confident assertion regarding the future. While Quinn follows Mauberley into the realm of the nonnarratable, Findley returns his reader to disequilibrium and lack. The incomprehensible abuses of power remain unnarratable. No matter how hard Mauberley may work to explain them, they can never be explained away. They are as old as Noah, as Findley's next novel suggests, and as recent as yesterday.

Chapter Six

The Law of Genesis and the Genesis of the Law:

Not Wanted on the Voyage

In Not Wanted on the Voyage, Findley leaves aside the realism of The Wars and Famous Last Words. The landscape of this novel is dream-like and magical; coloured rain and talking animals, demons and mythical beasts recall the beautiful, bizarre world of Alvarez Canyon and the hordes of fluttering monarchs in The Butterfly Plague. The characters, too, are less fully developed than in his two novels of war. Like many characters in The Butterfly Plague, they are strangely flat. But while those of the earlier novel were caricatures from the world of motion pictures, those in Not Wanted on the Voyage recall the one-dimensional, allegorical figures of Medieval romance as well as those in the Bible. Little attempt is made to explain their motivation through the kind of psychological logic applied to Hooker, Robert Ross and Mauberley. They are stock figures, representing a variety of values and positions. Yet this novel is very realistic in another, less literary, sense of the word. For it represents social problems of North American culture which are all too real. It is just as guided by moral vision as the Medieval miracle

play or the biblical tale, but it parodies their conventionally simplistic moral codes. As a student once complained bitterly to me, "Findley turns everything upside-down. Everything that is supposed to be good is bad, and everything that's bad is good!" But even the reversals are not that simple.

Not Wanted on the Voyage is based on the Old Testament, the seminal law book of the western world. It examines the role of the law in human society and the structures which keep it in place. These are very illogical structures, as the novel reveals. The illogical story of the flood is an excellent place to start for such an examination. Genesis tells of the creation of the world, emphasizing the perfection of God's handiwork. Then it tells of the corruption and destruction of that world and its new beginning. Perhaps Findley was partly attracted to this story because the beginnings of his own creations are often similarly structured. God didn't get it right the first time either, apparently. The destruction of the world in Genesis is told as a story of preservation. God names the world into existence and gives it law -- the word of God which must be obeyed. Then God destroys all those who do not obey the law, even though, to quote Findley's Yaweh, "only the single chosen of the Lord may hear the Word" (110). And even though, according to the Bible, God created all those elements which he now destroys. This mysterious

paradox has puzzled Christians for centuries, giving rise to such explanations as the doctrine of free will. In Not Wanted on the Voyage, Findley provides an alternative explanation, one which is highly relevant in present western culture, for the rhetoric of biblical law is still in full effect, whether backed up by the violence of the government or other, subtler means.

Findley's novel traces the passage of the paradoxical movement of the law. Both story and narrative are shaped by conflicting drives which mirror God's double desire: to destroy and to preserve His original creation. Findley's novel draws attention to the power and authority vested in biblical Scripture, and questions it by disrupting the narrative structures on which that authority is based. Except for its opening, the plot structure of this novel is not fractured as the stories of Robert Ross and Mauberley are fractured. Instead, the novel plays with the logic of Noah's law. By playing with the notion of beginnings -- both divine origins and the beginnings of narrative structures, both the source of divine power and the literary sources of narrative -- the novel deconstructs the official narrative of Judeo-Christianity by laying bare its contradictory logic. In the process, the novel examines the paradoxical way in which the law seeks both to define and to obscure the point of its own origin.

If the law (and its enforcers) is to maintain its privileged status, its origin must go unquestioned. There must be a fixed point at which the question "why?" can be suppressed. In biblical terms, this fixed point is "God," a word which names the origin of the law without explaining it. The law cannot admit of incoherence, uncertainty, or indeterminable borders. In Jacques Derrida's terms, it must appear "present to itself," fully capable of knowing itself and its own intentions. Derrida writes that

It would be possible to show that all the names related to fundamentals, to principles, or to the centre have always designated the constant of a presence [...] ("Structure, Sign, and Play" 249)

Derrida's list of these names includes archè and telos, for the one demands the other. The point of origin signals the presence of the law, as the moment of creation in Genesis signals the presence of God. The law rests on a story in which its origin is indelibly inscribed, thus ensuring its own continued existence as a given which cannot be questioned.

Within the story of Not Wanted on the Voyage, it is Noah Noyes who most desires a fixed point of origin. "The only principles that matter," according to Noah, "are the principles of ritual and tradition" (13). All of Noah's commands have a source in the past, in the law which is never questioned; and Noah's law is upheld by a reverence

for determinable beginnings and endings. The law is sustained through the highly ritualized existence Noah imposes on his family. An essential element of ritual is that it must have a clearly marked beginning and ending each time it is performed. Noah laments the Festivals of Baal which are "endless -- blurred -- going on forever so that no one knew where one had ended and the next begun" (49). In contrast, the rituals of Yaweh are performed in strict accordance to "the fixed hours of prayer, the consecrated hours of sacrifice" (47). The source of the law must be identifiable, in order to be worshipped. Noah pleases Yaweh most when he stages the Masque of Creation (96-98). With fireworks, coloured paper, mechanical animals and actors playing Adam and Eve, Noah supplies a nostalgic return to the very beginning of everything, reenacting the moment of the origin of Yaweh's power over the world.

Noah leaves out an important element in his Garden of Eden -- the snake. It seems as though Noah is trying to improve on the original in order to flatter Yaweh. The missing element is supplied, fittingly, by Lucifer himself, who has come to earth, like Milton's Satan, looking for a new world. But Findley's Lucifer does not take on the role of the snake. Disguised as a woman, "Lucy" replaces the paper cut-out which Noah had planned to use for the representation of Eve. Lucifer's appearance in the tableau is a reminder that the Garden was always already invested

with difference, and that perhaps all creation has something of the devil in it. Lucy also disrupts Noah's sexist portrayal of the relationship between men and women. Instead of a paper puppet pulled by a string from the rib of the living Adam, Eve appears on Noah's stage alive, autonomous, and seven feet tall.

The Judeo-Christian tradition also points dramatically to the creation of the world. But the Bible suggests that God exists both before and after the world as we know it. The Bible uses the concept of infinity to describe the power of God. Infinity posits the existence of a phenomenon beyond human comprehension. It therefore veils the source of power in mystery, naming it and yet concealing it at the same time. If used as a weapon in the abuse of power, infinity takes on a paradoxical nature and becomes finite. For whatever else infinity might be, it is a point beyond which we cannot theorize or question.

In Not Wanted on the Voyage, Findley turns the tables, giving the power of infinity to humans and animals, and making their creator finite. In the novel, infinity is released from its potential role as a tool to maintain power over others, and is allowed to empower the oppressed. It is associated with the imagination -- the ability to imagine a world beyond the beginning and ending decreed by Yaweh. Findley's Yaweh, who smells suspiciously "human" to Mottyl (66), cannot admit of infinity. The sign of infinity is

visible in the formation of the Faeries who appear to Mrs Noyes (39). But Noah doesn't believe in them (37); and when Mrs Noyes repeats this sign, by interlocking her fingers, Yaweh's cat attacks her viciously (100). The concept of infinity cannot be tolerated by Yaweh's camp; it erases the moment of origin, makes impossible the naming of a source. Yaweh must maintain the power to create and to destroy -- to make a beginning and to make an end.

Without beginnings and endings there can be no borders, and Noah's law depends upon the existence of borders. What Noah desires is a clean line to draw between every necessary opposition: what is to be saved and what is to be destroyed; what is human and what is not; what is male and what is female; who is in authority and who is not. In "The Law of Genre,"¹ Derrida questions the possibility of such strict distinctions, asking whether the borders are not self-erasing:

What if there were, lodged within the heart of the law itself, a law of impurity or a principle of contamination? And suppose the condition for the possibility of the law were the a priori of a counter-law, an axiom of impossibility that would confound its sense, order, and reason? (57)

Lodged within the heart of the ark, of course, are several impurities which, although not wanted on the voyage, manage to board. Both Lucy (alias Lucifer) and Mottyl, the calico

whose mottled coat is the sign of impurity, constitute a sort of counter-law to Noah's. Noah, it seems, knows how to handle anything which is clearly on one side or another of the borders he has drawn. Women, for instance, have a designated place. This law, like the others, has its origin in the story of creation: "after the sin of Eve, the subordination of women" (238). All Noah must do is make sure that women stay in that place. In fact, Noah's position on the privileged side of all oppositions depends upon the existence of others on the opposite side. But Lucy is an outrage, not because she stands on the other side of the border, but because her very incarnation erases the borders. Lucy is angel and human, male and female. The presence of Lucy aboard the ark serves to explain the continued existence of difference in the world, but her presence is only possible because Noah does not realize her true identity (even Yaweh thinks Lucy is safely in hell). Noah would not knowingly depart from the law of genre with its strict rules regarding the drawing of borders. Ironically, however, this departure from the law only occurs because Noah is determined to stick to the letter of the law: according to Yaweh's edict, Ham must have a wife, and Lucy is the only viable candidate at the crucial moment (120). When Noah does begin to suspect that there is something peculiar about Lucy, her appearance seems to weaken him considerably. He is uncertain whether she is

man, woman or angel. His mind, unable to cope with more than one category per person, begins to stutter:

"And who was that man beside her...?" (Angel. Angel. Was that not an angel's face beside her -- angel skin and angel hair?...)

"Ham, Father Noyes. That was Ham, your son."

The vision flickered on and off -- swaying with the lamps, in and out of reach. Another face -- not Ham's -- but ... (313)

Noah cannot hold the image of Lucy in his mind because he has no imagination. His inability to see the fairies or to recognize Lucy is a sign of his metaphorical blindness. Despite his obsession with sources, he has no inner resources. The blind cat Mottyl, with her instinctive "whispers," can see far more than Noah can.

Mottyl's whispers suggest an alternative origin to that decreed by Yaweh and Noah, a biological, natural one. Culture and nature are set up as binary opposites in this novel. When Mrs Noyes refuses to board the ark, she enjoys herself for several days, living outside in the rain. She is "gratified" that "civilization was falling away from her shoulders" (146). The community of animals is presented in a far more positive light than that of humans. Findley does not romanticize the animals. They are not all peace-loving rabbits like those in Watership Down. But they are closely tied to the life of the body in a way which gives them a

dignity that is lacking in the humans. Noah Noyes is a mad scientist in the tradition of the Nazi doctors in The Butterfly Plague and Dr. Potter in The Telling of Lies. He uses the animals he can catch for cruel experiments as well as for sacrifice. But he cannot impose the ideological control on the animals that he imposes on his family. Free of shame and humiliation, they enjoy the performance of their bodily functions.

The animals have a different attitude toward the telling of stories as well. While Yaweh and Noah use stories as a tool for control, the animals use them, literally, as a means of escape. "Tales of escape were like currency" among the animals, "like the news of a birth or a death or an injury, [they] were tradeable" (41). The gossip of the forest is a way of exchanging information, of entertainment and of keeping companionship. In contrast, the stories of Noah are usually a means of withholding information, while those of Yaweh are a means of intimidation.

The law is a kind of story into which Noah must fit all of creation. First, he must follow Yaweh's edict regarding the number of survivors. Then, when Yaweh destroys the world, Noah must take on the task of recreating, or rewriting, it, erasing any possible challenges to his own power. Noah sees himself as responsible for "the survival of the human race [a task which seems to include defining

the human race]; the subjugation of nature; the establishment of law and order" (238). In order to write the world -- and law -- into existence, Noah must ensure that his writing will prevail over all other discourse. In many ways, Not Wanted on the Voyage tells the story of a power struggle over language, over whose words will achieve hegemony, who will be allowed to write the history of this voyage. As the novel focusses on the war between humans and animals, it is fitting that the human victory should be signalled by the animals' loss of language (346-47).² Among humans, as well, the struggle over language is ongoing, with Noah usually winning. As Helen Tiffin argues, "Findley's account of [Noah] Noyes's techniques exposes the ideological processes by which a dominant discourse establishes and maintains its power" (Tiffin 49).

Scenes of reading and writing in the novel illustrate the ways in which Noah tries to achieve "Sole interpretative control of events" (Tiffin 49). Many of these scenes have been analysed in a paper by Erica Hendry, who examines the opposition between Noah's official texts and the censored discourse of women who are not "aloud" in the official version (27). Noah's log book contains only his interpretation of events. Because he dictates it, he does not leave the mark of his own hand upon it. He thus conceals the subjectivity of its source. Like the supposedly objective official histories of our culture,

including the Bible, Noah's account will become history. Hannah writes down only what he dictates, "Never arguing -- never saying 'this is right' and 'this is wrong' or 'I agree with this' and 'disagree with that.' Nothing. Never a word" (243). Hannah is "full of words. Sentences and paragraphs. Whispers and shouts. Hundreds of them. Thousands. But she was a woman and she could not speak" (243). Exiled from public discourse, the women in the novel write diaries and recipes; they record nothing that could be considered history. Hendry analyzes the scene where Mrs Noyes gives a recipe to Hannah:

Unlike Noah who thrives on the hermeneutic knowledge of holy books and the secrets of the Explicit Name, Mrs Noyes does not dictate or impart her knowledge, she shares it eagerly [...] there is no privileged recipient of knowledge.

(28)

As well, the recipe is not fixed. Mrs Noyes describes the amounts of nutmeg and salt by sound and gesture. The exact amount cannot be written down, but must be memorized (222-23). As Hendry points out, the recipe -- unlike Noah's edicts -- leaves its reader free to experiment and give the recipe "her own special flavour" (Hendry 29). In other words, it is not law.

Findley's focus on language is appropriate to the novel's intertext of Judeo-Christianity. "In the beginning

was the Word," says John. And the "Word" is a closely guarded secret, its power revealed only to a chosen few. Findley's Noah follows ancient Judaic tradition when he keeps the secret names of God to himself: "the name which no one but Noah must hear" (27) must be drowned out by loud noises during rituals. Yaweh's parable of the four rabbis who enter the Sacred Orchard (99-100) is adapted from the Talmud. Its purpose is to illustrate the dangers for those who "attempt to usurp their God [and] ask of God: why and how?" (110). Rabbi Akiva warns his companions of "the dangers that lie in words" (99). One rabbi attempts creation, one thinks on "the forbidden word," and another tears up the roots of plants (a Hebrew euphemism for heresy). All come to a bad end, except for Rabbi Akiva (a famous sage whose superior wisdom is illustrated in many tales of the Talmud). The errors of the would-be usurpers are all transgressions of language. The mystical aspects of the ancient esoteric teachings of Judaism are intimately linked to words:

The sages regarded knowledge of 'the letters according to which Heaven and earth were created' as an instrument lending mortals the power to engage in acts of creation [...]. It is related that one of the scholars created a man through reciting names [...]. (Adin 214)

The names of God must be concealed because they hold the secrets of creation -- and of destruction: Yaweh mentions "those words that even We do not utter, lest We bring Creation to a halt" (99). Language is power, especially for those with access to the direct connection between words and creation, while, for the rest of us, words are merely signifiers.

The language of the dispossessed -- such as the diaries, recipes and oral discourse of women -- poses no threat to the law. The linguistic transgressions of the dispossessed are not important. For example, after an argument with Noah, Mrs Noyes is aware that "nothing had been changed by what she had said -- nor by the manner in which she had said it" (128). Noah can dismiss, and therefore tolerate, outlaw elements such as Mrs Noyes's rebellious nature. They must be tolerated because they are necessary. Without outlaws, there could be no justification for the law. Elements which do not recognize the law, however, must be destroyed.

Lucy and Mottyl manage to survive, despite Noah's law; others do not. While every animal is supposed to be included on the ark, Noah excludes those ape children who are born to human parents. In the world of the novel, these interspecific births occur fairly frequently. The existence of the ape children defies the definitive borders which Noah seeks to maintain; they do not recognize the law. Neither

are they recognized by the law, which does not admit the possibility of their existence: "The law said nothing about such matters" (149). Not only are these children unfit because they are different, but because they point to the process of evolution -- a theoretical construct that defies the Bible and, worse, defies any hope of finding the moment of origin. The slow process of random mutation and natural selection makes impossible any definition of the special moment, makes impossible the tableau of creation -- the fetish object which brings pleasure to Yaweh (98). Children like Emma's sister, Lotte, with her "ape's body" (173), "long, furry arms" (177) and "underslung jaw" (179) must be destroyed. Lotte's name, as a feminization of Lot, is reminiscent of Lot's wife in the Bible who was punished for looking back on Sodom and Gommorah. The allusion to Lot's wife reminds the reader that the biblical flood was not the last time God tried to destroy his creatures, rainbow notwithstanding. It also conjures up an image of transgression, a person looking back beyond the new origin decreed by God. The presence of ape children is a kind of transgression, looking back to the biological roots of humanity which are inextricably tangled with the other species. Noah is a creationist, determined to preserve the moment of creation and to draw an indelible line between human beings and other animals.

While Noah tries to preserve the idea of a fixed and singular origin of the law, he must move simultaneously in a counter-direction. Paradoxically, his struggle to remain in power requires also that he obliterate certain origins. Like Yaweh, Noah must preserve and destroy at the same time. When Noah appeals to the authority of "the principles of ritual and tradition" to legitimize his laws, Mrs Noyes answers: "The only principles that matter here are yours!" (13). But Noah will never admit this true source of the law; he refers always to the law as though it were a pre-determined condition which has its source elsewhere.

Yaweh, too, must conceal the origin of the law in order to remain in power. As he begins to take responsibility for his creation, he seems to waver and weaken. Yaweh brings about the destruction of the world because it is corrupt, but his own death is precipitated by signs that he is beginning to look to himself as the source of the corruption. The message from Yaweh which most distresses Noah is "WHAT HAVE WE DONE, THAT MAN SHOULD TREAT US THUS?" Noah is thrown into confusion by Yaweh's apparent doubt: "Why should Yaweh ask such a question [...] Did it matter what He did? Was He not God?" (17). God's self-questioning is inconceivable and contradictory because being God means being unquestioned. The structure of power is a structure with a fixed and unexamined source. By pointing directly at this source (himself), Yaweh displaces himself; he ceases to

be God. Mrs Noyes, too, is surprised at the change in Yaweh. Yaweh's use of the first person singular alerts her: "He said 'Me'; Mrs Noyes almost said aloud. He said 'Me'..." (99). Yaweh's slipping from "We" to "Me" implies a slipping from power. The royal, or holy, "We" serves to obscure the origin of the law by denying that the speaking individual is the source of power. It ensures power by implying a surrounding order which is greater than the single speaker, as if to say "I did not create these laws myself, they exist in a larger context." Thus the law-maker naturalizes the law. By saying "Me," Yaweh reveals the origin of the law and disempowers himself. His death follows soon after.

Noah must never admit that his own body is the true source of a difference that he condemns. Like Mottyl and Lucy within the sacred ark, the seed of impurity resides within Noah himself. He carries the gene for ape-children. Having fathered one such child himself (named, ironically, Adam), whom he managed to dispose of in secret, Noah fears the reappearance of another among his grandchildren. This is his motive for forcing a marriage between his son Japeth and Lotte's sister Emma. Mrs Noyes explains to Emma:

then the blame for future Lottes and Adams could not be laid on us: on Noah Noyes and his wife [...] when a child is born -- it will be yours -- not Japeth's. Your blood, not his: your ancestry

... your blame ... your fault ... your
responsibility. (165)

Noah has suppressed the story of this Adam, concealing the origin of a possible future ape-child. But while he can suppress the story, at least for a while, he is unable to suppress his seed: he conceives a baby with his daughter-in-law Hannah. Noah locks out the rest of the family during the birth, forcing Hannah through a solitary labour, because he fears that the child will be an ape. Noah's fear comes true, but the baby is stillborn and easily concealed from the others until it can be thrown over-board. To Hannah, who does not know about the birth of Adam, Noah remarks "I begged it would not be so -- that you, like all the others, would not be contaminated with this curse" (341). If Hannah is "contaminated," of course, it is Noah who has contaminated her. Like Derrida's law of genre, Noah contains "lodged within" himself "a principle of contamination." And like his law of genre, Noah's law of gender also contains its own deconstruction. Noah's purity cannot exist without the (alleged) impurity of the women. The true origin of the impurity must be obscured; the opposition Noah needs so desperately to keep in place depends on it.

This whole process can be seen as the deconstruction of the patriarchy. What is the origin of Noah's patriarchal power if not his seed? However, because the seed does not

obey Noah's law of genre, its origin must be concealed. Noah is therefore dependent on women. This dependency does more than reverse the hierarchy of men over women. Patriarchal law demands the presence of women. Noah can claim responsibility (identify the origin) for his "normal" children, and deny responsibility (obscure the origin) for the others. This is the operation of the law. In the case of Noah's reproductive problems, the operation is only possible because of the body of woman, which provides the place of concealment. In childbirth, the female body reveals the child, but conceals the child's father -- thus the historical double standard regarding adultery. Paternity may be forever in doubt, a fact Noah turns to his own advantage.

The law which governs the borders of species and of gender prescribes not only segregation but definition. Biological gender determines a whole set of behavioural codes including, significantly, sexual orientation. Findley's novel draws attention to the way in which the law of Genesis ties sexual desire to procreation. This law is first implicit in the story of Adam and Eve, but its most potent expression in Genesis is the story of the flood. Findley has chosen perhaps the ultimate heterosexual myth of our culture for his subtext. Two by two, all must enter the ark or perish. Lucy's apparent refusal to acknowledge the law of gender draws further attention to the enforced

heterosexuality of Noah's law. Lucy has the ability to take any form she chooses. She can become a cormorant or a dragon or, presumably, a female human being. But although she dresses as a woman, and the narrative gives her a female pronoun, Lucy does not adopt the body of a woman. Lucy's brother, the angel Michael, points out that, although Lucy is not a man, she is male (107). When Lucy counters that dressing up is "harmless enough" (107), Michael replies, "It won't be harmless if he beds you. Human beings do that, you know" (108). Lucy, typically, cares nothing for this law. "I'll make it up as I go along," she says. Ham's spouse -- the spouse that Noah insisted he take -- is a biological male. Ham, "who had never so much as looked at a woman or even mentioned a woman's name" before meeting Lucy (119), is apparently satisfied. He finds Lucy to be "The perfect lover" (180).

Ham's marriage to Lucy outwardly appears to fulfill the edict. Ham remains safely in the closet, shielded by Lucy's masquerade. His sister Emma has no such protection. Emma does not obey the law of heterosexuality which decrees that all must go forth and multiply. Emma has no desire to have intercourse with her husband Japeth. In Emma's case, of course, it is particularly important that she fulfill this command, for she is the only one aboard the ark whose genetic link to apes will conceal that the source of impurity resides within Noah's family. As well, Noah fears

that Japeth's sexual frustration with his wife is turning into lust for Hannah. Noah is jealous, but pretends to be concerned on behalf of Hannah's husband, Shem (244). The reason for Emma's reluctance is not entirely clear. It could be her youth, for she is only twelve to fourteen years old (255), or it could be the rough manner of Japeth, "whose hands were all fingernails and fists and thumbs" (262). Or she could be a lesbian, as her pleasure when Hannah touches her suggests (261-62). In fact, the scene in which Hannah rubs Emma's body with almond oil suggests that Hannah herself is attracted to women. Noah, who invades the privacy of everyone under his rule, knows of Emma's reluctance, and determines to correct the situation. Noah assumes that the problem lies with a defect in the biologically gendered body. Emma is "so tick and tight, a pin could hardly enter" (263). The sadistic doctor decides to rape Emma with the horn of the unicorn.

Like the rape of Robert Ross in The Wars, the rape of Emma signifies a betrayal and a violation which occurs in the society outside of the text. The appearance of heterosexuality is enforced not only by societal pressure, but by a physical violence which is, in many places, sanctioned by the legal system. Findley's novel points directly at the Bible as the source of oppression against animals and against humans on the basis of faith, gender and sexual orientation. It also shows the futility of

attempting to dictate one law for everybody. "It was all very well to have written into the Edict 'two by two' -- but animals do not come in pairs" (122). The irony by which Lucy is allowed on board suggests that the law deconstructs itself. By outlawing difference, it only ensures that difference will survive. Nevertheless, the futile efforts of authoritarian law cause horrific suffering as portrayed in the bizarre and brutal scene of Emma's violation.

The logic behind Noah's rape of Emma is extremely complex. Under the guise of enforcing "normal" heterosexuality, Noah is ensuring that his own "abnormality" will remain hidden. He is also, one suspects, satisfying his own sadistic desires and venting his hatred of women. In the aftermath of the rape, Noah must perform "that always wild and unpredictable turn that was meant to save him from any kind of blame: that turning which even convinced himself that he was blameless" (265). Because the rape kills the unicorn, "one of Yaweh's favourite beasts" (271), Noah desperately seeks to provide a rationalization that will keep his actions within the law and conceal his true motives, even from himself. He struggles to repress his thoughts as they threaten to interrupt his attempt to construct an explanation:

[the unicorn's] Holy life has been sacrificed so
that ... In order that ...

Noah faltered.

In order that ... apes...

Noah looked behind him. Was someone watching him? Was someone there?

No.

Whose life had ... whose Holy life had been sacrificed to the greater understanding of ... apes ...

STOP THAT! (272)

Noah eventually transforms his murder into the "Ritual Ceremony of the Holy Phallus, in Remembrance of Yaweh's Holy Beast, the Sacred Unicorn" (273). The elements of sex and death involved in the rape seem to feed Noah's desire for ritual beginnings and endings. The violation provides both a forced beginning to procreation and a dramatic ending, not only for this unicorn, but for his entire species.

Findley's record of Noah's thoughts is strangely humorous, considering the circumstances, or at least it would seem strange in a more realistic novel. The allegorical characters and the surreal setting of this novel tend to distance the reader emotionally from the world of the text. The slaughter of the dolphins (235-38) is also a humorous scene, although surely it is meant to remind us of our present environmental crisis. The image of Noah foolishly "defending" his ark from the "pirates" is laughable. Findley has created a patriarchal power figure who is absurd. In Famous Last Words, when Findley (or

Mauberley) records the inner thoughts of the villain von Ribbentrop, the man seems quite a sympathetic character. The reader can identify with his emotions, with his fear, if not his political ethics (317-22). But Noah's inner thoughts are an occasion for laughter, even though the consequences of his thoughts are so horrible. This novel parodies the twisted logic of a law that rests on a metaphysical origin. It exposes the laws of gender, sexuality and dominion over the animals as utterly baseless, having no origin at all except the one that the law conceals -- self interest.

It also exposes the hypocrisy of religious fanaticism. For Noah does not really believe in God at all. Obviously, Findley's Noah would never withstand the trials of faith God puts to his long-suffering servants in the Bible. For when Yaweh ceases to send Noah messages, Noah quickly loses faith. Without proof of Yaweh's existence, Noah has difficulty functioning as a priest. Ironically, the act of faith and service that Noah cannot perform is performed in the dark underside of the ark by Lucifer, the rebel angel.

Lucy was exiled from heaven because she would not recognize the law. She would not allow the word "God" to stop her from asking "why?" -- the question which seeks to go beyond the origin. The archangel Michael condemns Lucy: "Why? All you ever said was why? Why this and why that and why everything. How dare you. How dare you" (108).

Against the law of perfection in Heaven, Lucy dares to desire disruption: "I wanted storms. I wanted difference [...] someone I could argue with" (282). Against the law which dictates fixed identity, Lucy articulates a desire for mutability. She longs for a place where she could say, "I am not I" (282). The place where I am I -- coherent, whole, as yet undoubled, is the realm that Noah desires, and which he seeks in vain to impose on everyone around him. Lucy's imagination allows her to envision the possibility that "I am not I -- but whoever I wish to be." Noah seeks to construct identity through edicts and decrees. Lucy realizes that, if identity is constructed by the movement of language, by narrative desire, then it can be rewritten. Lucy does not suggest that the movement of desire should stop -- she does not say what it is she wants to be. She recognizes that one should be able to make and remake the self, rather than to remain in the "I" as dictated by an authority such as Noah or Yaweh.

Lucy refuses to recognize the borders of the law. Although "God divided the light from the darkness" (Genesis 1.4), Lucy believes that "Somewhere -- there must be somewhere where darkness and light are reconciled" (284). A world with rigid borders is a prison. As Emma knows, "Holy" means "no way out" (270). But Lucy believes that there is a way out, somehow, and she passes this hope on to Mrs Noyes, Ham and Mottyl.

"Even if it takes a thousand years -- we want to come with you," said Mrs Noyes to Lucy.

"Wherever you may be going."

"Now," said Lucy -- and she smiled; "you have begun to understand the meaning of your sign"

Infinity. (284)

Lucy touches the unicorn and appears to bring it, momentarily, to life. "All the moments of this creature's life can be with us in an instant," Lucy says, "All we have to do is remember it alive" (280). Mrs Noyes thinks, "after all these years of living with Noah Noyes, at last I have seen a miracle" (281). This scene suggests that the imagination may open doors which the powers-that-be have closed. All of Noah's sacred rituals are undercut here, for this moment is perhaps the most religious moment in the novel, invoking a much stronger sense of the miracle of faith than any other scene. The sense of communion and hope that Lucy brings to her fellow creatures makes Noah's claim to priesthood look weak. The unicorn represents all those creatures outlawed and destroyed by Noah's law. The miracle that keeps it alive is a miracle of will and imagination, the only weapons of resistance available against the violence of the law. The power of Noah's rigid structures fades before the power of the mind to imagine them away.

The story of Not Wanted on the Voyage questions the structure of power in a way which corroborates Findley's

description of himself as "a dedicated anti-fascist writer and thinker" (Benson Interview 113). The way in which the narrative mirrors this questioning adds another dimension to the issue of power. Findley's novel suggests that power writes itself as a narrative, that beginnings and endings are preserved in their most potent form as the beginnings and endings of stories. While the operation of the law works itself out in the story through beginnings and endings, revelation and concealment, Findley's narrative seems to play with similar concepts, displaying an ambivalence about the authority of its own borders.

As I discussed in Chapter One, the structure of the opening displays an uneasiness about the point of the story's beginning. The intertextual play throughout the novel also hints at an uneasiness about origins. The novel plays with its literary sources as though expressing a desire to blur the borders between texts, to disobey the law of genre. The obscuring of literary sources has become a postmodern convention since Jorge Luis Borges made use of fictional sources in several of his works, including "Three Versions of Judas" (1959). For example, the authority of literary sources is parodied and undermined by Flann O'Brien, who quotes frequently, with scrupulous documentation, from purely non-existent sources in The Third Policeman (1967). The introduction to Umberto Eco's The Name of the Rose (1980) also lampoons the scholarly task of

verifying the source of the text. The novel claims to be an "Italian version of an obscure, neo-Gothic French version of a seventeenth-century Latin edition of a work written in Latin by a German monk toward the end of the fourteenth century" (xvi-xvii). Findley employs a similar device on at least two occasions. The epigraph to "Hello Cheeverland Goodbye" and a quotation in The Wars (191) are attributed to Nicholas Fagan, an apparently non-existent writer.³ Findley seems to use Fagan in order to work in ideas which he does not want to attribute to his characters. But these references to an unlocatable source also throw the notion of definitive origins into question. In Not Wanted on the Voyage, the confusion of sources is highly ironic in contrast to Genesis, which, according to religious tradition, has a definite, metaphysical and ultimate source.

The narrative is ambiguous about the existence of its own main source. Are we to assume that the Bible exists within this novel? Like Ezra Pound's poem "Hugh Selwyn Mauberley" in Famous Last Words,⁴ the Bible is constantly alluded to, yet never mentioned as an existing book. The narrative frame of the novel certainly acknowledges an existing Bible, with quotations serving as epigraphs for every "book" of the novel. The prologue's opening sentence -- "Everyone knows it wasn't like that" -- suggests that this version will be a retelling of a well-known tale, a revisionary reading that will set the record straight. But

this acknowledgement of the Bible occurs on the borders of the text, neither within nor outside of it.

The ontological status of the Bible within the novel creates a paradox. Assuming that the events in the Bible happened, they must have occurred before they were written about and so the story of Not Wanted on the Voyage must take place before the Bible is written. Yet Noah seems determined to stick to the biblical story, suppressing anything that might contradict it. His rigid adherence to the correct construction of the ark and the composition of its passengers can be explained by Yaweh's edict. But when Yaweh fails to appear with the covenant, Noah creates it himself, imitating the Bible right down to the details of rainbow and olive branch. Is Noah following or creating the story of Genesis? In its paradoxical use of the Bible as both cause and effect of Noah's actions, the novel effectively blurs the trail that might lead to its own source, simultaneously pointing at and erasing the origins of the story much as Yaweh attempts both to preserve and to destroy the traces of His creation.

The temporal setting of the story is also impossible to trace. There is plenty of evidence to suggest that the story takes place long after biblical times, such as the anachronistic intertexts of Mrs Noyes's songs, including "On Top of Old Smokey" and "When Irish Eyes are Smiling" (175); Noah's book Famous Battles of the Seven Seas (224);

quotations from Chaucer (288); and the sheep choir's rendition of "Kyrie eleison" (69). The genre of this novel is also ambiguous. As a postmodern revision of the Bible, it has few parallels in contemporary fiction. With its talking animals and supernatural beings, it is reminiscent of children's literature as well as such adult fables as Gulliver's Travels and George Orwell's Animal Farm. Its anachronisms suggest that it perhaps takes place in the future, and it thus has similarities to post-nuclear science fiction. Its sources have been traced to Latin American magic realism (Heidenreich 123), Gnostic parables (Woodcock 235) and Medieval mystery plays (Hill 12), for Mrs Noyes's reluctance to board the ark, her drinking and her disobedience were staple conventions in the theatre of the Middle Ages. Findley's biblical, fantastic, and dystopian elements combine to create a very mixed genre. George Woodcock has called it "a combination of fable and prose mock epic" (233).

The novel does obey some generic rules, however. As a euhemeristic tale, part of the task of this novel is to explain why things are the way they are. Thus, all supernatural powers must die and animals must cease to communicate with humans. Findley even explains the continued existence of outlaw elements after the purge, a subject on which the Bible is mysteriously silent. Although events may be added to the biblical story, nothing can occur

which would directly contradict it. For example, although Mrs Noyes leaves the ark to search for Mottyl, we know that she must, eventually, reboard. The narrative structure of Findley's novel must manage to fit within the borders of a pre-existing story (Genesis), according to a law which is somewhat similar to Noah's.

When Yaweh dies without bringing an end to the flood, Noah's desire for closure leads him to stage the covenant of the rainbow, which promises an end to the rift between God and his people. Noah cannot live in a world with no source of authority. Yaweh's death leaves a gap in the power structure, an absence which must be made present. In Famous Last Words, Mauberley reacts to the abdications of his father-figures by continually replacing them with human substitutes. But Noah is the only father left on this ark which has become the world. With no suitable object in sight, Noah creates a fictional authority, falsely claiming that Yaweh still speaks to him (350-51). Narrative desire is capable of making even God appear present. In Findley's novel, Noah's desire sets in motion the biblical story in which God reveals his covenant to Noah alone. Thus Noah maintains his "sole interpretive control" (Tiffin 49). Noah's desire for a closed ending to the story is a desire to bring closure to the frightening emptiness left by God's abandonment of his creatures, but it is also a desire for power. By reinventing the abdicated God, Noah effectively

places himself in the vacated position of power. By inventing a God who speaks through him, Noah claims for himself the power of "We" from which Yaweh has abdicated. All of Noah's pronouncements are backed up by this fictional authority and so the true origin of the law is once again obscured.

But Findley, as fictional authority of the narrative, resists closure by undermining the signs of the end. The reader knows that the rainbow is "Noah's paper rainbow" and the olive branch is a branch which has been on the ark all along, remnant of an ante-diluvian tree (352). The "end" is an illusion, another one of Noah's magic tricks. Noah's ending is further undermined by Mrs Noyes, to whom the novel gives moral authority. In contrast to Noah's desire for closure, Mrs Noyes resists closure or certainty. She knows what certainty means: "another world and more cats [for Noah] to blind" (352). Mrs Noyes says "no" to the end which would mark a new beginning. She does not want the border drawn. In the novel's last sentence, she prays for rain, for an infinity of rain which would prevent another ritualistic beginning, another creation which will end in destruction. By ending with this desire not to end, the novel moves us out of the finite world of Noah's law and empowers us with the infinity of the imagination.

Diana Brydon has argued that Not Wanted on the Voyage advocates "a return to lost origins" ("Dream of Tory

Origins" 40). But the prayer for rain is not nostalgic; it is imaginative. Noah decrees that the earth will dry and that God will deliver all animals into human hands "forever" (351). Mrs Noyes imagines deferring that moment -- paradoxically setting infinity up against forever. The flood, Findley suggests, may never end. We are perhaps still enduring it. There may be somewhere (over the rainbow?) a beginning and an end: "We, however, are still in the middle, still 'tilting in this stranded ark/blind and seeing in the dark' (Webb, epigraph)" (Hendry 1).

Despite the horrifying violence in many scenes, and the suggestion that Noah's will to power will persist, this novel seems to offer more hope for possible liberation than Findley's previous novels do. The balance of power at the end of the novel has shifted slightly. Lucy's visionary gift enables the oppressed members of the ark, and the reader, to imagine a world beyond Noah's borders. The narrative desire that seeks to define and to delimit experience is shown to be incapable of fulfilling itself. In The Wars and in Famous Last Words the failure to achieve a coherent, stable identity is presented as somewhat tragic. Not Wanted on the Voyage presents this failure as a blessing. Closure in this novel would represent a victory for the villain. Open-endedness becomes a form of resistance to tyranny. In this sense, Not Wanted on the Voyage is more postmodern than any of Findley's previous

works. In his following novel, The Telling of Lies, Findley explores further the moral aspects of narrative desire for coherence and closure, exposing its dangerous tendencies in a contemporary political setting. Taken together, these two novels seems to warn that the operation of the law and the desires which drive it must be persistently examined, not only in the Bible, but in all textual constructs.

Chapter Seven

The Telling of Stories and The Telling of Lies:A Mystery

"Danger! What danger do you foresee?"
 Holmes shook his head gravely. "It would
 cease to be a danger if we could define it,"
 said he.

-- "The Copper Beeches"

As I have noted in my discussions of his first five novels, the desires of many different genres make their way into Findley's texts, affecting the shape of his narratives. None of the previous novels is so deeply grounded in one particular genre as The Telling of Lies: A Mystery, which announces its affiliation within its subtitle. The subtitle brings into play a complex code of associations for the reader. It calls up expectations for an evocation of all that is mysterious and uncanny. At the same time, it calls up expectations for a solution to the mystery, a containment of the uncanny. This is the double tradition of the genre.

Stephano Tani traces this double tradition back to Edgar Allan Poe's Dupin, the prototype of the genre's detective figure. Dupin represents "rationality exorcising the irrational" (7). The detectives of Arthur Conan Doyle, Agatha Christie, Raymond Chandler, Howard Engel and Eric

Wright follow in Dupin's footsteps. As Sherlock Holmes was well aware, the detective's task is to use logic to define the source of danger, to restore order to the world of the text by naming the agent of disorder. In Holmes's case, that naming usually marks the end of the task, and the end of the story. Once the criminal element is defined, the mechanics of the legal system take over, punishing and eradicating the aberration. Yet even the most conventional detective fiction raises the spectre of the unnameable aberration, the nemesis of the detective. Holmes's Moriarty, for instance, prefigures a more generalized nemesis of many later detectives, including Findley's Vanessa: a societal corruption too widespread to be fully contained by the individual. The "hard-boiled" school of mystery writers (Dashiell Hammett, Raymond Chandler) casts the detective as "a lonely hero who clings to a personal moral code, no matter how absurd his devotion to it may seem" (Tani 22). Chandler's Marlow and Engel's Benny Cooperman often solve their cases with a sense of futility, fully aware that their efforts are a mere drop in the bucket of general corruption. In Vanessa's case, she begins her detective work with a sense of justice, believing that the solution to the mystery will restore order. But by the end of the novel she has become somewhat hard-boiled, not only about justice, but about the very nature of reality.

The desire for explanation and containment, embodied in the detective figure, is the driving narrative force of the mystery genre. In many ways, the narrative desire of the mystery is an exaggeration of classical narrative form in general, the epitome of the "well made plot," with beginning, middle and all important end. As Dorothy Sayers once argued, Aristotle would have loved it. Such plots are driven by the insatiable desire to make sense out of experience by imposing on it a narrative structure which "demarcates, encloses, establishes limits, orders" (Brooks 4). The search embodied in Oedipus and Hamlet, the search of the gothic heroine Jane Eyre, and the search for self-understanding embodied in so many modern heroes -- Saul Bellow's Henderson, Robertson Davies's Dunstan Ramsay, Margaret Atwood's Marianne McAlpine -- all lead the reader through a series of clues and snares which result in revelation. Even the search for Mr Right in the Harlequin Romance takes the structure of detection, with false leads represented by the presence of handsome men who will not turn out to be the groom who will close off the quest.

Findley's own novels contain several detective figures. Hooker's eavesdropping is a form of detection, and his quest is driven by insatiable, suspenseful desire, as over-stated in one passage:

What had happened? What was happening? What was happening? What was happening?

What was happening?

What was happening? What was going to happen

... ? (184)

The California Police in The Butterfly Plague are failed detectives who emphasize the failure of society at large to realize that "one thing leads to another." The researcher in The Wars is another failed detective, although in his case the failure is more complex. The Wars follows the double structure of the mystery, reading the past in order to rewrite it in the present. It repeatedly returns to the scene of the crime, searching for clues with which to construct this story, but the evidence is inconclusive. In Famous Last Words, Quinn and Freyberg also search for clues to past crimes. Freyberg, conducting "a little research" of his own (56), with his files and his collection of physical evidence, is a type of hard-boiled detective. As in The Wars, the crime he seeks is too large to be contained.

Findley's novels all display a keen awareness of the semiotics of genre, an ability to use the various codes set into place by past forms. In The Telling of Lies, he deals with the mystery genre in a distinctly postmodern fashion. Umberto Eco writes that "the postmodern reply to the modern consists of recognizing that the past, since it cannot really be destroyed, because its destruction leads to silence, must be revisited: but with irony, not innocently" (Postscript 67). This is the tone with which The Telling of

Lies revisits the detective novel, ironically playing with its notoriously rigid conventions.

Findley brings to the novel numerous stock conventions: the search for clues; the retracing of events; the multitude of suspects, including the necessary mysterious, beautiful woman; wild chases; red herrings; and the denouement in which all is explained to the reader. But he uses most of them in a parodic manner. The search for the aberrant element is ultimately disrupted. Vanessa, like the traditional detective figure, embodies the narrative desire which moves the story forward from the unknown to the known. In this process, the detective, as plot-maker, must explain away anything which does not make sense. Findley's novel draws attention to the potential abuse of this project of rewriting the past, focussing on the political aspect of narrative desire. The roles of victim, villain and detective are inextricable. The moral victory does not go to the one who can best construct the true story of the past. That story is frighteningly relative. All power lies with the teller of the tale, the shaper of the truth.

The Telling of Lies also doubles the typically double structure of the detective novel. For while Vanessa relates the events of her present detection in order to understand a past crime, she also relates events from her personal past in order to understand her present self. Vanessa has a kind of dual personality, each side following one of the two

modes of characterization Findley uses in his previous novels. The private Vanessa, the one whose journal we read, has psychological depth, and a traumatic past which has forged a complex personality. The public Vanessa seems to lack depth; to her friends, she is a kind of stock character. She rarely speaks to others, except to exchange pleasantries. Instead, others come to her with their problems, taking her silence for wisdom (18), an important asset for a detective. Vanessa is the only character who has much depth in this novel. In this, Findley follows a convention common to the type of mystery, like those of Agatha Christie, that focuses on the puzzle rather than the characters. The mystery genre demands a multitude of suspects, and the characterization of each must be intriguing, but brief. Nigel Forestead's briefcase, chained to his wrist, Lily's choice of a birthday card, and Mercedes's facelift are all details which are a kind of shorthand for characterization. Publicly, Vanessa fits in with these other characters; she plays the role of a respectable spinster, reminiscent of Miss Marple. Privately, she lives in a Findleyesque world where the war she survived is still taking its toll some forty years later.

At the end of Famous Last Words, Mauberley's epilogue evokes an uncanniness which resurfaces in The Telling of Lies:

Think of the sea [....] Imagine something
mysterious rises to the surface on a summer
afternoon -- shows itself (395)

What is this mysterious shape which Mauberley has seen? It sinks back beneath the surface, unnamed, unremembered, but not absent, for "a shadow lying dormant in the twilight whispers from the other side of reason; I am here. I wait" (396). Dennis Duffy reads this ominous shape as "the appeal of violence and irrationality" (203), an interpretation which would align it with Thornton Wilder's notion of the "constitution of human nature for evil" which Findley takes as an epigraph to The Telling of Lies. It also seems to signify an unheeded warning. But without such interpretations, it remains unknown and uncanny. The shape is the sign of the thing unnamed, the trace it leaves behind, the undeciphered clue, the tip, say, of an iceberg.

The iceberg in The Telling of Lies is an uncanny phenomenon, which "will not go away, in spite of reason" (28). It is a clue: something which has crossed a border, disturbing in its "absurd and incomprehensible presence where it should not be" (27). More specifically, it is a parody of the obvious clue -- a postmodern version of Poe's purloined letter -- huge, omnipresent, and bearing "an eerie likeness to the Capitol Building in Washington" (28). It both reveals itself and conceals itself at the same time.

When Freud wrote about the phenomenon of the uncanny in literature, he was particularly fascinated by the word unheimlich, with its doubled, paradoxical meanings. Like the mystery genre, the meaning of this word "finally coincides with its opposite" (Freud 347). "[On] the one hand [heimlich] means what is familiar and agreeable, and on the other, what is concealed and kept out of sight" (345). Unheimlich, then, is the unfamiliar, the uncanny, and also the unhidden: "the name for everything that ought to have remained secret and hidden but has come to light" (345).

In his essay "Unhiding the Hidden," Kroetsch points to the powerful link between naming and hiding. He argues that certain Canadian writers are engaged in a process of "unnaming," in which the hidden aspects of our culture are unhidden.

The Canadian writer's particular predicament is that he works with a language, within a literature, that appears to be authentically his own, and not a borrowing. But just as there was in the Latin word a concealed Greek experience, so there is in the Canadian word a concealed other experience, sometimes British, sometimes American.

(Lovely Treachery 58)

Taking examples from Atwood, Davies and Wiebe, Kroetsch argues that these writers are uncovering an essential Canadian experience, throwing off the colonizing names and

unhiding something "essentially new" (63). In The Telling of Lies, Findley portrays an opposite process. In this novel, that which is hidden does come to light, but it is Canadian complicity with America. And it does not remain unhidden for long. Like the mysterious shape in Famous Last Words, and unlike the conventional solution in a detective novel, it is quickly hidden again. What comes to light is the unfamiliar, that which ought to have remained secret and hidden. Narrative desire seeks to name it, explain it, and hide it away.

Icebergs, by their nature (nine-tenths submerged), are signs of hiddenness, and "iceberg" is another word whose meaning finally coincides with its opposite. It derives from the German berg, which refers both to the mountain above the surface and to the mine below; it is linked with the words burrow and bury. It is associated with another German paradox as well -- the verb bergen, 'to hide, conceal' or (mysteriously) 'to salvage, to excavate' -- to uncover, to bring to light.

Almost any meaning can be inscribed upon the white surface of Findley's iceberg. It floats offshore showing only its tip, an invitation to write in the rest of the story, to complete the picture. It acts as a sort of Rorschach test for the characters in the novel, who deal with its appearance in a variety of ways, wanting to use it as a tourist trap, to exploit it as an advertising gimmick

or, more simply, to "blow the bugger out of the water" (30). Vanessa's reaction is to capture it on film; then she wonders:

What is it? What? This instinct to raise the camera in the face of wonder -- to stare through a viewfinder into the face of calamity? [...] All this picking up of pencils and pens and cameras, brushes and tubes of paint and broken bits of charcoal, all to record bewilderment. (27)

It is narrative desire that lifts the camera to the eye, the desire to structure, to contain and to name. The iceberg, as the sign of difference, arouses this desire.

It is a similar desire that drives Vanessa to record in her journal the memories of her time spent in a prison camp in Bandung, Java, during World War II. Memory, she says, "buffets you with stories out of sequence [...] It seems to take all its cues at random" (132). In her journal, Vanessa restructures her memories, places the stories into sequence, into order. Vanessa's writing is a form of self-construction. Like *Mauberry*, though with far less sinister connotations, Vanessa makes her marks on paper in order to see herself whole. She inscribes the statistics of her life -- her name, birthdate, nationality -- because, she says, "it gives me concrete evidence of what I know in the face of what I do not know" (117).

Vanessa is very particular about language. She frequently stops to comment on a peculiar turn of phrase, especially if it seems to contradict what she perceives to be her "witness" (a common occurrence in this novel). For example, when police set up a roadblock at Sutter's Hill, down the road from her vacation hotel, Vanessa is shocked to hear that they are demanding identification from passing motorists. Once identified, tourists are waved on with the monosyllable "Pass." It is the use of this word "pass" that stops Vanessa short, and strikes her, at first, as incongruous, outrageous: "As if it was a border. At Sutter's Hill" (36). The border here is reminiscent of Noah's borders, signalling the infringement of tyrannical authority. To Vanessa, it is reminiscent of the borders of the prison camp, which, she has convinced herself, are far in the past. Vanessa and Meg have an upper-class attitude toward the police. They have no fear of the police, but view them as "impertinent" (36). At the murder site, Vanessa finds the questioning of the police "outrageous" and "astonishing" (67). "Charm is lost on them" (66), she complains, as though she were criticizing bad-mannered guests at a garden party. These women have never known what it feels like to be on the wrong side of the police. In their monied, sheltered lives, they have operated under the assumption that the police operate to protect the people, not to harass them. That kind of thing doesn't happen in

America, or at least not in their neighbourhood. Vanessa holds to a fairly straightforward correlation between language and reality. She seeks the truth which will explain away the mysterious events she witnesses. But by the time the border at Sutter's Hill has been clearly drawn, the border between truth and lies has been clearly blurred. Vanessa changes from a detective to an anti-detective, and narrative desire in this novel eventually deconstructs itself.

The detective is the reader of clues, and a clue is that which is out of its place, that which has crossed a border. Findley plays with the conventional questioning of the witnesses performed by the detective: did they notice anything unusual, out of the ordinary? As Vanessa says, a clue shouts out to the detective, "I shouldn't be here!" (186). Calder Maddox, the murdered drug magnate, who "owned half the world and rented the other half" (11), has a rigid daily routine. Every morning Joel Watts, hotel employee, plays a part in this routine, bringing in the breakfast tray, peeling Calder's orange, helping him on with a pair of white gloves to protect his sensitive hands. After Calder's death, Joel is visited by two men in suits and shoulder holsters who want to know just how this routine went on the morning of the day Calder is found dead on the beach. Despite their sinister behaviour, these men seem to be conducting a typical investigation into a murder. This is

the detective's job: to examine small details -- coffee, oranges, gloves -- to discover what is out of place, what does not make sense. The detective discovers "what really happened" by reconstructing a story that does make sense, one into which all the clues will fit. Their method at first fools Joel into thinking that they are detectives, but they are only going through the motions of the operation. They are not trying to discover what happened, but to cover it up. They don't need logic to write the story, they have power. They tell Joel that Calder died in his room early that morning, or maybe even the night before.

"How can [that] make sense?" said Joel. "It didn't happen that way."

"But we say it did" [they answer]. (126)
Casually revealing the presence of a snub-nosed Magnum, the men offer Joel 600, then 800 dollars if he will agree with their version of events. He refuses, and reports this exchange to Vanessa.

Vanessa's reaction to hearing Joel's tale is a meditation on the nature of memory, the reconstruction of events:

They wanted to impose a sequence of events that didn't jibe with [Joel's] experience; his witness. Their motive was sinister; yes. But it need not have been. I, too, have rearranged the order of

events -- according to my ability to grasp their meaning. (131)

This rearrangement, this telling of lies, is a powerful and pervasive drive, the novel suggests. Vanessa's parents were also prisoners. Her mother, Rose Adella, was in the women's camp with her daughter. Her father was kept in the men's camp. When Vanessa's father tried to cross the border between the two camps, at night, to visit his wife, he was shot and killed before her eyes. Vanessa ponders Rose Adella's version of this event:

Ever since my father's death, my mother's opinion of that event had been that he had died in her arms, the victim of an unnamed plague. It was as if she had never seen [his body] lying in the rain. When reminded he had died specifically because he could not reach her arms, my mother denied it vehemently. (149)

Rose Adella's fictional "plague" is reminiscent of the plague of perfection which is constructed through similar stories in The Butterfly Plague. In this case, the rewriting of history which covers up the crime is actually performed by the victim, who cannot live with the painful memory, and is thus complicit with the powers that are destroying her. Findley does not confine the telling of lies to the villains in this novel. Rose Adella's memory

reconstruction is voluntary, fuelled by the desire to maintain a romantic vision of her marriage.

There was nothing Rose Adella could do to stop the murder of her husband. To have attacked the Japanese soldiers would have been suicide. In the supposedly democratic society of North America, however, the people decide who will be placed in positions of authority. The freedom of expression allows for open protest. But, as the novel demonstrates, this is an illusory freedom, a story we tell ourselves. This story hides the nearly total control of those in power, which perhaps we do not want to face. The democratically elected government is in conspiracy with corporate power, as signified by the involvement of the drug companies in the novel. It is backed by the violence of the police and, if need be, the military. But this force is rarely needed against the domestic population. The authority of these institutions is effectively maintained through the process of the telling of lies in which the domestic population is complicit.

Narrative desire can function to imprison. This connection is made clear. A prison contains, controls, delimits. Narrative desire seeks to remove things which are out of place, to erase those which do not fit. It has the power to shape the version of Calder's death, Vanessa's story of her past, Rose Adella's memory and, presumably, the writing of a mystery novel. As Sherlock Holmes knew, it's

very simple: remove that which cannot possibly be the case, and what you have left is the truth. The process of detection, like that of war, is the process of elimination. Elementary.

The mystery in this novel is threatening, yet as the net of logic and explanation begins to close in on the solution, it becomes apparent that elimination will not be a simple process. Deductive logic and the correct reading of clues (186) enable Vanessa and her sidekick Lawrence to discover the location of their kidnapped friend Lily, so that she can be rescued. In this instance, knowledge and logic triumph over the danger of the unknown. But as the novel progresses, the force of logic grows more and more suspect, and the representatives of the unknown and the uncanny, particularly the mysterious Honey Girl, are increasingly associated with the role of the victim, rather than the villain.

Vanessa has never thought too heavily on such concepts since the war, which is now over, and therefore seemingly contained within history. Colonel Norimitsu's prison camp is not only years in the past, but on the other side of the ocean, in the Orient: strange and mysterious place, dream-like and removed. The apparent "otherness" of the Japanese is a trap, especially for the Canadian reader who is inclined to forget the prison camps that existed right here in British Columbia. Vanessa marvels at the naivety of

herself and her fellow Americans in Bandung, 1941. "What was the drug we took back then?" she wonders (104). The drug is the same today: "it cannot happen here" (104). The drug is the logic of denial, the logic of the prison. Narrative desire works its irresistible magic, insisting that the war had a beginning, and a middle, and that it has come to an end. To Vanessa and her contemporaries at the Aurora Sands Hotel, the prison camps of war are not only foreign, but in the past. A border at Sutter's Hill? It can't happen here.

It does happen here, as Vanessa is finally forced to admit. The only difference, it seems, is that in this society the prisons have open doors. At Bandung, armed men and barbed wire marked the border clearly. When the bombs fall on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the Colonel announces to the prisoners their liberation, and the Japanese withdraw from the camp, fleeing into the jungles. Vanessa recalls the scene that followed: the women waiting, the gates standing open, nobody moving (117). This tableau seems to signify the beginning of a new way of life for Vanessa: one in which the prison walls are not gone, just invisible. In this new life there is no need for restraint; the prisoners restrain themselves. In contrast to the motif of the closed door in The Last of the Crazy People, the doors in this novel are all wide open. But nobody passes through them very often. When government body guards escort Vanessa to a room, order

her to wait, and close the door behind them, she remains there for twenty minutes, assuming that the door is locked (236-39). In fact, it is not. The motif of the willing captive in a room with an open door seems, in the context of this novel, a commentary on the so-called freedom of democracy which we supposedly enjoy in our society. The restraints are invisible, but they are perfectly effective. Margaret Atwood expresses it beautifully in a poem: "In this country you can say what you like/ because no one will listen to you anyway" ("Notes Towards a Poem That Can Never Be Written").

Throughout her investigation, Vanessa discovers several similarities between the prison camp at Bandung and the resort hotels on the coast of Maine. The social façade she witnesses among the elite guests at a presidential reception is compared to

what we used to call in prison the game of nothing is happening here. This is the game you played when you were sitting on your cot, with a radio receiver under your mattress, and a Japanese guard walked into your barrack. (287)

Vanessa draws a parallel between Moira, a young fellow prisoner at Bandung, and the Honey Girl, who lives in "Half Way House," down the beach from the Aurora Sands Hotel. Moira was rejected by many of the women prisoners because her pregnancy was a sign of the sexuality that had been

denied them and because she was pregnant by a Japanese man (114-15). The Honey Girl, like Moira, is a woman alone. She, too, seems to represent a sexuality that causes discomfort among her neighbours. Her habit of swimming naked elicits a bizarre reaction from Nigel, who interprets her behaviour as a sexual invitation (23). Her willingness to dance with a black man, despite the racist taboos at an exclusive hotel, elicits "dark whispers and unvoiced accusations" (248) from the other guests. In the prison camp of high society, public behaviour is carefully codified. The Honey Girl is marked as something out of place, something out of control. As such, she is another representative of the uncanny, which must be contained. The Honey Girl haunts this novel in a way that suggests that she is, allegorically, mystery itself. She appears when the mystery appears, and disappears when it disappears, as though she were the muse of detective fiction, watching over the world of the text. She also reverses the order of things, for her corpse turns up at the end of the novel, instead of at the beginning where it belongs. The criminal in this final crime is perhaps the rigid standards of society at large.

These examples of social control, however, only foreshadow the far more sinister political control that Vanessa eventually uncovers. The Telling of Lies is a postmodern anti-detective novel similar in several ways to

Tani's definition of the genre. While the detective novel typically lusts after closure, the anti-detective novel foregrounds this lust by frustrating it, refusing to give the reader the traditional pay-off. Tani identifies three main strains of the anti-detective novel: the innovative, the deconstructionist, and the metafictional. Both his innovative and his deconstructionist categories have aspects pertinent to The Telling of Lies. In the innovative novel, a solution may be found, but the solution does not imply the punishment of the guilty nor the restoration of order (Tani 43). In the deconstructionist novel, the mystery may conclude, not with solution, but with the "suspension" of solution; and the crime may turn out to be "a conspiracy by a secret organization ruling and perverting society" (Tani 43). The Telling of Lies meets these criteria with (of course) a few twists. The solution to the crime does not imply the punishment of the guilty because the usual distinction between victim and villain is blurred beyond recognition. And the conspiracy is not, as in Tani's example of The Crying of Lot 49, the work of some shadowy metaphorical enigma. It is, quite clearly (if only we had paid attention to that iceberg), the American government and its related institutions -- including the Canadian government.

Vanessa's detection leads her finally to discover that the government is implicated somehow in the murder. But

this disclosure does not restore order. Instead of closure, she and Lawrence find an opening -- a gap in the "story" of America. Vanessa has the courage to go on. Of Lawrence, she notes, "His gate stood open, but he would not go through" (260). And at the end of the novel, at the expected conclusion, the reader also finds an opening, a gaping hole with the world beyond the text showing through. Meg Riches, the murderer of Calder Maddox, is also his victim. Her husband Michael has been virtually destroyed by Calder's drugs, administered by Doctor Allan Potter of the Makin Memorial Institute in Montreal, a barely disguised double for the late Doctor Ewen Cameron of the Allan Memorial Institute, also of Montreal. Findley's character Michael suffered a breakdown, possibly caused by overwork, and was admitted to the institute by his loving wife who believed he would receive the very best in modern medical care. There, like at least 52 real-life patients at the Allan, he was subjected to a barrage of highly intrusive and dangerous treatments, including the use of experimental drugs until, as his wife puts it, "he no longer knew what his legs were for -- or his fingers -- or his tongue -- or his eyes -- or his ears -- or -- name it!" (347).

It has been widely suggested that similar procedures at the Allan were actually experiments to develop brainwashing techniques for the C.I.A., or at least to study the effects of brain-washing (see Marks). This allegation has never

been proven in court. However, regardless of the specific agency responsible, the experiments, or so-called "treatments," were quite military in nature.¹ Doctor Cameron viewed mental illness as a sort of faulty structuring. The patient's "brain pathways," he believed, had been formed by "incorrect" learned responses, and Cameron set out to correct their structure. First, the patient was subjected to "depatterning." This was accomplished either by sensory deprivation or, more efficiently, by prolonged periods of drug-induced sleep, coupled with electro-convulsive shock therapy, or ECT. After periods often exceeding 60 days of forced sleep, including up to 30 days in which ECT was administered twice daily at 20 to 30 times the so-called "normal" intensity, the patient suffered severe memory loss. Thus, as one doctor puts it, the mind became a "clean slate" (Dr. Brian Robertson qt. in Gillmor 56). Repatterning was accomplished by means of "psychic driving," during which the patient lay in bed, sometimes drugged with LSD, sometimes immobilized with curare, while a tape recorder under the pillow repeated messages chosen by the doctor: rational explanations for a patient's faulty behaviour, and a list of sensible reasons for changing that behaviour. According to one estimate, the patient might hear these messages up to half a million times (Cooper 20).

Because the hospital was publicly funded, in part, the Canadian government launched an inquiry into the events at the Allan Memorial. To head the investigation, they hired George Cooper, Q.C. Cooper was a former Conservative Member of Parliament. Not surprisingly, he found the Canadian government clear of all responsibility. In his report, Cooper employs a fascinating metaphor to describe Cameron's methods:

Under Cameron's theory, one might compare the patient's brain to an old-fashioned telephone switchboard, in which all the wires were plugged into the wrong holes. In depatterning, all the wires were pulled out; in repatterning, the aim was to plug all the wires back into the right holes. (15)

The purpose was to "reprogram" the mentally ill. Through this series of violent manoeuvres, the doctors destroyed what they found to be incomprehensible. They then replaced it with reason by feeding in explanations through narrative coercion much as one might force feed a comatose patient through an intravenous tube. With a motivation eerily parallel to that which drives the detective novel, the doctors eliminated mystery by erasing the story that made no sense and by rewriting a more coherent story on the empty slate.

Many literary critics agree that it is the containment of the uncanny which is the appeal of the detective novel.² Identification with the detective provides the reader with the vicarious experience of imposing order on events, eradicating mystery. Several theorists in fact use the word "exorcism" to describe the detective dynamic. But in The Telling of Lies, it is exactly this type of exorcism that the villain is engaged in. The Telling of Lies unravels the rhetoric on which the whole genre is based. For at the heart of the mystery is the eradication of mystery, an uncanny canniness, an insane desire for sanity. What narrative desire seeks to explain and to contain turns out to be explanation and containment. What narrative desire uncovers finally is itself -- gone mad

Michael's wife tells Vanessa how she was kept from finding out about his treatments. The doctors told her that her visits might "disorient" him, keep him from getting well (384). Their explanations fulfilled her desire to know, contained her fears. After all, the doctor knows best. Despite the numerous references in the novel to the opening and closing of gates, the doors of the institute are never mentioned. But the most famous attribute of the Allan Memorial was that it was an "open" institute, that is, none of the doors were ever locked. They didn't have to be. Most of the time, patients were kept in and their families

kept out by a border drawn with carefully told stories -- carefully told lies.

In the novel, agents of the government act swiftly to cover up the true story of Calder's murder. They are willing to let the murderer go free in order to avoid any damaging lawsuits. They kidnap the only witness and brainwash her, using Makin Memorial methods, until she believes the recorded words they feed her, rather than her own witness. When Vanessa discovers that the murderer is actually the victim, and that the villain is so large as to encompass virtually everybody, she destroys the evidence she has worked so hard to obtain. She feels she has joined the enemy. She is even "prepared to do what they have done: even to use their weapons" (359). Vanessa's world view has been shaken. What she has ceased to believe in is not only a certain order in which right is clearly distinguishable from wrong, and in which the state operates to protect its people. More fundamentally, she can no longer believe, as she did, in an order in which language corresponds to truth. In her search for the truth, Vanessa has discovered our "ability to lie collectively" (288), that is, our ability to call something into being by naming it, to make something disappear by not naming it -- the tremendous power of narrative desire.

Vanessa takes for herself the power of lies, and prepares to hide the unhidden once again "if the truth

should rise to the surface of Lily's mind and I am forced to move against her" (359). By the end of the novel, truth has become nothing more than a convincing enough story. "I would ask whoever questions this to tell me what is right," Vanessa challenges (359).

The story of the Makin Memorial, finally, remains hidden. Like Mauberley's mysterious shape, it is only momentarily unhidden. It goes unnamed and therefore unremembered -- an unsolved/unsolvable crime, though not without victims. The mystery of the iceberg and the mystery of the Honey Girl remain unsolved as well. The Honey Girl is "a thing out of place," someone who does not fit in. Like the husband in the women's prison, or the patients at the Makin Memorial, she is different, and therefore dangerous, different, and therefore in danger. Her drowning at the end of the novel has, of course, a simple public explanation: "They've blamed it on the iceberg and they've called it an accidental drowning" (358). The iceberg, gigantic sign of the narratable -- disequilibrium, insufficiency -- is used by officials to move the story of the Honey Girl into the realm of the nonnarratable. The pain of this woman, "with her desperate apartness and her appalling loneliness. And the way she eyed the distance out beyond the gate" (358) revealed something which ought to have remained hidden. To hide it again one need only "blame it on the iceberg," one need only explain it away.

Findley's novel untells the official version of her death, but does not replace it with another version. The novel's ending strives to keep the woman's story unnarratable -- not simply to retain an enigma, but because, in the context of this novel, this seems the only way to avoid "lies."

"The bastards," Vanessa comments, "They don't see anything that's real" (358). What "they" don't see is anything beyond the border of the rational. What they don't want to hear is that "whisper" from "the other side of reason." From within the detective genre -- the epitome of narrative desire for explanation and closure -- Findley's novel explores society's reaction to difference, a reaction which too often mirrors the detective dynamic with violent and destructive consequences.

Chapter Eight

In Conclusion

In conclusion, I am grateful to the methodology developed by Miller and Brooks which allows the reader "to see the text itself as a system of internal energies and tensions, compulsions, resistances, and desires" (Brooks xiv). This method of reading is very helpful to an understanding of Findley's fiction, which increasingly works out its conflicting desires in "the text itself" over the course of his career. In the process, Findley's work brings to light the power of past social and literary texts, such as the meta-narratives which he explores. These past texts live on not only in the individual words and phrases, the literary allusions, for example, that creep into Mauberley's discourse and become complicit in his rationalization, but in the hidden, unspoken desires for origins and endings, wholeness, truth and knowledge, which are imported into our own discourse as we repeat them. In Findley's first novel, this process is in operation, although he is not yet resisting it in the structure of his own narrative. His later novels tend to work out the conflict through narrative structure as well as story, and therefore the concept of narrative desire becomes most useful to the reader.

The technique of chronicle form in The Butterfly Plague, the double structure of The Wars, the embedded narrative in Famous Last Words, the play with beginnings in Not Wanted on the Voyage, all speak desire through the structure of the narratives themselves, as well as in the stories they tell. In The Telling of Lies, we read the signs of desire not only as they are expressed by the characters, but in the very shape of Findley's narrative. The plot structure itself moves the reader in a direction which promises to lead away from mystery and toward explanation. And, true, we do reach explanation -- at least in the story. Vanessa solves the crime and learns, through the denouement, why it was committed. The crime itself turns out to be fairly easy to understand. Calder was responsible for incapacitating Meg's beloved husband. Meg's motive is revenge, which takes the form of a logical exchange: a life for a life. Vanessa's reaction is also logical, in a sense; she resolves to protect her friend whatever the cost. The uncanny element of the novel surfaces, like the iceberg, when the reader tries to impose a conceptual structure which mirrors the detective dynamic. The binary opposition between mystery and explanation cannot hold. For the mystery is, in fact, the very need for explanation. This deconstruction of narrative desire occurs within the system of energies that constructs the text itself.

Reading the desires of the text allows the reader to see coherence and closure not as logical constructs, but as signs of desire. Spivak argues that "the impulse to narrate [...], the impulse to think of origins and ends [...] is a need rather than the way to truth" (Post-Colonial Critic 20). Findley's exploration of the meta-narratives of various traditions brings this need to light. The tragedy on which he models his first novel needs to close off aberration and cleanse the stage of difference; so do the patriotic films of Letitia which reflect the story of fascism; the military story of heroism which writes out Robert Ross; the modernist story of literary heroism which tries to erase the contradictions of Mauberley's life; the biblical law which silences animals, women, homosexuals, and all those who question it; the logic of detection which seeks to erradicate the illogical. Yet neither the telling of stories, nor the concept of authority is completely condemned in Findley's fiction.

For even in Findley's most postmodern works, Not Wanted on the Voyage and The Telling of Lies, narrative desire emerges as one way to counter the repressive stories of irresponsible authority. Lucy's story of a place where the darkness and the light can be reconciled, where the unicorn still lives, if we will remember it, serves to unite the powerless, to give them the hope that enables them to rebel against Noah. Vanessa's restructuring of her memories of

Bandung enables her to read the story of the present in order to realize what is happening around her. And almost every book retains the traces of a desire for a stabilizing, benevolent authority. It is important, in the context of any discussion of Findley's authority figures, that many of them are condemned because they have abdicated power. Hooker's father, who sits at the steering wheel of a car going nowhere (147), is as guilty of lacking leadership ability as he is of using it. Mauberley Senior's suicide, the Duke of Windsor's abdication, Yaweh's consenting to his own death, all signal a loss of authority which precedes violent disorder, not liberation. Mrs Noyes's prayer for rain reveals her desire for some force that would control Noah's rampant destruction. It is a prayer "to the absent clouds" and "the empty sky" (352), a desire for the forces of nature to overcome the unchecked force of culture. Even Vanessa's complaint about the "impertinent" police contains a wistful desire that the police should be otherwise, not that they should cease to exist.

The postmodern text privileges fragmentation and open-endedness. It is difficult to argue that Findley's texts do so whole-heartedly. Perhaps the text that comes closest in narrative structure to this ideal is his second novel, The Butterfly Plague, which precedes his reputation as a postmodern writer. For in that novel, more clearly than in any other work, the forces of coherence and closure

are associated with the ruthless fascism of the Nazis and the atrocities they committed in the name of purity. Although all of his novels resist closure, the chronicles of The Butterfly Plague do so most blatantly. In his following novel, The Wars, the desire for coherence and closure is not only embodied in the military meta-narrative, but in the researcher's desire to seek the truth about Robert Ross. This desire is disrupted by the forces of violence in society which make coherence and closure impossible to attain; this is as much a source of agony as it is of Barthes's "bliss." It seems to me that no dichotomy -- open/closed, coherent/incoherent, logical/illogical -- has an unambiguously privileged term in Findley's work.

Concepts of wholeness, origins, truth and closure, are all tools in the gaining and keeping of power. But is power itself to be accused? Findley's fictions suggest that we need to have power in order to point effectively to its abuses. The Last of the Crazy People demonstrates, in its fanatical impulse toward closure, that closure leads only to death. But The Butterfly Plague, even as it fights spiritedly against closure, warns that "one thing leads to another," and without imposing some form of narrative closure on events, we will be blind to where they might lead. Not Wanted on the Voyage points to the possibility that both the desire to preserve origins and the desire to deny their presence may be made to serve the will to power.

The Telling of Lies, which promises to expose the lies of the oppressors and thus to overcome them by revealing the truth, ends up demonstrating that lies can as easily be used as a tool of the oppressed. Findley himself always tells his stories in (fairly) coherent narrative structures, even as he calls those structures into question. It seems that it is only possible to undo the meta-narratives through narration.

What I come away with, after my reading of Findley, is a sense of narrative as a process rife with conflict. Writing is a form of violence, as Findley's ragged openings suggest. This violence, however, is not a phonocentric myth; it is not to be found solely in the way that writing ruptures the dream of self-presence. Nor is it to be found solely, as from a strictly deconstructive perspective, in the way that it constructs that dream, and its sometimes violent consequences. Writing continually constructs and ruptures the dream, and in fact puts its very status as a dream into question, for "what does that mean? The opposition of dream to wakefulness, is that not a representation of metaphysics as well?" (Of Grammatology 316).

I have written that Quinn engages in a dream of closure when he dates the writing on the wall and believes that the horror of war is over. By this I imply that the war is not over. If we dream that it is, we are being seduced into the

silence and amnesia that will ensure its continuation. For violence as a means of perpetuating power is in no way on the wane in this world. On the other hand, is such a dream not necessary, if we are to put an end to war? For how can we make it end if we cannot envision the peace that Quinn envisions? Like Lucy's story of faith in the dark hold of the ark, some such dream is necessary. The trick, perhaps, is to be aware that we are dreaming, even as we dream. The same could be said for the dreams of self and story -- of origins, truth and presence. We cannot not dream them, but perhaps we can strive to remember that we are dreaming. Spivak's project of persistent re-examination (In Other Worlds 117), unsatisfying and inconclusive as it is, must serve. One of the things it serves to do is to keep the argument going.

Perhaps narrative is never a cohesive structure, but rather a sign which marks the struggle among conflicting desires. I had hoped, at the outset of this project, to gauge the relative strengths of these desires -- to set myself up as a sort of referee, deciding which desires would out. But in conclusion I can only refer to the inconclusiveness of the match. The struggle is ongoing. In fact, more than any one of the desires which work themselves out in these novels, it seems to be the struggle itself that keeps narrative in motion. In their constructions of self and story, Findley's narratives oscillate between a vision

of wholeness and a vision of fragmentation. Which vision is only a dream? The one seems always to desire and to dream of the other.

ENDNOTES

Chapter One: Openings

1 The stories discussed in this chapter appear in the following collections: "About Effie," "War," "Lemonade" and "Losers, Finders, Strangers at the Door" in Dinner Along the Amazon; "The Name's the Same" and "Real Life Writes Real Bad" in Stones.

2 Genesis 1 and Genesis 2 tell two different and logically incompatible stories.

3 My analysis of "The Paper People" is based solely on the script as printed in Canadian Drama/L'Art dramatique canadien.

4 It is interesting to note that Chambers himself seems to have difficulty with this point. He recognizes that subject positions can be thought of as being produced by discourse, rather than vice versa. He therefore seems uncomfortable using terms such as "narrator" and "narratee" which, he feels, imply "a common sense world in which speakers produce discourse for hearers, as opposed to

speakers and hearers being produced by their shared discourse" (22). He takes care to point out that these terms have a "fictional status" and should not be confused with "realities" -- a rather tautological distinction, as it assumes the very separation (between fictional and real narrative entities), which it argues against. Nevertheless, I find myself doing the same, referring to Neil as the "narrator" or to Quinn and Freyberg as "narratees." Perhaps, as Chambers suggests, "it should be an important priority of narrative theory to produce a conceptual apparatus less misleading [...]" (23). However, the presence of an analytical model within a theoretical argument which denies its existence is perhaps a very good example of the kinds of conflicting desires which I am discussing here.

Chapter Three: The Butterfly Plague

1 Exact dates and times are used also in "The Book of Pins" (Dinner Along the Amazon) and in The Wars. The Wars also contains the warning that "one thing leads to another" (10).

Chapter Four: The Wars

1 Robert Ross quite probably takes his name from that of Oscar Wilde's Canadian friend and lover. See Coral Ann Howells's "'History As She Is Never Writ.'"

2 The only suggestion of this in the text is found very early in the novel: "In the end, the only facts you have are public. Out of these you make what you can, knowing that one thing leads 'o another" (10). The use of the second person in the novel is complicated and could probably engender a whole other essay. It is sufficient to note here that while "you" often refers to a researcher of some sort, there are also times when "you" appears to refer directly to the reader (eg. 158). "You" is also often used in the colloquial, universal sense, where it seems closer to the French use of "on." For example, in a description of the house of prostitution (where the researcher is definitely not present), "you" is used throughout: "On entering Wet Goods, you were greeted by a large, male mute who was said to be Swedish. [...] A negro woman took your coats and called you Cap'n' no matter what your rank. Then you were left to stand in the hallway, not quite sure which way to turn" (38). In conclusion, the "you" who must "make what you can" is less easily identified as the researcher than most critics assume.

3 For comparisons of The Wars with other novels of WWI, see Eric Thompson's "Canadian Fiction and the Great War," Coral Ann Howells's "'Tis Sixty Years Since'" and Sister M. L. McKenzie's "Memories of the Great War: Graves, Sassoon, and Findley."

4 In fact, there is a trebling of distance, if one takes into account the fictional status of the photographs. Linda Hutcheon notes: "There are no photographs in The Wars; there are only descriptions of photos, imaginary ones at that" (Canadian Postmodern 50).

5 In Derrida's terms, the concept of phonocentrism privileges the voice and the breath. In Of Grammatology, this privileging is connected to the belief in being fully present to oneself (a desire for coherence and self-knowledge), a metaphysical concept which Derrida deconstructs using as his tools the metaphors of speech and writing. "The reflection, the image, the double, splits what it doubles" (36). Fear of this split (which has always already occurred), gives rise to the privileging of speech over writing -- or of breath itself over a photograph of breath. But the realization that breath contains within itself the possibility of being photographed (as speech contains the possibility of being written) deconstructs the hierarchy.

6 I am thinking of Lacan's conception of the "mirror stage," in which the infant sees his own reflection and has the illusion of wholeness and coherence (Ecrits).

Chapter Five: Famous Last Words

1 I use the term narratee in order to distinguish the role of Quinn and Freyberg from the role of the novel's readers. Quinn and Freyberg are extradiegetic narratees in relation to Mauberley's narrative, but they are intradiegetic in relation to Findley's narrative -- to which they cannot be narratees (See Genette 248). The narratee of Findley's narrative is the reader her/himself. Gerald Prince terms the reader of an entire work, "including the title," the "main narratee" (24), which he distinguishes from the "real reader" (25). In keeping with my practice in the chapters above, I will continue to refer to this external reader as, simply, "the reader."

2 Quinn's first name is never mentioned, leading some critics to speculate that it might be Daniel (Shields). Findley's Quinn may take his last name from John Quinn, the New York lawyer and patron of the arts, who supported Pound, Joyce, Wyndham Lewis, and numerous visual artists as well. The connection would be an apt one, as John Quinn was a kind of ideal reader for the modernists, offering not only

appreciation but financial support, promotion, and legal aid (Reid).

3 Franklin is probably based on the late Janet Flanner, Paris correspondent from 1925-75 for the New Yorker, who was known for the moral concern which she brought to her writing. Flanner reported on many of the famous figures of modernism and wrote a damning account of the life of Charles Bedaux for the magazine.

4 I am indebted to Stephen Scobie for pointing out the intricacies of this allusion.

5 A similar fate is shared by Diana in "Sometime -- Later -- Not Now" (Dinner Along the Amazon); Clair in "Desperadoes" (unpublished novel, c. 1975; Papers 10-14); and Lily in "Whimper" (unpublished novel, c. 1971; Papers 15.14-16). The character is likely based on the dedicated musician Clara Schumann.

Chapter Six: Not Wanted on the Voyage

1 Although Derrida goes on to deal with the law of genre in a different manner than I do here, his point is taken. The law contains its own deconstruction.

2 Not Wanted on the Voyage takes, as an epigraph to Book Four, Genesis 9:2 which repeats the promise made by God in Genesis 1:26 -- that humans shall rule over the animals. Findley once considered "Genesis One Twenty Six" for the title of an unpublished novel (Papers 12.13 c.1975) later called "Desperadoes."

3 These words are attributed to "the Irish essayist and critic Nicholas Fagan" (Wars 191), who apparently does not exist. Eva-Marie Kröller writes: "In a reading given at the University of British Columbia in November 1981, Findley explained that Fagan was the pen-name of an aunt of his, an unsuccessful author. I suspect that Nicholas Fagan is a resident of "Findleyland" (74 n.1).

4 Stephen Scobie raises this question about Famous Last Words ("Eye-Deep in Hell" 207-08).

5 The novel also has to fit within the borders of contemporary literary tradition, to a certain extent, in order to be accepted by its contemporary audience. Findley, like Noah, had to decide who would be allowed to board the ark of the book. The faeries almost didn't make it on board, he says, because he was afraid of straying too far from convention (in conversation, 1990).

Chapter Seven: The Telling of Lies

1 See Holquist, Knight, Spanos, Hatman, Tani.

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