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The Sounding Board:
W.O. Mitchell's Fiction on CBC Radio

Roger des Ormeaux

A Thesis
in
The Department
of
English

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts at
Concordia University
Montréal, Québec, Canada

June 1994

c Roger des Ormeaux, 1994



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ABSTRACT

The Sounding Board: W.O. Mitchell's Fiction on CBC Radio

Roger des Ormeaux

The major task of this thesis will be to explore the **thematic** and **technical** relationships between the fictional works of W.O. Mitchell and the radio plays he derived from them for CBC Radio, from 1949 to 1983.

On the **thematic** side, I will examine the evolution of Mitchell's personal and social values in his early works of fiction and draw comparisons with the perspectives presented in the related radio dramas. It will be my contention that, because of the public nature of radio drama, and the corollary wide range of audience sensibilities, Mitchell refrained -- until the very end of his career as a radio dramatist -- from giving the full measure of the increasingly sobering vision of the human experience displayed in his first three novels, when he adapted them for radio.

On the **technical** side, a major issue will be Mitchell's use of fictional techniques in his early radio drama adaptations, as well as the evolution of his radiophonic style over the period studied. I will also give evidence that, by the end of his career as a radio dramatist, Mitchell's dramatic work was, conversely, significantly influencing his fictional style and technique.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my advisor, Dr. Howard Fink, for his help and patience in the production of this thesis. I am also beholden to Dr. Fink for his invaluable work as the founder and Director of the Concordia Centre for Broadcasting Studies, where CBC radio drama scripts from the nineteen-twenties to the present day have found a permanent home. The facilities at the CCBS, as well as Dr. Fink's comprehensive bibliographies of CBC radio drama, proved to be indispensable in the production of this thesis.

I am also grateful to Dr. John D. Jackson of the Concordia Department of Sociology and Anthropology, and co-Director of the CCBS, for his faith and support. Finally, my heartfelt thanks go out to Shirley Sibalis, archivist at the CCBS, for her help, encouragement, and friendship.

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First, for years I thought of myself as a Platonist with presbyterian overtones. (...) But, in later years, I've come to realize that in fact I am an Existentialist as an artist and as a person. And that Existentialism is a falling/balancing act with no absolutes. And so what you're faced with in life, or illusions of life, is balancing -- there's no either/or. There are no total victories; there are no total defeats. You end up accepting that life involves dilemma, contradiction, and no absolutes or simplicities. So now we get to the greatest dilemma of all -- which is involved in the heart of The Vanishing Point -- are you going to be a slob Romantic and go for the green living whole? Are you going to say that we must all return to our primitive childhood of the Indian? You can't. It's dreadful. It's horrible. What's your alternative? The asphalt ghetto? The oversimplified mirror image of technology and of man? So when Carlyle takes the trip from the green ghetto, he goes into the asphalt ghetto. And all you can do is, between the two, leave very minor victories. I still say "yes" to man, but it's a qualified yes."¹

W.O. Mitchell

¹ O'Rourke, David, "Interview With W.O. Mitchell," in Essays on Canadian Writing, No. 20, Winter 1980-81, pp. 153-54.

PREFACE

Over the span of almost thirty-five years, from 1949 to 1983, Canadian author William Ormond Mitchell wrote over two hundred radio scripts for the CBC, both plays and episodic serials. Despite the fact that this represents the largest volume of his output,² very little critical attention has been given to Mitchell's radio work. In 1979, Alan Yates produced a doctoral thesis³ on the long-running and immensely popular serial, Jake and The Kid, which accounts for three-quarters of Mitchell's total output for radio. In his thesis, Yates laid down a strong foundation for a scholarly investigation of Mitchell's radio drama material. Because so little had been done before, Yates took a general approach to the 'Jake and The Kid plays,' devoting much of his thesis to Mitchell's biography, the social and literary context in which the serial was produced, and the technical processes used in getting the material to air. More work needs to be done in analyzing Mitchell's substantial literary and dramatic contributions to Canadian radio in its "golden age."

² He has written eight novels, some sixty short stories, six stage plays, thirty-eight television plays, and four film scripts, as well as numerous articles and speeches.

³ W.O. Mitchell's Jake and The Kid : The Canadian Popular Radio Play as Art and Social Comment, McGill University thesis.

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There are some forty of Mitchell's radio plays that have had almost no critical investigation. These plays can be divided into three types in terms of the manner in which they were produced: 1) the Foothill Fables series⁴ - twenty-seven anthology plays, written originally as radio dramas; 2) eleven individual plays written exclusively for radio; 3) seven plays which are adaptations of Mitchell's own short stories, novels or stage plays.⁵ There is some minor overlapping within the three categories; Mitchell was not averse, for example, to adapting a scene from one of his novels or one of his unpublished fictions into a radio play for The Foothill Fables series. But the three categories are clear enough to be considered distinct.

For the purpose of this thesis I will focus my attention on the third type, Mitchell's adaptations of his own fictional material to the radio medium; though there will be the necessary references to the Jake and The Kid serial, the Foothill Fables series, and the other radio plays unrelated to his fiction. The main reason for this focus on plays based on his fictions is my conviction that Mitchell's novelistic vision and fictional techniques were, as his career progressed, significantly influenced by what he was learning

⁴ This series originally aired on the CBC Trans-Canada Network from 25 December 1961 to 19 January 1964.

⁵ See APPENDIX C, p. 110, for a complete listing of radio drama titles from these three categories.

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while writing for radio. In this light, these adaptations are particularly significant because they represent the clearest point of contact between the two media.

It will be my contention that Mitchell's fictional style, though it made abundant use of dialogue from the very beginning, was further developed and polished by his radio experience. The adaptation of fiction for the eye into fiction for the ear sharpened Mitchell's innate sense of the spoken word. As a result, in his second and third novels (The Kite and The Vanishing Point), entire chapters would be almost exclusively based on dialogue, and the narrative sections would become significantly more confessional.

From his very first experiences at adapting his fictional works for radio in 1949 and 1950,⁶ Mitchell found himself facing difficulties and contradictions. Although he had already written one original radio play, "The Devil's Instrument,"⁷ he still faced the technical problem of adapting

⁶ "A Chaperon for Maggie" (radio play script), produced by Andrew Allen, 1st broadcast 1 May 1949, Toronto, Trans Canada Network, 49 pp., 60 mins. and "The Liar Hunter" (radio play script), produced by Andrew Allen, 1st broadcast 21 May 1950, Toronto, Trans-Canada Network, 44 pp., 60 mins.

"The Liar Hunter," based on a 'Jake and The Kid' short story, first published in Maclean's magazine in August of 1945, was used as the pilot for the radio serial.

⁷ "The Devil's Instrument" (radio play script), produced by Andrew Allen, broadcast 27 March 1949, Toronto, Trans-Canada Network, 50 pp., 60 mins.

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his natural talent as a raconteur to the already well-established conventions of the radio-dramatic art. Who would have thought that Mitchell, best known for his clever use of naturalistic dialogue and as a gifted speaker, would run into problems in making the transition to a medium based principally on the human voice. But that is precisely what happened.

Mitchell's short stories and first novel had proven the author's talent for producing unique and plentiful dialogue. Yet he was aware from the very beginning that making his type of fiction work on radio was not simply a matter of deleting narrative segments and retaining dialogue. Narrative bridging techniques that worked well on the written page became awkward and cumbersome if transposed directly to radio. Moreover, by this time the omniscient narrator in radio drama seemed an artificial, contrived means of communicating information to the listener.⁸ As in the cinema, audiences had grown with the radio medium and had learned to accept its evolving and more complex dramatic conventions and semantics.

Other technical difficulties included adapting fictions of various lengths within a fixed time format, mainly involving the distillation of longer works into effective and

⁸ In the Jake and The Kid serial, Mitchell used the character of the Kid effectively as a limited narrative link between scenes; but he relied less and less on the technique over the years, as the audience grew familiar with the self-contained world of Crocus, Saskatchewan.

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hopefully artistically satisfying interpretations of the original pieces in the new medium. But the most difficult of Mitchell's problems lay in the widening distance between the deepening seriousness of his novelistic world view and what was expected of him by the CBC radio audience. Though in his novels he dealt more and more directly with serious social and moral questions, in his radio adaptations of his fictions, he seemed nevertheless to attempt to live up to the reputation he had acquired in and around the medium as a genial and good-natured satirist in the lineage of Stephen Leacock and Mark Twain. This inner tension was most acute during the nineteen-fifties, when Mitchell was writing The Alien,⁹ a dark and pessimistic novel, while he was at the height of his fame as the author of the lighthearted Jake and The Kid radio serial.

This thesis will be structured chronologically around the individual radio dramas Mitchell wrote for CBC Radio and based on his own works of fiction. I will analyze the methods and techniques developed by Mitchell in translating his fictions for radio in terms of style and substance. The cross-

⁹ This novel, though submitted to Macmillan as a complete three-part, 900 page manuscript in 1953, was never published in book form. A serialized, nine chapter version was published in Maclean's magazine from 15 September to 15 January 1954. The greatly modified and re-written third section resurfaced as The Vanishing Point in 1973.

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influences of the two media on Mitchell's writing style will be closely examined.

CHAPTER 1

At the Crossroads: W.O. Mitchell's two writing careers

William Ormond Mitchell first made a name for himself as a short story writer in the mid-nineteen-forties, publishing mainly in Maclean's magazine. Though he produced a variety of stories in his first five years (1942-47) of professional writing, his "Jake and The Kid" short stories soon overshadowed his other material in terms of popularity. However, it was not until the publication of Who Has Seen the Wind in 1947 by Macmillan of Canada that he fully arrived on the national literary scene and was consecrated as a major Canadian writer. The immediate success of his first novel opened doors for him that he had not imagined possible only a few years before. In the early part of 1948, he gained even greater national prominence by accepting a job in Toronto as the fiction editor at Maclean's. Leaving his native Alberta seemed a small price to pay at the time for the exposure he would get in such a prestigious post.

Up to that point he had supported himself and his family with a variety of odd jobs, teaching positions, and the publication of short stories. The Great Depression had taken its toll on him as it had on most Canadians and, as Pierre Berton has remarked, evidence of his years of penury were

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still evident in his choice of clothing during his first year at Maclean's. A steady income was a refreshing change for Mitchell, but it would also bring its own share of disadvantages.

His principal artistic objective remained focused on the novel, but he was soon to realize that a full-time job at a magazine would necessarily keep him from any long-term writing project. Indeed, during his three years at Maclean's, from 1948 to 1951, he all but abandoned writing The Alien, which should have been his second novel. He had originally begun work on The Alien in 1946, shortly after he had completed the manuscript for Who Has Seen the Wind. He was not to go back to it until late in 1951, well after he had quit his job at the magazine and moved back to High River, Alberta.

By the end of his tenure at Maclean's however, Mitchell's writing was channelled into a new direction, one that may have seemed natural from his readership's perspective, but a direction which came to him as something of a surprise. His high national profile had attracted the attention of the CBC, and he was offered the possibility of writing for radio. Mitchell first ventured into the new medium by writing two radio dramas for the CBC in 1949, "The Devil's Instrument" an original radio play, and "Chaperon for Maggie," adapted from one of his own short stories. The plays were well received, but they did not have as much impact on the CBC audience as

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might have been expected, coming from the pen of one who was considered by many as Canada's most promising writer.

It was during this period that Harry Boyle, then Program Director of CBC Radio's Trans-Canada Network, suggested to a somewhat reticent Mitchell that he should adapt his "Jake and The Kid" concept into a radio serial. After a brief period of reflection, Mitchell relented and agreed to give it a try. Of course, Mitchell's decision to take up radio drama writing on a regular basis was primarily founded on his hope of gradually gaining his independence from the pressures of the job at Maclean's. The plan worked, and within a matter of scarcely eighteen months, this new avenue in his writing career was to lead him away from Maclean's and back to the Alberta foothills he loved so dearly.

Yet once again, Mitchell's success was to cause him as much strife as it did satisfaction. Jake and The Kid on CBC radio was an immediate success, and before he could weigh the repercussions of the serial's exigencies on his life and work, he was being pressured to produce a half-hour radio drama per week. The first Jake and The Kid play for radio was adapted from his short story "The Liar Hunter", and aired on the CBC Trans-Canada network on 21 May 1950. This special one hour trial-run for the serial was produced by Andrew Allen for this

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one occasion. The serial itself, produced by Peter Francis,¹⁰ began as a replacement Summer series on 27 June of the same year and then continued on for six regular seasons, ending on 26 April 1956. The nearly 200 half-hour weekly episodes Mitchell wrote during those years were to mine his creative energies and take him even further away from his novel writing.

The Jake and The Kid serial had transmuted Mitchell into a Canadian icon and, by the end of the nineteen-fifties, his reputation as a humorist and satirist spanned the entire country. Yet therein lay the very contradiction that was tearing at him as an artist: the public's perception of his work, and therefore of the writer, was completely at odds with his own. Despite the fact that he had not published another novel after Who Has Seen the Wind, Mitchell still saw himself, first and foremost, as a novelist. The radio work had been a means toward the end of giving him enough financial freedom to pursue his novelistic ambitions. The reality of it had turned out quite differently.

He spent the greater part of the nineteen-fifties trying to finish The Alien, whenever time allowed, going through draft after draft. The novel came close to being published in 1953, but lack of backing from Macmillan's international

¹⁰ Francis was replaced by Arthur Hiller in 1952, and Esse Ljungh produced the final third of the episodes, from 1954 to the end of the serial's run.

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partners killed the project. Mitchell went back to work on it until 1958, when he finally put it aside, judging that the book's world-view had grown too bleak and its conclusion (the suicide of the main protagonist) too pessimistic. He then began work on Roses Are Difficult Here, which was adapted from a section of The Alien. That novel project was also to run aground for the same commercial reasons.¹¹

By the late nineteen-fifties, Mitchell had been free from the constraints of weekly radio drama writing for a few years, and a second novel had yet to be published. Starting in 1955, as the Jake and The Kid serial had been entering its final season, he had begun writing individual scripts for radio at the approximate rate of one per year, among them adaptations of Who Has Seen the Wind and The Alien. But Mitchell's principal focus was, by 1958, entirely on the production of the much awaited second published novel. The Kite, the seed of which had come, ironically, from the Jake and The Kid serial,¹² was first presented as a completed manuscript to his publisher in July 1960, but was only published in September 1962, after revisions.

¹¹ Though, like The Alien, it also re-surfaced in modified form years later and was finally published in 1990.

¹² The character of Daddy Sherry in The Kite was based on the Jake and The Kid serial's Daddy Johnson, as he appeared in, among other episodes, a special one-hour broadcast on 5 February 1956 titled "Time Is My Enemy," produced by Esse W. Ljungh.

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Though Mitchell was initially happy with the way the book had turned out, the public's reaction to its appearance in print considerably dampened his feelings. The long span of time that had gone by since the publication of his first novel had only served to raise the expectations of his readers. Those fifteen years had infused Who Has Seen the Wind with a mythical quality in the eyes of the Canadian reading public and critical community. Great things were expected of this author. The unprecedented popularity of Jake and The Kid on CBC radio had elevated Mitchell's image as a humorist and as a raconteur to equally legendary levels. In this context, and in a country anxiously waiting for the emergence of its first writer of world stature, The Kite was received with bitter disappointment.

The Kite was, as time has proven, an excellent second novel. Mitchell had successfully avoided the pitfall of trying to duplicate his first success and had written the book he wanted to write. So he was deeply stung by the cold winds of disapproval that blew in from all across the country. The long delay before the completion of his third novel was undoubtedly due in great part to his own reluctant acceptance of the generally perceived failure of his second effort. The

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Kite did not even go into a second printing and his publisher was left with a good number of unsold copies.¹³

During the final months Mitchell spent completing the manuscript for The Kite, he was again offered the possibility of writing a series of plays for radio. This time, the format would be different. Individual original scripts were to be written for a weekly series to be titled "Foothill Fables." The series ran for two half-seasons, the first beginning on 25 December 1961, and ending on 25 March 1962, the second spanning the period between 3 November 1963 and 19 January 1964. A total of twenty-seven plays were written for the series.

On 12 June 1964, almost two years after the publication of the novel, a radio adaptation of The Kite aired as part of the prestigious CBC Stage series. This sixty minute adaptation was produced by Gustaf Kristjanson, who had by then inherited the mantle that had been previously worn by Esse W. Ljungh as foremost Western Director of CBC radio drama. The play spanned forty typescript pages. In 1981, Mitchell wrote a stage adaptation of The Kite, in which he made important modifications to the novel's story and cast of characters. This new work was followed, two years later, by its radio drama counterpart. The latter, a ninety minute presentation

¹³ Shortly after the publication of The Vanishing Point in 1973, The Kite was reprinted by Macmillan's and has remained in print ever since.

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on Saturday Stereo Theatre, was produced by Fred Diehl, and came in at one hundred and twenty-four script pages.

It is obvious that Mitchell had, in time, re-evaluated the project thoroughly and was quite willing to infuse new life into the characters and the plot. In his second radiophonic interpretation of The Kite, he made major changes to the story and delighted in testing the limits of the greater freedom of expression on CBC Radio in the nineteen-eighties.

After the first version of The Kite for radio, Mitchell discontinued making his yearly contribution to CBC radio as he had prior to and during the "Foothill Fables" series. Between mid-1965 and the radio adaptation of his stage play "Back to Beulah" in 1976, the only plays bearing his signature to be broadcast on CBC Radio were new productions of older material such as "The Black Bonspiel of Wullie McCrimmon," "Yes, My Darling Daughter," "Who Has Seen the Wind" and "The Alien." During those years, Mitchell became as much a part of the Canadian landscape as the prairie and foothills he had made famous. He was solicited by a wide variety of organizations and academic institutions for speaking appearances, universities across Canada offered him writing residencies, and many writing projects came his way, mainly from government sources. The period between the publication of The Kite and his first writing residency at the University of Calgary in

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1968 was however very difficult on him as a novelist. He still felt a deep bitterness that stemmed from the fact that his reputation was almost exclusively based on the popularity of Who Has Seen the Wind and the Jake and The Kid serial.

Having been kept busy by all kinds of secondary projects, including a play he co-authored with Robertson Davies, Yves Thériault and other regional writers for Canada's Centennial-year celebrations, Mitchell did not get back to his novel writing until late in 1967. At this point he decided to return to The Alien, which was a project he felt compelled to complete. Using the core idea of the third section of the original manuscript, he began re-writing the novel from scratch. He soon changed the title to The Vanishing Point, and work on the book progressed at a slow but steady pace. In its final form, The Vanishing Point was itself divided into three sections. The first and third sections were composed of new material, and the second, recounted as a flashback, was in great part constructed from the original third part of The Alien. The novel was finally published in the Fall of 1973. Public reaction was again lukewarm, although the book was generally well received critically.

It is ironic that, once again, Mitchell should have been haunted during the writing of The Vanishing Point by the very thing that had derailed his novelistic career a quarter of a century before. Indeed, CBC chose to re-broadcast a limited

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20-episode version of the Jake and The Kid serial in 1969 and 1970, when he was most deeply involved in the writing of his third novel. The serial was a treat for the fans of the original broadcasts and introduced 'Jake and The Kid' to a whole new generation of Canadians, but it once more set the focus of Mitchell's audience on only that one aspect of his writing talent.

If a constant was to have emerged at this point in the pattern of Mitchell's writing career, it was that his novelistic world view, his true intellectual vision, was conflicting with the one he had developed in the radio drama material that had become the foundation for the enduring fame of his public persona. Mitchell is still plagued by this phenomenon today, even though he has now written eight novels. While discussing the subject of the public's perception of his more recent work during a 1993 interview on CBC television he alluded to the Jake and The Kid serial and Who Has Seen the Wind, as just so many "monkeys on his back."

A radio drama version of The Vanishing Point was never to become a reality. A slightly re-edited script of "The Alien" had been produced by Esse W. Ljungh, and broadcast on 14 January 1968, and because the two novels had used the same general storyline as a matrix, a radio play based on The Vanishing Point would undoubtedly have seemed strange to the

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CBC audience, despite the major new developments and the radically different ending of the 1973 novel.

In the years that went by between his third novel and his fourth,¹⁴ Mitchell wrote several theatrical adaptations of earlier material, among which a stage version of a play that had begun its life on radio, "The Devil's Instrument." In 1973-74, he wrote the play "Back to Beulah" as a television script for Fletcher Markle's national television drama series "The Play's the Thing." A radio adaptation followed shortly thereafter and was broadcast on 10 January 1976, in an award-winning production for the CBC Stage series. The play also enjoyed a great deal of success on the theatrical stage and can definitely be considered as one of his major works, right alongside his novelistic output. Then, after a long silence of seven years, the 1983 broadcast of the second radio drama version of The Kite was to be his final bow as a working radio dramatist.

Since then, Mitchell's radio work has only re-surfaced in rare re-broadcasts of 'Jake and The Kid' plays on Morningside as well as a one-time-only re-broadcast of Fred Diehl's 1983 production of The Kite in 1990. Mitchell has gone on to write five more novels since The Vanishing Point, and at a much

¹⁴ How I Spent My Summer Holidays, Macmillan of Canada, Toronto: 1981.

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brisker pace than in years past: How I Spent My Summer Holidays (1981), Since Daisy Creek (1984), Ladybug, Ladybug (1988), Roses Are Difficult Here (1990) and For Art's Sake (1992).

The creative tension that had developed through three decades between Mitchell the novelist and Mitchell the public figure has relaxed to a great extent these last few years. Since the early nineteen-eighties, Mitchell has had more time to dedicate to his novels, and has also been able to draw from the invaluable experience he acquired during the difficult birthing process of his first three efforts. Though the general reading public may still perceive him as the writer of the classic Who Has Seen the Wind, W.O. Mitchell seems to have at least reconciled himself with his own self-image.

For W.O. Mitchell, though he has been quite prolific, writing never came easily. The quantity of energy expended by his CBC bosses and producers to squeeze plays out of him during his 'Jake and The Kid' years has become the stuff of legend. His first novels were excruciatingly long to produce. Yet in hindsight, it is clear that all the obstacles, conflicts and setbacks played an invaluable part in his apprenticeship as a novelist. Indeed, despite his efforts to prove the contrary over the years, Mitchell was and is, both

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the good-natured prairie satirist who fathered 'Jake and The Kid' and the serious novelist who has delivered some of the most profoundly honest and sombrely poignant portrayals of the Canadian psyche in our literature. The two conflicting parts of this writer are what keep his novelistic vision so piercing and harsh, yet empathetic and forgiving.

Mitchell's years as a radio dramatist, far from having been a long detour down a secondary road, turned out to be the best training ground for his type of naturalistic writing style. The CBC was, so to speak, Mitchell's graduate school. Though the road was not always paved and the direction signs may have been few and far between, it can be safely said that he completed the degree requirements with distinction.

Of all the plays that Mitchell wrote for the CBC, his radio drama adaptations of his own works of fiction must necessarily stand apart in terms of a critical analysis of the cross-influences of the different literary media in which he worked. These plays are situated at the vertex of Mitchell's relationship with the writing experience in that they offer valuable insights into the manner in which he perceived the qualities and weaknesses of each form of expression. From the perspective of analyzing a writer who saw himself primarily as a novelist, it is interesting to examine not only how the two media interfaced, but also what they exchanged in the longer term. In the chapters that follow, I will examine the

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principal works of his own fiction that W.O. Mitchell adapted for radio. I will analyze the methods and techniques he used in arriving at a finished product and I will also evaluate the degree of influence that these writing exercises had on Mitchell's mature fictional style.

CHAPTER 2

"The Liar Hunter:"

Grappling With a New Dramatic Vocabulary

"The Liar Hunter" first appeared in Maclean's on 15 August 1945. It was the tenth in the series¹⁵ of W.O. Mitchell's "Jake and The Kid" short stories to be printed in that magazine before the publication of Who Has Seen the Wind in 1947. The appearance of 'Jake and The Kid' stories in Maclean's had become well anticipated events since "You Gotta Teeter"¹⁶ had introduced the Canadian reading public to the inhabitants of the fictional town of Crocus, Saskatchewan, in 1942. By the time Mitchell wrote his first radio drama version of a "Jake and The Kid" story, the main characters, as

¹⁵ Eleven "Jake" stories were published in Maclean's from 1942 to 1947: "You Gotta Teeter," 15 August 1942; "Elbow Room," 15 September 1942; "Wimmen Is Humans," 1 December 1942; "Voice for Christmas," 15 December 1942; "Gettin Born," May 1 1943; "Woman Trouble," 1 July 1944; "Old MacLachlin Had a Farm," 1 September 1944; "Frankincents an' Meer," 15 December 1944; "Somethin's Gotta Go," 1 July 1945; "The Liar Hunter," 15 August 1945; "Two Kinds of Sinner," 1 June 1946. Only one other story was published prior to the beginning of the radio serial: "The Day Jake Made Her Rain," 1 March 1948. This last story was to be adapted as the first thirty-minute episode. It aired on 27 June 1950.

¹⁶ Mitchell had published only one short story before his relationship with Maclean's began. "But As Yesterday" appeared in Queen's Quarterly Vol. 49, no. 2, in 1942.

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well as the locale, were quite familiar to Canadians. This fact was to help Mitchell in his adaptation of "The Liar Hunter," the first 'Jake and The Kid' story to migrate to the radio medium in May of 1950.

Though Mitchell knew that he did not have to spend an inordinate amount of time introducing his newly-acquired radio audience to his repertoire of 'Jake and The Kid' characters, he was however aware that the real difficulty lay in making the material radiophonic. His two previous experiences¹⁷ with radio drama writing had taught him that radio, despite appearances, was not an easy medium to tame.

Narrative links that are conventionally accepted in one medium do not necessarily function in another. Where the fiction writer can almost always rely on his narrator to create connections between narrative shifts in time, locale or point-of-view, the radio dramatist, when dealing with the same technical considerations, generally tries to use dialogue, musical bridges, sound bridges, or sound effects before resorting to narration.

Mitchell had struggled with these problems the previous year in "The Devil's Instrument" an original radio drama, and "Chaperon for Maggie," an adaptation of one of his short stories. In the first of these two plays, Mitchell had

¹⁷ "The Devil's Instrument" and "Chaperon for Maggie" both aired in the Spring of 1949.

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written-in two narrators, an anonymous narrative voice, and the voice of the Devil, who did not participate directly in the action, but acted as a conventional narrator would in fiction. This somewhat odd arrangement stemmed from the fact that Mitchell had stumbled into a classic radio drama conundrum. On one hand, he wanted to introduce his audience to the social environment of the play, which was set in an Albertan Hutterite community, and on the other he felt he needed a narrative link to guide the audience through a complicated series of events and situations. Furthermore, it is obvious from the text itself that he also wanted to include glimpses into the thought process of the play's main character. This represented, in terms of radio drama technique, a full plate of problems.

"The Devil's Instrument" tells the story of a sixteen year-old Hutterite boy, Jacob Schunk, who, upon coming of age, opens his eyes to the hypocrisy of his religious community's beliefs and way of life. The "instrument" of the title refers to both the harmonica that he learns to play, despite the taboo it represents, and his long-lost brother Darius, who rejected the Hutterite faith many years before. It is Darius who buys the mouth harp for Jacob, and thus initiates the process of the boy's entrance into adulthood through a confrontation with the religious community's code of conduct.

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The anonymous narrative voice is used only at the beginning of the play to introduce the Hutterite beliefs and lifestyle to the audience, the Devil taking over the general narration of events after a minute and thirty seconds. Mitchell could hardly avoid the first narrative voice because he **did** have to acquaint listeners with the particularities of a religious community that was unknown to most Canadians at that time. The only other solution would have been to reveal the social and ethical parameters within which the play operated through awkward expository dialogue. This would have slowed down the action for a good deal longer than ninety seconds and would have corrupted the naturalistic style of dialogue on which Mitchell had built his reputation. The decision to go with an opening narrative passage was, in this light, a defensible one.

However, things got complicated when the second narrator had to enter the fray. Technically, the transition was well done, and even adroit considering Mitchell's lack of experience in radio drama. As the first narrator finishes his speech, a cross-fade to the Devil's voice continuing a list of his aliases smoothly passes the narrative torch:

NARRATOR: In this story of the Hutterites, all places and characters are purely fictional -- with one important exception -- an individual of many aliases: The Devil, Old Nick, Old Scratch, Mephistopheles...

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MUSIC: FADES OUT, AS DEVIL COMES IN CONTINUING
ENUMERATION

DEVIL: ... Satan, Beelzebub, Old Cloutie, take your
pick. I'm a travelling man. I travel in sin.
I travel in souls (PAUSE) wholesale souls and
retail sin.¹⁸

But this simple solution to a linkage difficulty between two narrators did not resolve the entire problem. The structural predicament within the play goes far deeper than is at first evident. From the moment of transition between the two narrators to the end of the play, the Devil interrupts the flow of the story on twenty-two separate occasions. Towards the end of the play, Mitchell uses his Devil/narrator nine times within a three-minute segment, as a counterpoint to the inner struggle that Jacob goes through when the events in his life press him into decisions he is not eager to make.

At this point, the technique begins to feel heavy-handed as the Devil's monologue oversteps the boundary between radio drama and fiction and becomes an indispensable component in the logical progression of the play. It is here that the play unwittingly exhibits the flaw in its conceptual matrix, revealing that the Devil's "point-of-view" is but a pretext for the use of omniscient narration:

¹⁸ "The Devil's Instrument" (radio play script), produced by Andrew Allen, 1st broadcast 27 March 1949, Toronto, Trans-Canada Network, 50 pp., 60 mins, p. 2. All future references to this work will be to this typescript.

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DEVIL: When he returned to the colony, Jacob was stirred with new wonderings about this life that stressed the puritanical and offered only joyless religion and the muscle-wearying life of men with hoes. He thought of the after-harvest marrying to come soon, but he also thought of the things that the discarded mouth organ sharpened and made more vivid for him.¹⁹

The second, and in fact most important function that the Devil filled in the play was as a buffer between Mitchell and any possible negative backlash he might have encountered had he tackled the issue of religious orthodoxy head-on. In "The Devil's Instrument," as in his first novel, Mitchell let transpire a world view that was quite removed from the light comedic style of the 'Jake and The Kid' stories. The Devil/narrator enabled Mitchell to distance himself from the serious social critique he was weaving out of the experience of a fictional Hutterite boy, by injecting a measured dose of fantasy and humour into the play. Mitchell used a similar technique a few months later in the comic radio drama "The Black Bonspiel of Wullie McCrimmon,"²⁰ but for entirely different reasons.

In "Bonspiel", the devil is a participant in the play and the entire weight of the play's comic effect lies on the

¹⁹ "The Devil's Instrument," p 36.

²⁰ "The Black Bonspiel of Wullie McCrimmon" (radio play script), produced by Peter McDonald, 1st broadcast 30 July 1950, Toronto, Trans-Canada Network, 22 pp., 30 mins.

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shoulders of the Faustian myth it is parodying. "The Devil's Instrument" is much closer in spirit to Mitchell's novelistic fiction than to his 'Jake and The Kid' stories, whereas the style found in "Bonspiel" is but a transposition of a Crocus-like social environment into another receptacle, with all the comedic properties left intact.

Using the Devil as a distancing device, as he did in "The Devil's Instrument," was obviously a deliberate attempt on Mitchell's part to dampen the impact of his social comment on the religious and moral sensibilities of the CBC radio audience of the nineteen fifties. This technique was but one of many Mitchell used in most of his radio adaptations of his serious fiction. Through the years, a pattern of distancing devices and conscious elisions was to emerge that points to the fact that he believed, and perhaps rightly so, that the two media were not geared to the same sensibilities. Mitchell obviously perceived radio as a more public, more "popular" medium that, by its very nature as a **broadcasting** instrument, could reach more "creative partners"²¹ and therefore ruffle more feathers in a single evening than a novel could in a year.

Although one can understand Mitchell's motives for approaching "The Devil's Instrument" technically in the manner

²¹ Mitchell's own appellation for his readers and listeners, as expressed in his lectures and articles about the art of writing.

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that he did, the structural problems that resulted point directly to his lack of experience in writing for radio. Mitchell had made the mistake, in the case of "The Devil's Instrument," of conceptualizing the play as he would have a novel. He had set up the method by which he would approach his theme with the eyes of the novelist, not the ear of the radio dramatist. The ground rules of fiction paralysed the structure of the play as Mitchell struggled with the proverbial square peg that he had whittled. The end result was that the emotional impact of the play was weakened by the use of an external narrator. A more naturalistic technique would have allowed for the exposition of the main character's feelings through dialogue or the radiophonic equivalent of the theatrical soliloquy.²² Mitchell's over-dependence on narration kept the play from blossoming into a more immediate and confessional radio drama.

Despite its technical weaknesses as radio theatre, "The Devil's Instrument" is nevertheless an interesting piece of writing in terms of theme and character development. And though it may not be as purely radiophonic as it might have been, it did serve to prove that Mitchell could preserve his

²² These two techniques are at the core of radio drama's uniqueness in that they allow for a one-on-one rapport to be built between radio characters and the listener. Mitchell's reliance on a narrator subverted this aspect of radio drama's strongest suit and kept the characters in "The Devil's Instrument" from developing fully.

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fictional themes, albeit with minor compromises, in the new medium he was entering. In his second radio drama effort titled "Chaperon for Maggie," Mitchell demonstrated, by trying a new approach, that he was concerned with the imperfections of "The Devil's Instrument."

"Chaperon for Maggie" was adapted for radio from the short story "Shoparoon for Maggie," published in Maclean's in May of 1948. It is a light comedy of no great thematic or technical importance. Yet it is worth noting that there is substantially less narration in this play than in "The Devil's Instrument," indicating fairly clearly that Mitchell was attempting to improve on his previous endeavour. Though the setting and characters are introduced by an anonymous narrator, there are only three more narrative interventions in the play. All other transitions are accomplished by dialogue and sound bridges (with varying degrees of success). This is also particularly interesting in light of the fact that, contrary to Mitchell's usual style, the original short story was well laden with narrative passages. Unfortunately, the story's farcical and episodic nature did not lend itself well to clear transitions of time and locale in the radiophonic medium. Due to the brevity of the original story, Mitchell added scenes in the radio version that did nothing to advance the two main storylines, both of which were already rather

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uninteresting. Despite the fact that it provided Mitchell with more experience in making his writing radiophonic, the play was a less successful aesthetic experiment than "The Devil's Instrument," and actually may have proven to be an artistic liability when he began adapting "The Liar Hunter" for radio. In terms of his use of narration, Mitchell had grappled with his two first radio dramas on different levels and for different reasons, but he had not achieved a clear victory in either case. Because "The Liar Hunter" was the first instalment of what could become a long-term commitment with the CBC, Mitchell undoubtedly approached the project with the uneasiness that came from the semi-failure of "Chaperon for Maggie."

"The Liar Hunter" tells the story of Mr. Godfrey, a professor who comes to visit Molly Gatenby, lovely daughter of crusty Old Man Gatenby, Crocus' foremost purveyor of tall tales. Godfrey, whose romantic interest in Molly is only equalled by his scholarly interest in the origins of folklore, sees his trip to small-town Saskatchewan as the perfect occasion to do some research in the field. Jake is asked to pick him up at the train station. From the very moment of their acquaintance, Jake unwittingly introduces the professor

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to his savory manner of interpreting and regurgitating reality.

Godfrey quickly realizes that he has struck the mother lode. Indeed, with "creative" liars like Jake and Old Gate around, he will return to the city with a treasure trove of scientific data. Unfortunately, Old Gate does not prove to be cooperative, and Molly begins to perceive Godfrey's note-taking as condescending and impolite. Their relationship quickly sours and Godfrey heads back to the train station, despondent. Jake talks Godfrey into staying in Crocus a while longer.

While in Molly's presence at McTaggart's general store, the professor makes an impassioned speech likening the prairie farmers' tall tales to a psychological shield against the harshness of their environment. Molly is moved by his compassionate vision of her community, and they reconcile. Jake then suggests that they go over to Old Man Gatenby's and impress him with Godfrey's own ability to exaggerate the truth. That evening, prompted by Jake, Godfrey tells Old Gate the fraudulent story of an extraordinary plague of grasshoppers in a nearby town. By the end of his yarn, which centres on a grasshopper the size of a World War II bomber, and its giant egg (that gets dynamited all the way to the United States), Old Gate is mesmerized and Godfrey finally earns his place in the Gatenby household.

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"The Liar Hunter," in its short story form, is written in the naturalistic style that characterized Mitchell's short fiction from the very beginning, and contains a great deal of dialogue. The narration is handled by The Kid, who is a witness and minor participant in the story. He addresses himself to the reader in a relaxed and familiar tone that seamlessly blends into the ebb and flow of conversation between the story's characters. Most of the narrative passages are as much a part of the dialogical structure as the actual quoted exchanges. This shows clearly that Mitchell had been experimenting with the process of breaking down the distinction between narration and dialogue even in his earliest works.

This may seem to be, at first glance, the ideal type of situation for an almost verbatim radio drama adaptation. But though it is true that this type of story is far simpler to adapt for radio than one that would be almost entirely reliant on an omniscient narrator, it is nevertheless not intrinsically radiophonic in terms of structure. However, the amount of change to the basic structure of the story would have been minimal if the **only** goal had been to transpose it into the radio medium. This was not to be the case.

Though the Jake and The Kid serial was conceived as a half-hour weekly presentation, the first instalment, which was scheduled to go to air a month before the serial, was to run

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a full hour. When "The Liar Hunter" was chosen as the lead-off play, the first consideration that was brought to bear on the adaptation was that of the story's length. This story, like "Shoparoon for Maggie" before it, was too brief for the one-hour format. In the finished play-script, the material from the short story, with very little taken out, amounted to approximately twenty-nine pages out of a total of forty-one.²³

The second major consideration was, once again, the narration. Given Mitchell's changing experiments in the development of his radio dramatic technique, it seems that he was, once again, searching for radio drama devices that would allow him to keep the same degree of intimacy with his radio audience that he had developed with his reading audience. For "The Liar Hunter", Mitchell apparently approached the source material as though nothing was to be considered etched in stone in terms of outer structure. He moved existing material around a great deal within a new dramatic structure and wrote important new passages to bridge the scenes. On the other hand, he also seemed aware that the basic story was solid, and that it should not have been compromised by steering away from its internal logic.

²³ The average for one-hour radio drama scripts is between forty-five and sixty pages.

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In terms of radio drama, there appeared to be a conflict between the fact that in "The Liar Hunter," as in all the 'Jake and The Kid' stories, The Kid was the narrator although Jake was in fact the central character. Although this arrangement had worked out quite well in fiction, it is obvious from Mitchell's experimentation that he had begun to reflect on the impact of this possibly dichotomous situation in the radiophonic environment. At this juncture, if The Kid were retained as the semi-external narrator, Mitchell would be facing the same problems that he had to wrestle with in his two first radio dramas. Mitchell's decision to steer away from an external narrative voice prepared the terrain for experimentation.

Since the main character in the story was Jake, Mitchell chose to use him as narrator instead of The Kid. The second device Mitchell worked out was to integrate the radio listener into the play. This was not a new technique, but it had the advantage of allowing for expository information to be gotten out of the way in a more convenient fashion than by dialogue alone, while retaining some of the naturalism of conversational speech. By having a narrator directly address the listener's alter-ego (in this case a "stranger" whose car had broken down on the outskirts of Crocus), Mitchell believed he could circumvent the narration problems he had experienced in his two first radio drama efforts.

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The resulting narrative construct was arrived at by means of cut-and-paste work on the introductory section of the short story, with sentences and paragraphs being used out of their original order (for the purposes of the new vehicle's own internal logic) and spread out over the first ten minutes of the play, with the necessary accommodations being made for the integration of the listener/motorist's predicament. By page six of the play and then all the way to the end, Jake's narrative comments make no reference to the motorist, and the narration is used solely to set up changes of scenes. The listener/motorist is then addressed directly only in Jake's closing comments, and by this time, a good deal of the rewards of the process had already been spent since the audience would have by then forgotten the original use of the device.

The overall effect of the aforementioned techniques was, it is clear, not completely successful. Indeed, a great deal of the charm of the "Jake and The Kid" stories came from the fact that the commentary on the action was from the point-of-view of a twelve-year-old boy.²⁴ With Jake being both the main character and the narrator, The Kid was relegated to the role of a straight-man for the hired man's folksy philosophical musings.

²⁴ Having learned from the experience of "The Liar Hunter," Mitchell returned to the original format from the very first episode of the Jake and The Kid serial to the end of its run.

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Another problem with Jake's dual role as narrator and participant led to ambiguous narrative situations. In a few instances Mitchell, possibly wanting to end some narrative passages with a reminder that Jake was still addressing the motorist, would have Jake directly introduce the first line of upcoming dialogue. This technique was somewhat imprudent in that he ran the risk that the resulting effect would be misinterpreted as awkward radio-writing:

JAKE: That night -- the next day, Godfrey kind of moped around the place. When we rode into Crocus to catch the twelve-ten, he didn't say anything, just sat there in the democrat looking like he didn't have a friend in the world. Pretty good wind had come up, lifting the top soil off the summer fallow so's it got in your ears and in your teeth. *Kid said [italics mine] (FADE)*

SOUND: THOSE HORSES AND THAT DEMOCRAT AGAIN

KID: Sure windy.²⁵

In the Jake and The Kid serial proper, Mitchell would return to the general structure of the short stories, with the narration being kept as brief and unobtrusive as possible. Most of the plays were narrated by The Kid (a small number used Jake as narrator or a combination of the two). The final effect was much more natural than that of "The Liar Hunter,"

²⁵ "The Liar Hunter" (radio play script), produced by Andrew Allen, 1st broadcast 21 May 1950, Toronto, Trans-Canada Network, 44 pp., 60 mins, p. 29. All future references to this work will be to this typescript.

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but was in great part possible because of the long list of Crocusians that the audience had quickly learned to know and love, and who needed no introduction save by being called by their name in the dialogue. In "The Liar Hunter," Mitchell made a conscious effort to adapt the short story so that it could be understood by people who had never heard of 'Jake and The Kid,' and unfortunately, the flow of the play suffered because of it.

Yet, despite some of the play's structural faults, most of the new scenes Mitchell wrote in order to lengthen the piece were successful in helping to flesh out the short story for the radio medium. In "The Liar Hunter," as in all his 'Jake and The Kid' short stories, Mitchell had used a minimalistic approach to narrative structure and exposition, somewhat akin to that of Ernest Hemingway. Two important plot threads in the story were handled with calculated narrative economy: the amorous relationship between Molly and Godfrey, and Molly's projection of her father's fatal flaw onto Jake Trumper. In the first instance, the depth of the lovers' relationship is only hinted at in the short story in two brief narrative references and one piece of dialogue:

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"I'll tell yuh one thing fer certain - they ain't gonna be no liar hunters tied up with thuh Gatenby outfit."²⁶

And later, when Molly tells Jake that he is "the biggest...two-handed...clod-busting liar"²⁷ she has ever known (except for her own father), it comes without much warning in the short story. In this instance, Mitchell chooses to intimate rather than show, by the elision of any preamble to this scene, that the relationship between Molly and Jake, like that of most of the inhabitants of Crocus, is long-standing, unaffected, and a social extension of direct kinship.

Though this approach works well in the short story medium, which has traditionally been the preserve of "slice-of-life" themes and techniques, it does not necessarily translate well into equivalent radio drama techniques. Mitchell therefore made good use of the extra pages that the script needed in terms of broadcast length.

The first scene Mitchell added was one between Molly and Godfrey, where the two lovers share intimate moments together away from the other characters in the play. The scene lasts for two-and-a-half typescript pages,²⁸ and though it does not

²⁶ "The Liar Hunter" (short story), in Jake and The Kid, Macmillan of Canada, Toronto: 1961, p.95.

²⁷ Ibid, p.98.

²⁸ Pages 11 to 13.

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really succeed in making the characters more three-dimensional (their chit-chat is somewhat superficial), it does serve as a necessary backdrop for the events that will occur later.

The second new scene involves an impromptu visit by the couple to the Kid's house, where Jake, Ma and The Kid are going about their daily chores. The scene is crucial in terms of the way in which the play unfolds because, contrary to the short story version, where there is only one visit by the couple to The Kid's house, it allows for the tension to build in a logical fashion, leading to Molly's final emotional outburst in front of Jake and her father. Mitchell also uses the scene,²⁹ which continues after the couple leaves, to develop the relationship between Ma, The Kid and Jake and to give the listener some interesting insights into the local male-dominated philosophy:

JAKE: (LONG PAUSE) Well now, I don't know, Kid. Hard to say. Way I see it -- ain't no reason women shouldn't lie just as much as men -- in a different sort of a way. Like the professor said -- all kinds of lying. Take that there cre-ative lying he was talking about -- takes a sort of a knack -- that kind of lying. If they could do it, why I guess women would. My guess is they ain't got no talent for it. Nothing they can do about it so they only tell the other kind --

KID: What other kind?

JAKE: Them prag -- pragmatikal lies. When a woman lies, she has to see it's gettin' her

²⁹ It covers seven typescript pages.

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somewhere. I guess a woman makes about as good a practical liar as you'll find anywhere.³⁰

The third major addition to the short story comes at the point where Godfrey is about to leave Crocus because of his falling-out with Molly. In the story itself the scene occurs in one sequence and one locale: MacTaggart's general store. It is there that Jake convinces Godfrey to stay in town, prods him into the speech on the virtues of the prairie homesteader which re-conquers Molly's heart, and then finally suggests that the professor try to impress Old Gate with some tall tales of his own. In the radio play, the conflation of these three major events in the plot would have seemed contrived, and Godfrey's almost immediate conversion to the ideology of the Tall Tale would have appeared expeditious. So Mitchell chose to divide the scene into three parts. The first part takes place in Jake's yard as Godfrey crosses it on his way to the train station. The second part is the scene at MacTaggart's, and the third part is set in the barn where Jake is milking his cow.

Mitchell was thus able to draw a greater amount of subject matter out of the scene, while making the events more natural and coherent from the perspective of the radio listener. The events described took up less than three pages

³⁰ "The Liar Hunter," radio play script, p.20.

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in the short story, and covered nine-and-a-half in the play typescript. What the additions to the story in the radio drama version prove is that Mitchell had a natural instinct for the dramatic logic and pacing of radio drama, and that his major challenges with the medium, at this point in his career, were directly related to technical and formal conventions, which were a product of over twenty years of radio drama production at the CBC, the BBC and in the United States.

In the final analysis, "The Liar Hunter" had its share of virtues and vices as a piece of radio writing, yet can be said to have been something of a disappointment, in light of successful techniques developed in the serial that was to follow, from the strict perspective of dramatic form and atmosphere. The production itself was also problematic. The play was produced by Andrew Allen, who had been at the helm of Mitchell's first two radio dramas. Despite his vast experience as CBC's premier radio drama producer, Allen seemed uncomfortable with the play's prairie environment and the comic treatment that the subject matter required.

Unlike The Devil's Instrument and Chaperon for Maggie, which were also set in the West but were less reliant on atmospheric detail, the locale and ambience of "The Liar Hunter" demanded that a new palette of aural & musical references be developed to create the proper backdrop for the

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play and the serial for which it was the pilot. Because the "Jake and The Kid" stories had almost single-handedly given the Saskatchewan prairie its rightful place in the Canadian social landscape, there was a great deal of pressure on Allen to create a unique prairie sound-scape.

The final result, however, did not live up to expectations. The production was stiff and artificial, the sound effects, banal. Lucio Agostini's musical score was a throwback to American cowboy themes. John Drainie, who played Jake, was not yet comfortable in the role and took to drawing out sentences and specially pauses (though this may have had something to do with the fact that the script was still a bit short for a one-hour radio drama).

It would be left to Peter Francis, who would be the first of the three producers of the serial, to develop the style that was to become clearly identifiable with "Jake and The Kid," and, against his better judgment, with W.O. Mitchell himself. Five years later, Mitchell would try to break that mold with his radio drama adaptation of Who Has Seen the Wind.

CHAPTER 3

"Who Has Seen the Wind:"

The Perils of Adapting a Classic

By the time W.O. Mitchell adapted Who Has Seen the Wind for CBC Radio in 1955, the experience of the Jake and The Kid serial had transformed him into a seasoned radio writer. Though he still had to be pressured into producing his radio work on time, the quality of his radiophonic writing had improved steadily as he had worked hard at defining his own unique style. Mitchell had in fact, in the years between "The Liar Hunter" and the radio adaptation of Who Has Seen the Wind, delimited the boundaries and established the conventions of a new genre, the Canadian prairie satirical comedy. The Jake and The Kid serial was in its fifth season and Mitchell had, by mid-1955, well over a hundred and fifty radio drama titles to his credit.

The radio adaptation of Who Has Seen the Wind provided Mitchell with an opportunity to explore a new aspect of writing for radio, but he was soon to discover that this kind of work carried with it a substantial cost. Indeed, the exercise of distilling the essence of the novel's narrative was to lead him to change its very tone, thus defusing the

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book's central metaphoric construct which dealt with a young boy's difficult and embittered relationship with life, death and God. Mitchell opted to concentrate his efforts on retaining the book's emotional appeal, which centred on Brian's relationship with his father and the natural environment of the prairie, as opposed to the novel's disturbing ethical themes and moral inquiries. The decision to proceed in this manner may have been partly due to two important external influences: audience expectations and an unspoken code of ethics at the CBC, which (like other media in Canada and the United States in the nineteen-fifties) frowned on material that strayed from the middle ground of social acceptability. Indeed, many of the novel's images and spiritual interrogations might have offended segments of the audience had they been transposed directly into the radio version and broadcast Canada-wide. On the other hand, the choices Mitchell made could also have been a basic reflection of his own artistic inner conflict, in which the tragic and comic vision of society were fighting a battle for dominance. In the end the radio drama adaptation of Who Has Seen the Wind turned out to be a cohesive piece of radio theatre, but with very little of the irony that is at the heart of the novel, and with some surprising structural changes in the story.

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Radio drama adaptations of major novels, much like film adaptations of the same, often suffer from structural and metaphorical anaemia after the transition procedure is completed. The novel being a denser medium, that is to say one whose innate capacity for layering concepts, points-of-view, and metaphoric constructs, makes for a more complex aesthetic experience, it is natural that superficial critical comparisons between source and target works in radio or film adaptations generally favour the original. That is **not** to say that adaptations of novels are, by definition, watered-down versions of their novelistic source material, only that successful transpositions to a new medium require that the subject matter be understood by the writer who is adapting the work, in terms of the conventions, strengths and limitations of the target medium. The resulting radio play or film, when effectively executed, should be a work that can stand on its own, quite independently from the novel that gave it life.

In examining W.O. Mitchell's radio adaptation of his first three novels, it will be of prime importance to keep in mind that these plays must be evaluated on two individual yet inter-connected levels. The first level, as mentioned above, relates to the play's success or failure as a finished work of radio theatre. The second relates to the techniques used to adapt the play: what is retained and what is discarded; and

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the final result in terms of the greater vision of the novel as it either successfully or unsuccessfully migrates to the radio medium.

These two levels, though inter-connected, are not necessarily inter-dependant. A radio drama may even excise the main metaphor of its novelistic source and nonetheless function healthily as narrative radio theatre. Conversely, a play can be a failure because the writer attempted to convey a novel's symbolism without sufficiently integrating the dramatic structure that holds the story together. The varying degree to which these two levels play off of each other leaves a lot of room for critical interpretation. Finally, the time constraints particular to radio drama³¹ and the amount of material that can be reasonably used from a three or four-hundred page novel must also be taken into account as a major factor influencing the editing decisions taken by the writer, and therefore, the final product.

Who Has Seen the Wind is a particularly dark coming-of-age novel. The eternal ontological conflict between life and death sits at its core and permeates every scene involving the main protagonist. The setting, which brings to the fore the

³¹ The overwhelming majority of plays that have aired on the CBC since the early days of radio are of the half-hour and hour-long formats. Fifteen-minute episodic dramas represent a small percentage of the total, and plays exceeding one hour were mainly the preserve of the Wednesday Night series.

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ruthlessness of the Canadian prairie during the days of the Great Depression, reinforces the classic oppositions between the Individual and Nature, Society, and God. Who Has Seen the Wind is a novel that underscores the mythical qualities of the prairie environment without attempting to romanticise it.

The novel chronicles the life, between the ages of four and twelve, of a Saskatchewan boy named Brian O'Connell, whose youthful existence is marked by the endless manifestations of death that cross his path. Brian is portrayed from the start as a complex and intelligent boy. He is obviously a child who is, uncharacteristically for one so young, surprisingly preoccupied with questions about God and His sense of justice.

An incident from the very first pages of the book warns the reader that Brian is a wilful child with a strong sense of self. After his grandmother sends him out to play because his brother is sick inside the house, his thoughts and actions reveal the quality and intensity of his inner rebellion against her authority:

He would get Jake Harris, the town policeman, after her. He hoped Jake would bring his policeman's knife and chop her into little pieces and cut her head off, for making him go outside to play.³²

³² Who Has Seen the Wind (novel), Macmillan of Canada, Toronto: 1947, p 5. All future references to this work will be to this edition.

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And moments later, as he stands in front of a sand pile, waiting for ants to appear:

He watched impatiently, and then as no ant emerged, he took up the shovel that lay at his feet. He hit the bump, and wished it were his grandmother. He hit the bump again, being careful that it was with the sharp edge and not the flat bottom of the shovel. He was hitting his grandmother so awful she was bawling her head off.³³

Brian then goes off to find God to "get Him after his gramma." His search leads him to the local Presbyterian minister, Mr. Hislop, who is somewhat perplexed by the boy's boldness and self-assured manner in asking for a personal audience with God. A short time later, Brian invents an imaginary character whom he names R.W. God, who rides a vacuum cleaner and will help him get even with yet another foe, Artie Sherry, a neighbour's boy.

Brian's preoccupation with ethical matters runs through the whole of the novel and influences his perception of the incidents that occur in his life. Death is all around him throughout his childhood. The prairie itself, being the larger canvas on which the story is drawn, is dying from drought. The town is being pushed to the limit of its endurance by the economic hardship imposed on it by the Depression, and further complicated by uncooperative weather.

³³ Who Has Seen the Wind, p 5.

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Brian's brother Bobby nearly dies of tuberculosis, making Brian painfully aware, at the tender age of four, of how close death can come to his own family. Further along in the story, his dog is run over in the street and his father falls sick and passes on. His grandmother, with whom Brian has long since been reconciled, dies at the end of the novel. The suicide of Wong, father of two of Brian's classmates, is also an important moment in the story.

Outside these major incidents, the novel's narrative is punctuated with other encounters with death. The deaths of many prairie creatures shape Brian's perception of the world: the spiders and caterpillars he crushes with his foot at age four; the baby pigeon that he sneaks out of Forbsie Hoffman's attic only to accidentally suffocate it during the trip home; the gopher who is tortured by his friends and finally put out of its misery by the Young Ben; the dozens of pet rabbits put to death by Forbsie's father; the stillborn two-headed calf he and his friends are given the opportunity to see; and the runt pig that he manages to temporarily save from an untimely death.

Brian's quest for the truth about God's greater motives and why untimely death and physical and emotional suffering are such an integral part of life, leads him to conclusions such as "God isn't very considerate -- is He, Gramma?",³⁴ and

³⁴ Who Has Seen the Wind, p. 166.

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at the very end of the novel, "It was awful to be a human. It wasn't any good."³⁵ As we take our leave of Brian and his world in the final pages of Who has Seen the Wind, Mitchell writes a final lament, that is a fitting coda to the story of a prairie boy's precocious coming to awareness of the often brutal cycle of life and death:

Here to the West a small dog's skeleton lies, its rib bones clutching emptiness. Crawling in and out of the teeth an ant casts about; it disappears into an eyesocket, reappears to begin a long pilgrimage down the backbone spools. The wind turns in silent frenzy upon itself, whirling into a smoke funnel, breathing up topsoil and tumbleweed skeletons to carry them on its spinning way over the prairie, out and out to the far line of the sky.³⁶

But Who has Seen the Wind is more than Brian's story alone. Many characters pass through its pages and fill out the portrait of prairie life painted in the novel. These characters can be separated into two categories which play off of each other and give the book its balance. The members of the first group personify the realistic, and often tragic lives of prairie inhabitants. At the core of this group is Brian's immediate family: his mother and father, his grandmother and his brother. Other characters such as Hislop

³⁵ Who Has Seen the Wind, p. 291.

³⁶ Who Has Seen the Wind, p. 293.

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the minister, Digby the school principal, Miss MacDonald the teacher, Ab and Annie, and doctor Svarich round out the group. Mitchell treats these characters with all the seriousness that their respective fates deserve for they represent the real prairie, that which is etched out of the sweat and tears of the people of various origins and destinies who settled there.

The second group is composed of colourful, sometimes eccentric characters such as Mitchell is famous for creating: Brian's foul-mouthed uncle Sean; Milt Palmer, the shoemaker/philosopher; and Saint Sammy, the religious lunatic. Though they infuse the novel with some degree of humour, these characters symbolize, upon closer analysis, those prairie people who create a buffer between themselves and the hardships they endure by using some kind of psychological distancing technique. Mitchell best described the process himself through the words of professor Godfrey in "The Liar Hunter" when explaining the sociological origin of the tall tales Old Man Gatenby and Jake Trumper loved to propagate:

Rust and hail and sawfly and cutworm and drouth are terrible things, but not half as frightening if they are made ridiculous. If a man can laugh at them he's won half the battle. When he exaggerates things he isn't lying really; it's a defence, the defence of exaggeration. He can either do that or squeal.³⁷

³⁷ "The Liar Hunter" (short story), in Jake and the Kid, Macmillan of Canada, Toronto: 1961, p. 101.

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At the very extreme edge of the second group dwell The Ben and his son the Young Ben. The Ben's constant drunkenness, his stories which patrons of the local drinking hall pay to hear, and his adventures with his whisky-still provide some comic moments, but they are always overshadowed by the pathos of his hopeless life and its repercussions on his son, who is left to grow up wild like a prairie animal. It is the enigmatic association between the Young Ben and Brian and the latter's recognition that they are somehow cut of the same cloth that is at the nucleus of the novel's human relationships. Indeed, there is no one that Brian identifies with more than the Young Ben. In this respect, even his father takes second place. The Bens are the conduit between the workaday, sane world of the town and the fierce and unpredictable prairie that rules its destiny. The prairie's untamed nature comes into contact with civilization in the form of the Bens.

When Mitchell began adapting Who Has Seen the Wind for radio, he had to make some difficult decisions regarding what to retain and what to cut out. The play was set to fall into the one-hour format, which left him little choice but to focus his attention on the main thread of the story: the experiences of Brian O'Connell. This meant that he would have to remove

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most of the secondary characters, thus severely restricting the scope of the novel's social backdrop.

Mitchell chose to use Brian's gradual discovery of what the boy called "the feeling" as the guiding thread of the radio drama. "The feeling" was a naturally-induced state of transcendence which Brian had begun experiencing spontaneously at a very young age. When he attained this state, through contemplation of elements of the physical universe, Brian gained a heightened awareness of the spiritual aspects of life. Mitchell's decision to use this element as the central reference for the rest of the story's components allowed him to narrow down the group of secondary characters radically. Characters that did not play a major part in the development of Brian's "feeling," could thus be easily removed from the story or relegated to the background. Brian's father became the axis around which Brian and the rest of his family revolved. The three main characters that were retained, outside Brian's immediate family, were uncle Sean, Milt Palmer and Saint Sammy.

The principal victim of this process was school principal Digby, whose influence on both Billy's and the Young Ben's lives was most direct in the novel. Ab and Annie, Uncle Sean's employees, who played an important role in the book at a crucial time in Billy's life (the period of his father's illness) were also cut out. Even The Ben, a central symbolic

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figure in the novel, was only referred to in passing at the beginning of the radio play as the drunken father of the Young Ben.

The play was constructed by dividing the novel into ten scenes, most of which were transposed almost word for word from the novel. The task of narration was taken on by the voice of Brian as an adult, reminiscing about his childhood on the prairie, with the simple difference that the selected text from the novel was changed to the first person, and certain lines were added for logic and continuity. This approach was ideal for the type of material that Mitchell had to adapt because of the intimate nature of the subject matter.

Mitchell had obviously set his mind on revealing the deepest feelings of this young boy, his own alter-ego, in the clearest and most direct way possible. This approach presented Mitchell with an opportunity to use narration that could blend-in seamlessly with the action of the story. It is evident when listening to "Who Has Seen the Wind" that Mitchell had learned a great deal about handling narration since his first awkward attempts in 1949.

As in the novel, the radio play begins and ends with the voice of the narrator, which is also present at regular intervals throughout. These frequent interventions, in theory, heightened the potential for making the narration appear obtrusive or contrived. But the end result was excellent and,

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contrary to what one might expect, the narration gave the play an intimacy never before attained in one of Mitchell's radio dramas.

The fact that very few changes were brought to the text of the narration and even less to the dialogue from the novel, is a clear indication of how close Mitchell's fictional writing technique was (as early as the mid-nineteen-forties, when Who Has Seen the Wind was written) very much akin to that of radio drama. What Mitchell had evidently learned by 1955, was that he had always had the instinct for radio drama writing, and that when adapting his fiction for radio, he did not need to alter parts of the material that were already radiophonic. Most of Mitchell's previous attempts at writing radio adaptations of his fiction had somehow or other suffered from the fact that he had attempted to re-write material that was, in many instances, ready for radio.

Adapting Who Has Seen the Wind gave Mitchell the chance to approach the problem from the opposite end. In the past he had to stretch his short fiction so as to be able to make it fit into a one-hour radio play. With "Who Has Seen the Wind," because Mitchell had to cut rather than add material, he did not face the problem of having to write new scenes which would then have to be merged with the original passages, while

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attempting to keep the overall style as radiophonic as possible.

In "Who Has Seen the Wind," since Mitchell chose to concentrate only on the central storyline which focused on Brian O'Connell, the logical bridges between scenes could be created for the radio play from the stuff of the novel itself. This does not mean that Mitchell adhered strictly to the chronology of the novel. Interestingly enough, he made some important transformations in the sequence of events and in the time elapsed between major moments in Who Has Seen the Wind. His modifications went as far as switching the characters present in certain crucial scenes, and even altering the ending of the story. In light of the success of the radio play as a work in itself, there is no doubt that Mitchell's open-mindedness in adapting his first novel for radio turned out to be his most important working tool.

The two most important changes Mitchell made to the storyline of Brian O'Connell's life centered on the boy's father. The story in the radio play ends shortly after the death of Brian's father. The death of his grandmother, which is the final major event in the novel, is omitted completely. A second crucial change is the replacement of Digby by Brian's father in the two scenes that take place at Milt Palmer's shoe repair shop. From a purist's perspective, this may appear as

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a travesty of the book, since the second scene, which occurs in the final pages of the novel, is set approximately one year after the death of Gerald O'Connal and shortly after the death of Brian's grandmother.

It is clear that Mitchell considered the scenes with Milt Palmer an important part of Brian's experience, since they involved the exchange of philosophical reflections on perceptions of reality, both sensory and spiritual, which directly touch on a central concern of the novel. But the Milt Palmer character's status as one of Mitchell's prairie originals was surely another major factor. Within the logical framework of the radio adaptation of Who Has Seen the Wind, the scenes work well and integrate smoothly into the play's continuity, though the tone is once again mellower because of the presence of Brian's father instead of the more sardonic Digby.

The fact that the second scene (where Palmer muses on the idea that reality is ultimately only as real as the one who perceives it) is played out **before** Gerald O'Connal's death, does change its impact as well as its moral significance. In the novel, because the scene occurs after the deaths of Brian's father and grandmother, with all that this implies in terms of the accelerated maturing process forced onto the boy, it is naturally imbued with pain as well as mistrust of the presumed benevolence of any higher power. In the radio drama,

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the scene plays out as a part of Gerald O'Connell's spiritual legacy to his son, before passing away.

It is obvious that Brian's revelation of his "feeling," in the radio play, to both Milt Palmer and his father is also a turning point in his life, a moment where he risks ridicule by baring his innermost thoughts to others, pressed by the overpowering need to corroborate his embryonic philosophical findings with adults who might perchance perceive the world as he does. But Billie-Mae Richards, who played Brian in both radio drama versions³⁸ of Who Has Seen the Wind stresses the boy's naiveté in her performance, although the dialogue is almost unchanged from the novel, giving the scene an inflection of ingenuous discovery. In the novel, because of the different context, the same scene conveys a more complex array of perceptions in Brian, as he is torn between the idealism of childhood and the nascent scepticism developing inside him as a result of the series of deaths that have touched his life:

Brian tried to work his way through the seething sees and feels. "I guess you were right," he said.

"I was afraid so," said Digby. "Don't let it bother you."

"But it does!" Brian looked up to the Principal's face. "I've been trying to--to figure out for a long time, and it won't! Everything has to figure out, doesn't it?"

³⁸ The first version was produced by Gustaf Kristjanson and broadcast on 20 July 1955. The second, produced by Esse W. Ljungh, was broadcast on 16 May 1966. The same script, without modifications, was used for both productions.

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"No--not everything."
"But if it doesn't figure out--"
"Just some things."
"I never told anybody--if I have to know about sense--sense--"
"You just keep on trying," Digby said.
"I'll know some day?"
Digby looked down at him without saying anything.
"I get the closest--I used to--when there's a feeling. Is there a feeling?"
"Yes."
"Then I'm on the right track?"
"I think you are."
"A person can do it by feeling?"
"That's the way," said Digby.
"Then I'm on the right track." Brian said it with conviction.³⁹

Digby's pointed silence when Brian asks if he will know someday is replaced in the radio drama by his father's replying "perhaps," and at the end of the conversation, when the question of guiding one's life by "feeling" alone arises, the reply "that's the way" is replaced by "that's **one** way." This type of subtle change can be found throughout the radio play, and is indicative of Mitchell's efforts to smooth out some of the rough edges that might have not gone over well with the CBC radio audience. Unlike in the novel, the name of God is only referred to in the most respectful way by the characters in the play, and Brian's doubts about His beneficence are never mentioned.

Of course, the language was cleaned up according to the broadcasting standards of the day. Curses were toned down or

³⁹ Who Has Seen the Wind, pp. 286-87.

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eliminated completely (thus dulling the edge of characters such as uncle Sean and Milt Palmer), and subject matter liable to offend was altered or removed. At one point, even Brian's mention of road apples⁴⁰ was changed to simply "road."

Who Has Seen the Wind could have been a totally different radio drama if Mitchell had used other scenes from the novel, chosen to integrate other characters than the ones he did, and left the ironic tone unchanged. But the end result would have been a much darker play, and this surely would have conflicted with the image that Mitchell had acquired in his first six years as a radio dramatist. Besides, even in staying with the central storyline, Mitchell saw himself constrained to serve up a string of sad events and deaths within one hour that was already impressive in itself. Had he wanted to stay closer to the novel in tone, he would have had to insist on negative aspects to the point of morbidity, unless he could have spaced them out in a two-hour play.

In light of this dilemma, one can understand Mitchell's choice of secondary characters. He consciously selected those that most resembled the colourful inhabitants of Crocus in the Jake and The Kid serial: Uncle Sean, Milt Palmer and Saint Sammy. It is obvious that these were retained because they could offer some comic relief and lighten up the atmosphere of

⁴⁰ Who Has Seen the Wind, p. 286.

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the radio play. However, because of this choice, one can not help but notice the resemblances between the Jake and The Kid serial and the radio productions of "Who Has Seen the Wind."

This state of affairs is, despite Mitchell's best intentions, somewhat unfair to the novel because these characters automatically become more important in a smaller pond. The fact that the voices of some actors, including Billie-Mae Richards and John Drainie were heard in both the serial and the adaptations of Who Has Seen the Wind reinforces this perception.

The radio drama version of Who Has Seen the Wind can be considered successful, because it is a cohesive, evenly-paced and entertainingly well-written piece of radio theatre. It leaves out many of the novel's themes, but this is a natural consequence of such a process of transition. And though it might leave a purist wishing for the bittersweet irony found in the original work, it can be safely said that the play stands firmly on its own two feet as an example of a safe passage from one medium to another.

Of course, the aesthetic impact on the reader/listener is quite different after finishing the novel and hearing the radio play. But this is only natural when one considers the quantity of material that can reasonably be transposed into a one-hour drama. The trade-off in this case, although major,

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does not compromise the integrity of the main storyline, and the finished play is an accurate, if not wholly faithful, reflection of the novel.

The main problem with the adaptation process, in the final analysis, was the conflict inside Mitchell himself. Because he was encountering serious difficulties in his novelistic pursuits (this was the period during which he was in the darkest moments of his struggle with the re-writing of The Alien), he was torn between his desire to show a more serious image of himself as a writer and the necessity to give the public and his CBC bosses what they wanted. The compromises he arrived at when adapting Who Has Seen the Wind for radio, though they may have been justified in terms of the strict exercise of adapting a novel, any novel, for radio, must nevertheless have seriously disturbed him as a writer. Mitchell had approached the task courageously and had proceeded in a manner that cast a noble reflection on his craft. But the final result, though technically well-executed, cannot have given him complete satisfaction on an artistic level. He had, in fact, helped perpetuate the very 'Jake and The Kid' image he was trying to discard.

CHAPTER 4

"The Alien:"

A Problematic Novel Brought Into Focus by Radio Drama

W.O. Mitchell began work on his second novel, to be titled The Alien in 1946, shortly after submitting the final draft of Who Has Seen the Wind to Macmillan of Canada. This novel project was to be the longest in his career, coming to a conclusion only in October 1973 with the publication of The Vanishing Point, a much re-worked version of the story. During those twenty-seven years, he was to come back to the project repeatedly and tenaciously, yet without meeting with the full and enthusiastic support of his publishers until the very last version.

The first period of work on the book lasted from 1946 to 1948. His new position as fiction editor at Maclean's and the responsibilities that came with it made him all but set The Alien project aside until 1951, when he left the magazine to return to Alberta. By 1953, a complete three-part nine-hundred page manuscript was ready for publication. But Macmillan's international partners refused to proceed with publication, finding the novel too long and the principal character most unsympathetic. Publication of the novel was

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abandoned by Macmillan, because of the fear that a solo Canadian edition of the book would not do well commercially. Nevertheless, because the manuscript had been circulated prior to publication, The Alien won the Maclean's fiction award for 1953. The magazine then published an abridged nine-chapter serialization of the novel, based on its third section, from 15 September to 1 December of that year.⁴¹

Despite Mitchell's best efforts to get back to The Alien in the mid-nineteen-fifties, his obligations to CBC Radio for the Jake and The Kid serial took up too much of his time for any major work to be accomplished on the novel. Mitchell resurrected the project from 1956 to 1958, after his tenure as the author of Jake and The Kid. But the novel kept getting more pessimistic with each re-write and he finally set it aside. Starting in 1958, Mitchell began writing another novel, Roses Are Difficult Here, which was based on the narrative of the second section of The Alien. Once completed, this novel met with the same fate as The Alien when presented to Macmillan's international partners.

By 1960, Mitchell had yet to publish a second novel. On 10 July of that year, a one-hour radio drama version of The Alien was broadcast on the CBC airwaves. The play was essentially based on the abridged third part of the novel that

⁴¹ The serial publication of the novel was an integral part of the award, which also included a monetary prize of five-thousand dollars.

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had been serialized in Maclean's magazine seven years earlier. Although, as in his previous radio drama adaptations of his own works of fiction, Mitchell freely modified the names of certain characters, the participants in certain scenes, and the locales of some of the action for dramatic coherence, the central storyline remained essentially unchanged. However, the addition of certain humorous, albeit ironic, scenes as well as a modified and slightly more optimistic ending were to prove to be the forebears of the major changes that would transmute the story into that of The Vanishing Point some thirteen years later.

The exercise of adapting The Alien for radio in 1960 proved to be instrumental in pointing the way towards a new interpretation of the story. As Catherine McLay has noted, The Alien, as a novel, had been a step backwards for Mitchell, considering the maturity of Who Has Seen the Wind: "Like many young writers, he wrote a *Bildungsroman*. And like many early novels, The Alien was very long and not completely integrated."⁴² The task of adapting The Alien for radio, initiated the process of redeeming the novel, the main protagonist's soul, as well as Mitchell's confidence in his art. The differences in the exigencies of the two media had forced Mitchell to focus on the material from another vantage

⁴² McLay, Catherine, "Novels Are Difficult Here: W.O. Mitchell's Unpublished Fiction," in Essays on Canadian Writing, No. 37, 1989, p. 88.

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point, as they had in the case of previous adaptations. This new outlook opened the door on solutions to the problems that had suffocated The Alien in its first incarnations.

The story of The Alien centers on the character of Carlyle Sinclair, a thirty-six year old teacher sent to an Indian reserve in Alberta ironically named Paradise Valley. Though this teaching assignment is the nucleus of the narrative in spirit as well in dramatic terms, the original three-part manuscript had the reader follow Sinclair through his college days, his marriage, and his early teaching years, only arriving at the Paradise Valley events in the third section.

Carlyle Sinclair has lived in White society all his life, but has always had great difficulty in reconciling himself with the fact that he is one-quarter Indian or "smoked" as he prefers to call it. The original novel built up this tension throughout the first and second sections in an obvious effort on Mitchell's part to have Sinclair arrive at the Paradise Valley Reserve wound as tightly as possible. However, this six-hundred page introduction to the main event proved to be a liability in terms of the novel's dramatic efficacy.

The serialized version that appeared in Maclean's in 1953 made use exclusively of material contained in the third section of the original novel. The action begins in the

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present, as Sinclair, his wife Grace and his son Hugh arrive at the Paradise Valley Reserve. Sinclair has been sent to the reserve to singlehandedly take responsibility for the education of all the native children at the primary level. What he soon discovers is the spirit of anarchy which permeates all activities on the reserve.

Sheridan, the local Indian agent, is on the threshold of retirement and has all but given up hope of ever changing the manner in which the Indians conduct themselves and their affairs. Fyfe, the local supervisor for the Department of Indian affairs, entertains the same type of bleak outlook on the future of the Indians of this as well as all other reserves. The Indians themselves seem to have no incentive to change the way in which they live. They look back on an idyllic past, before the Whites destroyed their societies, as something that can never be restored. It is in this grim context that Carlyle Sinclair must struggle to try and give the new generation a chance that their parents never had, through education.

Sinclair's first day at school serves as the linchpin of the narrative. Only one student has shown up by ten o'clock: Victoria Rider, a shy and self-effacing ten-year-old girl who, much as a reversed image of himself, is half-white. Though there are a few sub-plots (the crops that are not harvested because of the rodeo, the power company's desire to acquire

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exploitation rights to reserve land, Sinclair's relationship with his wife and son, etc.), the rest of the story centers on the teacher/student, surrogate-parent/adoptive-child relationship that develops between Sinclair and Victoria. Throughout all his difficulties with the Indians on the reserve, Victoria's academic success is the only element that keeps hope alive for Sinclair. After a few years, Victoria graduates from elementary school at the top of the class and is then sent off-reserve for her secondary studies. Her high school years are not without problems, but she eventually graduates and is sent to a hospital in the city to undergo training as a nurse.

The crisis that is central to the story is triggered when Victoria returns home for the summer holidays and is "grabbed-hold-of" (the local Indian expression for the all-too-common practice of raping teenage girls as they come of age) by one of the local men, Johnny Education. As a consequence, Victoria becomes pregnant. Ashamed that she has let her parents and Sinclair down, Victoria does not return to the hospital. When Sinclair comes back to the reserve after his summer hiatus, he discovers this situation and is crushed. His immediate reaction is to reject Victoria and lose all hope for the Indians he has tried to help.

The mood of the serialized version of The Alien is sombre, as it is in the original novel. Unlike in Who Has

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Seen the Wind, Mitchell does not regularly counter-balance the darker moments and incidents with humour, nor does he mythify the environment or the landscape. On the contrary, the desolate portrait painted is one that is the opposite of scenic resplendence:

To the north ran a tan and green line of hills bunched with buckbrush, for all the world like the clump bodies of buffalo at a distance, fixed in the act of grazing. At the head of the valley, the true mountain stood, great glacial facts against the late afternoon sky, presenting first a vista of gloomy pine, then spined and rocky disorder streaked and fluted and barred with radiance. The head must lift for eyes to attain the sterile peaks gauzed with light cloud.⁴³

With the one notable exception of Indian preacher Ezra Shot-Close's second sermon, in which he puts forward a most fanciful interpretation of the Christ's exorcism of demons when amongst the Gadarenes in St. Mark, Chapter 5, verses 1 to 14 (in the tradition of Melville's Father Mapple and Mitchell's own Saint Sammy), the story is devoid of even the smallest comic incident or repartee. In the end, despite Carlyle Sinclair's final decision to carry on his work on the reserve, the heavy grey cloud of hopelessness that has been building over the story since the beginning shows no real sign of abatement.

⁴³ The Alien (serialized novel), in Maclean's, Vol. 66 (no. 18), 15 September 1953, p. 57.

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At the moment when we take our leave of Sinclair, in the eerie penumbra of the dance tent, he comes to realize that he must persevere and that there may yet be other Victorias in his future. He pledges to himself to tear up the unfair power company agreement he incited the Paradise Valley Indians to sign and to phone his wife, who has vowed to stay away from the reserve until he has thought things through. But Sinclair has crossed the line in terms of the trust that his family and the Paradise Valley Indians have put in him, and he has possibly irreparably damaged all his personal and social relationships.

In the radio drama version of The Alien, Mitchell initiated changes in the story on three levels. On a first level Mitchell simplified the story by reducing the number of characters and modifying the nature of some of the relationships, as he had done in adapting Who Has Seen the Wind for radio. This was accomplished strictly for reasons of narrative and dramatic economy, and was a natural consequence of the shorter format supplied by the radiophonic medium.

Victoria Rider became the daughter of Ezra Shot-Close the Indian preacher. Sheridan, the Indian agent, was eliminated altogether. The character of Dr. Sanders took on more importance and became Sinclair's confidant. But these and

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other similar changes would have been, by themselves, unimportant in terms of the story's world-view.

The second level of intervention in the story was to be the most critical of the three in that it marked the turning point in the narrative's development, both in the radio drama version and subsequently in The Vanishing Point, thirteen years later. In the late nineteen-fifties, many of Mitchell's colleagues and friends, including John Grey, his publisher at Macmillan's, had suggested that he needed to step away from The Alien in order to get a new perspective on the book. In the radio play, Mitchell effected changes that proved he had begun doing just that.

In the radio drama "The Alien," Carlyle Sinclair still has partial Indian ancestry, but Mitchell approaches this situation with a far lighter hand than he had in the fictional versions. Though Sinclair does have his moment of crisis in the play (when he finds out that Victoria has ruined her own future, he rhetorically offers Dr. Sanders a trade involving his own Indian blood for the physician's tubercular affliction), it becomes evident soon afterwards that his Indian blood will have a positive impact on his decision to stay and help the people (his people, as he remarks) of the Paradise Valley Reserve.

There is no self-destructive quality in Sinclair in the radio drama, and this is a major step in the direction of the

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redefined character found in The Vanishing Point. In the final version of the novel, Sinclair has no Indian blood at all, and therefore interacts with the Indians through a whole new set of social dynamics.

In "The Alien," Sinclair is now unmarried (in The Vanishing Point, he becomes a widower, who has lost his wife and daughter during childbirth) and has come to the Paradise Valley Reserve alone. This major modification not only alleviated Sinclair's load of responsibilities, but it also removed the whole dimension of guilt about his son's upbringing and education. In the novel, Sinclair denied Hugh his Indian heritage by educating him as a White, and keeping him from participating in Indian dances and ceremonies.

These changes, by themselves, helped to excise over two-thirds of the original novel's plot, which revolved around Sinclair's inability to cope with his Native heritage in his youth and early manhood, and his first few years of marriage and fatherhood. In the third section of the original novel, as well as in the Maclean's version, his wife, Grace, plays a pivotal role. When she decides to depart for town at the end of the serialized version, despite her promise never to leave him permanently, it proves to be yet another devastating blow to Sinclair's sense of purpose:

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"We're going into town (...) Victoria -- signing the power company agreement -- I've got to, Car. You've got to work it out for yourself. Perhaps you can. I hope you can. Whatever you do you've got to do it yourself."⁴⁴

Because Mitchell did not go back to the original parameters of The Alien when he wrote The Vanishing Point, it is clear that his decision to cut them out or to reduce their importance in the 1960 radio drama was much more than a technique used for contracting the material to manageable radio-suitable proportions. In his reflexions on the heart of the novel's subject matter, Mitchell had evidently come to the conclusion that a great proportion of the tragedy and hopelessness in Carlyle Sinclair's story stemmed from the chaos and irreconcilable tensions in the character's personal life.

This was obviously problematical because the condition of Native people in Canada was supposed to be the principal social theme of the book. In its first incarnation as a novel, The Alien, as its title clearly states, centered on the ontological predicament of Carlyle Sinclair. The fact that Sinclair was quite obviously White in his thoughts and actions underscored the fact that his problem with his Indian ancestry emanated more out of a deep personal, psychological and spiritual emptiness than out of a social conflict per se. The

⁴⁴ "The Alien" (serialized novel), in Maclean's, Vol. 67 (no. 1), 1 January 1954, p. 34.

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confluence of these two streams in the original novel had resulted in a complex torrent of tragedy and despair that had become too powerful to stop.

By the time he adapted The Alien for radio, Mitchell had manifestly realized that he had been hanging on to certain ideas for too long and that it was time to really go to work on the story. His own inner conflicts as an artist during the period in which he wrote the original novel (1946 to 1953) had revealed themselves all too plainly in the character of Carlyle Sinclair. As in Who Has Seen the Wind, many important aspects of the character were based on Mitchell's own experiences, one of which had been a briefly-held position as a teacher on an Indian reserve. By 1960, the time had come for Mitchell to let go of The Alien's self-referential dimension and allow it to grow into a broader, more mature piece of writing.

The third level of intervention in the novel's original form related to humour. As mentioned earlier, The Alien was essentially a novel with none of the humour and satire that Mitchell had become identified with. Without this natural foil to the difficulties encountered by Carlyle Sinclair during the long span of years covered by the book, the end result could not be interpreted as anything but tragic. Where Mitchell had been so successful in Who Has Seen the Wind in creating a balanced structure that allowed his humour to

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function as a balm after the sting of tragedy had been felt, in the original versions of The Alien, there was no such relief to be found.

Paradoxically, Mitchell began by eliminating Ezra Shot-Close's amusing second sermon based on St. Mark, Chapter 5, verses 1 to 14, because his first speech, where he thanks God for sending Paradise Valley Reserve a teacher, was narratively more important and dramatically more effective in the context of the radio play (both speeches did, however, re-surface in the second section of The Vanishing Point). As a replacement for this, the only piece of humour that had found its way into the Maclean's version of The Alien, Mitchell added two scenes that had never appeared in previous versions. In so doing, he was no less than beginning the process of re-claiming The Alien as an authentic piece of W.O. Mitchell literature.

In his discussion on the relationship between humour and social comment in Mitchell's world-view, Alan Yates notes:

Mitchell has complained that, because the Jake stories were folksy, homespun and entertaining, critics have tended not to take them seriously. He also suggests that the critics fail to realize just how much work went into these seemingly simple stories. Any individual Jake story may, indeed, give the impression of being a simple and socially insignificant tale. Examined as a whole, Mitchell's Jake series of over two hundred episodes can be seen to boast considerable social content and import. There are common themes running throughout the episodes, themes that are just as serious as any explored in the literature of

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prairie despair; but they are skilfully disguised or attenuated by the humourous treatment.⁴⁵

By injecting humour into the radio drama version of The Alien, Mitchell was in fact reconciling himself with the very nature of his own unique, personal form of social criticism.

In the first new scene, Fyfe has a discussion with Ezra Shot-Close about the fact that the Paradise Valley Indians have been hunting game in the local Provincial Park out of season. The scene gives the listener a clear indication that the Indians have a lucid perspective on their condition and the White man's patented discourse that extends far beyond what the government and its officials will have the general population believe:

FYFE: Game. We've had a complaint from the Park Game Warden about deer and moose and elk -- being killed out of season -- indiscriminately -- does as well as calves -- in the Park -- Now -- You people have to abide by the rules the same as anyone else. You speak to the others -- tell them the Park deer and the elk and the moose are -- tell them they are special animals.

EZRA: Special?

FYFE: Put it this way to them. The Park game belongs to the Government -- no -- the Queen! They are the Queen's deer.

⁴⁵ Yates, Alan, W.O. Mitchell's Jake and the kid : The Canadian Popular Radio Play as Art and Social Comment, McGill University Theses, Montreal: 1979, p. 75.

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EZRA: Hey-uh.

FYFE: They belong to her just the same as Mr. Glass's cattle -- his cows and calves and steers. The park is her ranch. They are the crown's cattle.

EZRA: Hey-uh.

FYFE: I think that's all, Ezra.

EZRA: Mmmmmmm. (PAUSE) Mr. Fyfe.

FYFE: Yes, Ezra?

EZRA: About them deer and elk and moose of the Queen... I'll tell these people that.

FYFE: Good.

EZRA: I'll warn them -- when they go huntin'. Don't shoot the Queen's cattle.

FYFE: That's fine, Ezra.

EZRA: I'll tell them to be careful and make sure whenever they shoot -- just shoot the deer and the moose and the elk that has not got her brand on it. (PAUSE) I guess her brand would be a crown, Mr. Fyfe?

MUSIC: UP FOR A TOUCHÉ COMMENT... THEN OUT...⁴⁶

The second such scene added by Mitchell touches upon the clash of culture and values between the Whites and the Indians. In a conversation with Dr. Sanders, the local physician, Sinclair admits, somewhat embarrassed, that the odour emanating from the children in the classroom can be

⁴⁶ "The Alien" (radio play script), produced by Gustaf Kristjanson, 1st broadcast 10 July 1960, Winnipeg, Trans-Canada Network, 31 pp., 60 mins, p.p. 10-11. All future references to this work will be to this typescript.

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quite overpowering, especially in the winter when the windows are closed and the smell of sweat and nineteen pairs of mocassins wet with snow fills the air. Sanders suggests that Sinclair put a kettle on the stove and add a tablespoon of Lysol in the water to fight the odour. Sinclair picks up on the idea and starts using the disinfectant every day. At least for a little while.

SINCLAIR: It was a little better then -- the antiseptic filled the school room with bitter civilization... a forthright smell. I had assumed that the children had paid it little attention till the day Ezra was over to talk to me about Victoria.

MUSIC: OUT.

EZRA: She's doin' good.

SINCLAIR: Very well, Ezra. She's a very gifted little girl... Head of the class.

EZRA: Thank you.

SINCLAIR: Thank you... She hasn't missed a day of school.

EZRA: We send her regular. (SNIFFS THE AIR)

SINCLAIR: It may be too early to tell, but if she keeps on -- I think maybe she has the ability to take High School after that...

EZRA: (SNIFFING LOUDLY NOW) Smell. (SNIFFS AGAIN) Comin' from the stove there...

SINCLAIR: Oh --- that's antiseptic, Ezra. In the kettle.

EZRA: Deliberate.

SINCLAIR: What?

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EZRA: You do that, because you like it. You like that smell. (CAN'T BELIEVE IT)

SINCLAIR: Oh -- it kills germs, Ezra. Kills the cough germs in the air.

EZRA: Hey-uh. (QUITE NON-COMMITAL -- HE'S NOT ACCEPTING)

SINCLAIR: Winter time -- lots of colds and things, Ezra.

EZRA: I guess so. (PAUSE) You whitemen -- you're different too, you know.

SINCLAIR: Are we?

EZRA: You smell, of course. (SIMPLE OBSERVATION)

SINCLAIR: Do we, Ezra? What do we smell like?

EZRA: Cow.

SINCLAIR: Cow? We smell cow...

EZRA: Hey-uh.

SINCLAIR: You mean milky -- we smell milky to you.

EZRA: (LONG PAUSE) No. (QUITE GENTLE AND TOLERANT)⁴⁷

This scene made it into The Vanishing Point almost unchanged. In the novel however, the scene is played out with Old Esau, Victoria's grandfather, which adds a dose of bittersweetness to the moment because of the pathos surrounding the old Indian's last few days on earth and his tragi-comic death in the anguished presence of preacher Heally Richards. The first scene, involving the Queen's deer, did not re-surface in The Vanishing Point, but the humour that it

⁴⁷ "The Alien," pp. 27-29.

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and its companion scene had introduced into the radio play (and had been sorely lacking in the early versions of The Alien) had found its place in the new novel's blueprint.

The conclusion of the 1960 radio adaptation also pointed to the changes that were to come in The Vanishing Point. Though we find Sinclair in the same location in both the Maclean's version and the radio play -- in the dance tent, watching the Prairie Chicken dance -- Mitchell chose to leave the story on a slightly more hopeful note in the latter. Indeed, the ending of the serialized version of The Alien hints at dramatic closure, despite Sinclair's best intentions:

Drum and song and mind and watching hand were one under the bruising drum that ruined all things which bound them.

There would be other Victorias who would try with his help; they would go further or not so far, might even succeed, but at least there would be direction and that was the important thing. That was the important thing -- that and being part of them and all others.

He stood up within the dim tent -- unnoticed, made his way to the tent flap. He must tear up the power company agreement; it must never be sent to Fyfe or Ottawa. He must phone Grace.

Just as he stepped out into the night, the drum was stilled with one lambasting sound. As though he had been held up by its solid beat, Matthew, in a catalepsy of muscular tension, fell flat to earth -- spread-eagled in utter exhaustion. Wonderful as birth, terrible as death, harsh as rape, unimportant as failure, the faultless Prairie Chicken dance was over and done.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ "The Alien" (serialized novel), in Maclean's, Vol. 67 (no. 2), 15 January 1954, p. 33.

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The radio drama version, in which Sinclair had been used as narrator throughout, ends on a more open-ended vision, where the Paradise Valley teacher, unlike the omniscient narrator of the novel, expresses his metaphysical longing for a better future for all Natives:

SINCLAIR: The drum... the smashing... driving drum stole you from me! But who cares now... who cares for scabies and for coughing little babies in the deep trachome dusk... canvas and rags and cardboard keep us warm in the forty-five below. Let the fevered baby toss and the night sweats come. To hell with warping rickets that cripple little crickets born in buckskin sin. Ottawa sends us nurses and X-ray machines for the heart that pants for cooling streams. The Presbytery loves us, though our sins be scarlet as the welling spit that fills the fountain full with blood. Thirty days in jail with the agent going bail they are fun... fun... gun. So we lash the hidden instinct wolf and we club... club... club... We club the earth and burst the earth... the Methodist earth we burst it with disdain. (PAUSE)

MUSIC: HAS RISEN TO A CLIMAX... THROUGH ABOVE... NOW
SUBSIDES INTO QUIET LYRICAL STUFF...

SINCLAIR: The drum... the bruising drum which ruined all things that bound them... has beaten me, conquered Victoria finally. I left the tent, walked through the dawning light past the teepees' pale pyramids and the still lightless cabins. I knew then that there would be other Victorias. They would go farther, or not so far, with my help. Whether they succeeded or failed was not so important as that they tried... that some day... perhaps not in my short time upon the earth... not just one or two or few... but all of them... oh, God... all of them... (PAUSE) Some day!⁴⁹

⁴⁹ "The Alien," pp. 42-43.

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In The Vanishing Point, Carlyle who has not realized (though the reader has) how deep his emotional involvement with Victoria really is, sleeps with her after the scene in the dance tent. Waking beside her the next morning, he decides that he will marry her and be a father to her child. This is a long way from the endings of the story in its previous forms, though there were indications in the radio play that things might be leading to this particular circumstance.

In the radio drama, Sinclair does admit to Dr. Sanders that he has built a "bridge of emotion"⁵⁰ with Victoria, though he has gotten no response from her. And after Victoria's fall, he again reveals his feelings to Sanders:

SINCLAIR: In my life I have not wanted anything more!
 Oh, Harry, I've lost all happy days now!⁵¹

The remarks are meant, of course, to be taken at their face value, and there is no concrete indication that Sinclair's relationship with Victoria is anything but platonic. But there are enough signs in the play to fuel speculation, especially in light of the events as they ultimately unfold in The Vanishing Point. Whatever the case may be, despite the fact that one cannot call the ultimate union of Sinclair and

⁵⁰ "The Alien," p.33.

⁵¹ Ibid, p.40.

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Victoria a classic happy-end scenario, it is nevertheless far more life-affirming than in The Alien.

In The Vanishing Point, the final scene itself, like the novel proper, is more modern and impressionistic, in stark contrast to the other endings in previous versions of the story. It has a slice-of-life texture that proclaims, by its very nature the resiliency of the human spirit despite adversity. Archie Nicotine (one of the Paradise Valley Indians and an important character in the novel), whose truck has been in dire need of a new carburetor and rings from the very beginning of the story, has finally gotten the spare parts installed. With the help of his friends, the truck is pulled across the reserve by a team of horses to give it a rolling start. The technique is successful, but when the truck does start, letting off "a great, blue back-fart"⁵² the horses get spooked and a wild scene ensues with horses, men and machine careening across the reserve in a comic chase worthy of the best vaudevillian imagination. Finally, the horses are accidentally loosed when Prince Dixon slides off the hood. And so the romp and the novel come to an end:

Archie circled the schoolgrounds five times before he brought the truck to a halt. Carlyle walked over to him. He leaned his elbows on the open window.

"Congratulations, Archie."

⁵² The Vanishing Point (novel), Macmillan, Toronto: 1973, p. 391. All future references to this work will be to this edition.

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Plump face glistening with sweat, Archie sat with his hands nonchalant on the top of the steering wheel. The motor was still running. "Hey-uh."

"I see you did your rings and rebuilt carburator."

"Hey-up."

"That's nice."

"Won't have to impose on you for a ride any more -- Sinclair."

"Hey-up!" Carlyle said.⁵³

The experience of The Alien proved that Mitchell had plainly steered far away from his natural style of writing in a conscious effort to achieve recognition as a "serious" writer. He had wanted to express his concerns about Canadian society (as a microcosm of the human experience) in what he had envisaged as a more mature and incisive manner. This of course was a reflection of his struggle with his own inner novelistic demons and the growing pessimism and darkness of his personal outlook on human endeavours.

But this attitude had been a miscalculation, as The Kite and The Vanishing Point clearly proved. Mitchell could indeed plunge into the darker recesses of the human soul and remain true to himself as a writer. He was no less of a writer for using comedy and satire as a sociological magnifying glass, quite the contrary. There was no dichotomy, between the serious novelist and the writer of "popular" drama, because his personal writerly vision had been 20/20 all along. After

⁵³ The Vanishing Point, p. 392.

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all, despite his great admiration for the man and his writings, he was not John Steinbeck, he was W.O. Mitchell.

CHAPTER 5

"The Kite:"

Two Adaptations for Two Generations of CBC Listeners

Commenting on the evolution of his own world-view during his early novelistic career, Mitchell has said in a 1990 interview: "The Alien ends with the guy committing suicide. He's an excluding person. He keeps closing doors on others all the time, until he closes the final door on himself by soaring off a mountain peak. And that ain't what happens in The Kite. But it ain't phoney. I didn't despair once I found out my rosy view wasn't. The Kite is the most antic thing I've written -- on the surface, but underneath..."⁵⁴

The Kite, Mitchell's second published novel, first appeared in print in September 1962. A radio drama adaptation followed in 1964, and was broadcast on CBC Radio on 12 June, produced by Gustaf Kristjanson, for the "Summer Stage" series. On 26 April 1965, a television version aired on the CBC series "Show of the Week." Despite the extra exposure gained from

⁵⁴ Collins, T.J., "W.O. Mitchell," in Canadian Author and Bookman, Vol. 66 (no. 1), 1990, p. 17.

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the radio and television broadcasts of the story, the novel remained largely unread, and its publisher, Macmillan's, did not see fit to reprint it until 1974, a few months after the publication of Mitchell's more commercially successful third novel, The Vanishing Point.

In 1981, in the wake of the success of his own stage adaptation of "Back to Beulah"⁵⁵ five years earlier, as well as that of Guy Sprung's stage adaptation of "The Black Bonspiel of Wullie MacCrimmon"⁵⁶ in 1977 and 1979, Mitchell reworked the material from The Kite for the theatrical stage. The play enjoyed a brief run at Theatre Calgary from 30 April to 23 May. The production was then sent to participate in the Toronto Theatre Festival that summer. A year-and-a-half later, on 26 February 1983, a radio adaptation of the stage play aired on CBC Radio's "Saturday Stereo Theatre."

The 1964 radio drama version of The Kite, based on the novel, had been written to fit into the standard one-hour format, whereas the 'special gala performance' of the play, produced by Fred Diehl in 1983, lasted ninety minutes. The

⁵⁵ The original teleplay aired on CBC television's "The Play's the Thing" on 21 March 1974. The stage version, directed by Guy Sprung for Theatre Calgary started its run in January 1976. The ACTRA award-winning radio version aired on CBC Radio on 1 October 1976.

⁵⁶ The original radio drama script was expanded, adapted for the stage and produced by Guy Sprung in 1977 for the Peterborough Festival of Canadian Theatre. The same production was also performed in various theatres throughout Alberta in 1979.

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original sixty minute version was forty typescript pages long, the latter ran for one-hundred and twenty-four pages. In order to appreciate the evolution of the material over this period of twenty years, it is important to understand the chronology of events in Mitchell's writing career during that time, as well as the impact of some major changes in Canadian society on the CBC, that allowed him to re-direct the focus of his radio writing to a point much closer to his novelistic vision.

During the early nineteen sixties, Mitchell's days as a regular radio dramatist were drawing to an end. In a last burst of production, from December 1961 to January 1964, he wrote 27 commissioned radio dramas to be aired on the CBC as a series of individual plays under the general title of "Foothill Fables." The beginning of this period of writing coincided with the acceptance of the manuscript of The Kite for publication by Macmillan's in November 1961. The "Foothill Fables" series gave the CBC radio audience an opportunity to enjoy a cross-section of Mitchell's favourite prairie themes. Exclusively composed of light dramas and comedies, the series tapped into the same pool of locales and character types that had become familiar to the enthusiasts of the Jake and The Kid serial. This new series presented Mitchell with an opportunity to explore some subjects that had

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only been touched upon lightly in the 'Jake and The Kid' plays, to develop themes that he had thought of but was not able to fit into that serial, and to work on new story ideas that were best suited for the radio drama format.

In the Spring of 1964, Mitchell wrote two half-hour radio scripts for the CBC series "Summer Fallow,"⁵⁷ and on 12 June, some six months after the end of the "Foothill Fables" series, the first radio drama adaptation of The Kite was broadcast within the framework of "Summer Stage" on CBC Radio. This play marked the end of Mitchell's regular contributions to radio, which had begun fifteen years earlier, in 1949. Thus began a period (between mid-1964 and the publication of The Vanishing Point in October 1973), in which Mitchell diversified his activities, as a writer for television, stage and screen, a public speaker, and a teacher in many Canadian Universities.

In the years between 1964 and 1983, Mitchell wrote only two more new radio dramas for the CBC. Both were adaptations from his works for the theatre. "Back To Beulah," an adaptation of his television/stage play, aired on 26 November 1974. His final contribution was the second version of "The Kite" in 1983, adapted from his 1981 stage version.

⁵⁷ "Weather, Weather, Weather" aired on 30 March, and "More Weather" on 6 April.

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Despite the long silences between new radio material, the CBC kept its audience in touch with the universe of W.O. Mitchell on a regular basis with new productions of his major radio work of the nineteen fifties and sixties. A 20-episode version of the Jake and The Kid serial aired in 1969 and 1970. A five-part radio drama based on previous scripts and simply titled "Jake and The Kid" was broadcast in 1972. To the casual listener, unaware of the history and chronology of his work, it may have even seemed that Mitchell had never ceased to write for radio at all.

The period between the mid-nineteen sixties and the late nineteen seventies was a time of social re-evaluation in Canada. Influenced by the groundswell of populist movements in the United States (civil rights, youth, women's liberation, the anti-war movement, etc.) Canadian society began a process of re-examination of its own values that was only intensified by the political tensions stemming from the fear of a breakup of the federation due to mounting nationalism in Quebec.

A greater awareness of and openness to ideas regarding politics, human sexuality, race relations and a myriad of other crucial social questions made their way across the border, mainly via the electronic media, and into the Canadian lifestyle and imagination. The CBC was not immune to these influences, and both its television and radio programming soon

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began to reflect the changes that Canadian society was going through.

During this important period in Canadian history, W.O. Mitchell made the transition, in terms of his radio writing, from the light comedy of the Jake and The Kid serial and the bitter-sweet nostalgia of "Who Has Seen the Wind" to the biting satire and social criticism that had only, until that time, surfaced in his novels. Where "The Alien" and "Back to Beulah" had shown a more serious side of his writing talent to the CBC radio audience, the 1983 radio version of The Kite announced the arrival of a new, feistier, more acerbic and direct Mitchell on the airwaves.

The two radio versions of The Kite most clearly exemplify the evolution of Mitchell's perception and use of the medium over a span of almost twenty years. His radiophonic writing style, influenced by his work for the theatrical stage in the nineteen sixties and seventies, had taken on a new boldness and power. Unfortunately, because the 1983 version of The Kite was his last radio play, the Canadian radio listener never got the opportunity to experience the effect again in that unique format.

Of the three novels that Mitchell adapted for the CBC, The Kite underwent the greatest structural and thematic changes in the course of its radiophonic life. Over the span

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of twenty years and two radio adaptations, "The Kite" was transformed from a light drama with comedic highlights (an accurate transposition of the novel's general theme and style) to a biting satirical comedy.

The novel originally made use of the symbolism of the kite as a central metaphor for the relationship between individuals and life itself, as it appeared to the main protagonist, journalist David Lang. As Mitchell himself has noted, The Kite, despite its apparent lightness, rested on sombre underpinnings that invited readers to reach-in past the novel's glistening surface and investigate their own relationship to mortality. This aspect of the novel came across as well in the 1964 radio drama version because the David Lang character was proportionately as important as in the novel, despite the cuts made necessary by the duration of the play. As in the radio adaptation of Who Has Seen the Wind and The Alien, Mitchell chose to use the principal character as a narrator and, as in those previous plays, David Lang's narrative voice addressed the audience in confessional intonations:

NARR.

Actually, it's only the landings and take-offs that bother me -- so on the non-stop flight -- just one of each to sweat through -- airplanes provoke my shrewd and seasoned ulcer but time is the important thing, and five hours is a small price to pay for crossing four fifths of a continent. (PAUSE)
I don't know how it is that the supply of time has become so breathlessly small. The world's

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contemplative time is almost non-existent.
I've used up thirty-nine years of David Lang
time.⁵⁸

But by the time the stage play and the second radio drama adaptation were written, David Lang had disappeared as a character (though parts of his persona were conflated with equal parts of Dr. Richardson's, the new composite character had a smaller role in the play). Furthermore, the radio play no longer had a narrator (a direct consequence of its previous adaptation for the stage), and the symbolism associated with the kite had taken second place to the satirical social critique that Mitchell had woven into the text.

When Mitchell first adapted The Kite for radio in 1964, he essentially used the same techniques that he had in adapting Who Has Seen the Wind and The Alien. The radio play was, at the simplest level, an abridged version of the novel, the text taken almost exclusively directly from its pages.

The story was, once again, partially based on Mitchell's own experiences. David Lang, columnist and television personality is sent by his editor to Shelby, Alberta to do a piece on a man named John Felix Sherry, but known by all as

⁵⁸ "The Kite - 1" (radio play script), Gustaf Kristjanson, prod., 1st broadcast 12 June 1964, Winnipeg, National AM Network, 40 pp., 60 minutes, p.1. All future references to this work will be to this typescript.

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"Daddy Sherry," Canada's oldest citizen. At one hundred and eleven years of age, Daddy is still going strong and is quite a legend in his province, not only because of his extraordinary longevity, but also because of his reputation as a Canadian pioneer. This reputation, though it is partially grounded in fact, has been merrily helped along by Daddy's own colourful inclination towards the telling of tall tales about his own, as well as his country's glorious past (he even boasts of having **founded** the Canadian West himself).

Like Mitchell, David Lang has been haunted by the feeling that, by writing commercially for a living, he has strayed away from a more serious writing career:

How long since he'd taken an article assignment? Two -- three years. Too long. Suddenly he was filled with a sense of impotency, the same old pre-trapeze feeling -- no life-net. He knew he was not yet over the disappointment of last year when he'd gathered the column material together, hoping for a hard-book publisher. Only to be turned down -- everywhere. Too shallow and too swift; what he had written running, people would not stay long enough to read in a book -- not in their homes, only on a bus, with their morning coffee, giving him just fragments of their time. He wrote and wrote again, and he wrote again. (...)

Why hadn't he managed the time for a novel? A play?⁵⁹

One of Mitchell's principal objectives in The Kite appears to have been to exorcise the demons of professional

⁵⁹ The Kite (novel), Macmillan of Canada, Toronto: 1962, p.6. All future references to this work will be to this edition.

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radio drama writing by channelling his own experience and frustrations into a novel. It is not surprising that, following the perceived failures of both The Alien and Roses Are Difficult Here, Mitchell blamed the long detour he had taken via CBC Radio, as the fundamental cause for his novelistic woes.

So in The Kite, David Lang's odyssey through Shelby, the people he meets, the friends he makes, the woman he falls in love with (Daddy Sherry's great-granddaughter, Helen Maclean), **are** the stuff of the novel. Daddy Sherry plays a vital role, since he is the focus of Lang's attention and the most colourful character in the novel, but it is the struggle for the redemption of David Lang's soul that is the basis for the theme and the structure of the book, as well as for its symbolism. Lang has come, once again (like Mitchell himself), to a crossroads in his life. The events that occur and the relationships that are created in Shelby will determine if his life has been a success or a failure as well as what direction he should take in the future.

At the beginning of The Kite, we are taken into David Lang's past, and told of how, after the death of his father when he was eight years old, he and his mother had moved to city, where she had started a boarding house. There he had befriended a boarder named Lon Burke, a man in his sixties, who, over time, had become a surrogate father for him. Lon

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had helped David build a kite, which was a dream come true for the youngster, but had unfortunately died of a heart attack before they had a chance to fly it. The kite itself was lost, forgotten by David on the bus during the return trip home following his attempt to fly it himself. At the same time, unbeknownst to him, Lon was suffering his fatal heart seizure.

In Shelby, in the novel's present, David meets and befriends a young boy named Keith Maclean, who is (although this is kept a secret from him in the novel) the natural great-great-grandchild of Daddy Sherry. In a reversed-image of the relationship with Lon, David Lang helps Keith build a kite as a birthday present for Daddy. This time, at the end of the novel, David gets to fly the kite in the company of Keith and Daddy Sherry. The moment is one of the most powerful in Mitchell's writing. While the kite is aloft, guided by Daddy Sherry's expert hand, Lang reaches a state of grace and of revelation about his own existence and about life itself:

David was only half listening to the old man, for suddenly his attention had turned inwards. Now he knew what it was that Daddy had for him -- the astonishingly simple thing the old man had to say -- and had said through the hundred and eleven years of his life -- between the personal deeds of his birth and his death, knowing always that the string was thin -- that it could be dropped -- that it could be snapped. He had lived always with the awareness of his own mortality.

There were thousands of ways of holding the string, David realized: gently, tenderly,

fearfully, bravely, stubbornly, carelessly, foolishly. Some dropped it without warning; others were given terrible vision ahead of time that they must drop it soon. With the ages many men had engaged in contests to knock it from each other's grasp; states broke it regularly with rope or poison gas or knife or bullet. With dance and chant and taboo ritual, with fairy tale and song and picture and statue, with pattern of word and note and colour and conduct, they tried to insist that they did not hang on simply for the blind sake of hanging on. It was for such a short time that the string was held by anyone. For most of his hundred and eleven years Daddy had known that, and knowing it, with his own mortality for a touchstone, he had refused to settle for less. Quite simple after all. Time and death and Daddy Sherry insisted: never settle for anything less.⁶⁰

The 1964 radio drama adaptation of The Kite kept both the structure of the novel and its main narrative components intact (although the raw language and coarse imagery used by Daddy Sherry was considerably toned down). In fact, of all three radio adaptations of his novels, "The Kite" is certainly the most direct, unmodified and faithful to the novel's theme and storyline. There are several reasons for this. The novel itself was relatively short,⁶¹ and therefore required that less extraneous material be cut out for the radio play. Even given its length, there were proportionally fewer characters and events than in Who Has Seen the Wind or The Alien, so the main storyline could virtually be left intact. But most

⁶⁰ The Kite, pp. 209-210.

⁶¹ The Laurentian Library edition was two hundred and ten pages long.

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importantly, the novel itself had benefited from Mitchell's extended experience as a radio dramatist and was written in a clear and crisp style that demonstrated an increasingly marked attraction for and facility with the spoken word.

Although dialogue had always been one of the strongest suits in Mitchell's fiction, the sheer quantity and naturalism of the verbal exchanges in The Kite represented a noticeable evolution of his style in this direction. Dialogue uninterrupted by narration (or even by simple narrative boundary markers such as "he said" or "she said") became more commonplace and set new parameters for his fictional technique. In many instances, Mitchell simply relied on the idiolects of the various speakers to act as a scheme of reference that would keep the reader aware of who was talking, despite the length of any given utterance. This technique would be carried even further in The Vanishing Point, where entire chapters were predominantly composed of dialogue.⁶² The 1964 radio drama "The Kite" was, therefore, not far removed from the source novel because Mitchell's fiction itself was becoming more dialogue-oriented (and more naturally "radiophonic") as his style matured.

⁶² Chapter One alone is composed of sixteen pages of dialogue out of a total of twenty-eight pages. The trend ebbs and flows throughout the novel, reaching its apex in Chapter Twenty-Four which boasts eleven pages of dialogue out of twelve.

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The lack of commercial and critical success of The Kite as a novel did not seem to have an influence on Mitchell's straightforward adaptation of the book for radio almost two years after its publication. From the style and content of the resulting play, it is clear that Mitchell was comfortable with the book in its published form and thought, at least in 1964, that it did not cry out for any major modifications. But time passed, and by 1981, having reconciled himself with the novelist he fundamentally was (after the publication of The Vanishing Point and How I Spent My Summer Holidays), he had come to the conclusion that David Lang was not to be the main character of new stage and radio adaptations of The Kite.

Indeed, the character of Daddy Sherry had been destined for center stage from his earliest appearances in the Jake and The Kid serial in the mid-nineteen fifties under the name of Daddy Johnson. The 1981 stage production "The Kite" re-awakened interest in the character of Daddy, and the radio adaptation that followed in 1983 was produced largely in response to the material's renewed appeal.

"The Kite" was a completely re-written work, though the stage version and the radio drama are essentially the same piece of writing, with minor modifications.⁶³ Most of the

⁶³ The final radio drama typescript contains the same amount of text as the stage play, with minor re-adjustments (replacing stage effects with techniques that worked better on radio). However, fourteen pages were crossed out by Fred Diehl during production to make the play fit into the ninety-minute format.

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novel's original major scenes involving Daddy Sherry were used again, but an overwhelming majority of the dialogue was written afresh. Conspicuously absent was the highly colourful scene where Daddy's house is swept off its foundations by a flood and floats downstream, into the United States. But this incident had taken place in the story's past and was difficult to reproduce effectively on stage or on radio.

The nucleus of the story was now based on the personality of Daddy, and his relationship with Keith and Helen, the future inheritors of his material and spiritual legacies. Keith's mother, Helen Maclean, took on a more important role than in the novel, and her amorous interests were now directed toward Dr. Richardson. The important addition of a CBC documentary producer named Motherwell and his crew, who had come to chronicle the events surrounding the celebration of Daddy Sherry's one hundred and seventeenth birthday (up from one hundred and eleven in the novel) was also central, and served as an ideal platform from which Mitchell could launch some of the sharp barbs he had kept in reserve for just such an occasion. Because of the much greater latitude in terms of what the CBC would allow on its airwaves in 1983, Mitchell indulged in his newly found freedom and used it for all it was worth.

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Mitchell made good use of expletives and raw language from the very first pages of the radio drama. In the process, Daddy Sherry, who had already joined the likes of Who Has Seen the Wind's Uncle Sean and The Vanishing Point's Archie Nicotine in the novels as a mouthpiece for Mitchell's own earthy perspective on society and its "bullshit," gained a whole new dimension by being broadcast on the airwaves all across the country. Mitchell had to refrain from such sorties in his previous radio drama adaptations, as well as in his other radio work, because of the sensibilities of an era that was now bygone, much to his relief and delight.

So the level of humour in the new version of "The Kite" was far removed from the polite, pacified tones heard in Mitchell's previous radio work. And though the relationship between the boy and his great-great-grandfather could not help but invite comparisons with that between The Kid and Jake Trumper,⁶⁴ there was no resemblance in terms of the material's potential shock value. The use of foul language, rude noises and wry social commentary filled page after page in the play.

Mitchell loved it and it showed. At last he could be himself on radio. Many years before, Professor F.M. Salter,

⁶⁴ This was reinforced by the fact that Billie-Mae Richards, best known for her interpretation of The Kid in the now legendary serial, was once again taking on the role of a young boy in a W.O. Mitchell radio drama.

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Mitchell's teacher and mentor, had warned his young protégé to show restraint in writing dialogue that echoed common speech patterns too closely:

"Well, he w's a Baptist and my generation's language bothered him. If you hear somebody in the poolhall using obscenity, that's one thing, he told me. But when it's written on the page it has more power, so you've got to pull back from actuality to achieve the same effect."⁶⁵

Mitchell had obviously taken a quite liberal perspective on his mentor's advice throughout his whole career as a novelist, but with "The Kite," he had brushed it aside with the assurance of a writer in full possession of his art. In the very first scene, involving Daddy and Keith, a part of their verbal exchange sets the tone for the play:

KEITH: The yellow pail.

DADDY: What yellah pail...

SOUND: CAR NEAR ENOUGH TO ANNOY TIMMY, CONTINUE
THROUGH:
TIMMY BEGINS TO BARK AS HE RUNS AFTER THE CAR.

KEITH: The yellow pail I was using to wash the goddam windows.

DADDY: Watch your goddam language. Ain't very nice to have a great grandson all the time using liv'ry stable language... shut up you little bunt nosed son of a bitch!

KEITH: I didn't say nothin'!

⁶⁵ Collins, T.J., "W.O. Mitchell," in Canadian Author and Bookman, Vol. 66 (no. 1), 1990, p. 15.

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DADDY: Not you! Him! Timmy!⁶⁶

The expletives and the ribald humour were only parts of the outer shell in which the play's social and philosophical themes were encased. The new treatment had transformed the story into a biting satire that underlined the fact that Mitchell had given serious thought to the social theme of the original novel.

The symbolism of the kite was still important in the new play, but expressing the definitive sociological assessment of a one hundred and seventeen year-old man was an irresistible temptation for Mitchell. Here was a character that had witnessed the first century of Canada's existence, and had some thoughts about how the country had been and was still run. Interviewed by Motherwell and his crew, Daddy Sherry expressed his opinion thus:

DADDY: Nope. Forget the cake. Ever since I turned a hundred -- they come from the newspapers -- television -- Calg'ry -- Trontuh -- camera -- cake an' candles -- hell -- I'm sick of blowin' out birthday cake-candles -- last twenty years I just about kep' the birthday-cake-candle industry goin' single-handed. Now -- aaah -- your first question? Second -- after the secret -- will be -- what do I think of the state of the world today. Right?

⁶⁶ "The Kite - 2" (radio play script), produced by Fred Diehl, broadcast 26 February 1983, Toronto, National FM Network, p. 5. All future references to this work will be to this typescript.

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MOTHERWELL: Well -- (SURPRISED BECAUSE DADDY IS RIGHT) yes --I did have something -- that in mind.

DADDY: Manners -- mor'ls --

MOTHERWELL: Yes.

DADDY: All friz to rat shit. Same goes for politics. Your average politician ain't fit to haul guts to a bear.

HELEN: Mr. Motherwell...

DADDY: So -- that's somethin' ain't changed much.

HELEN: Just a minute, Mr. Motherwell --

MOTHERWELL: Cinema verite.

HELEN: Which is a nice way of saying you intend to undress him in public...

DADDY: One way you could tell what kind of a man was runnin' in an election -- way he passes his wind... Sneakers he blames onto somebody else...

HELEN: Make him out to be a foul-mouthed dirty old...

DADDY: William Lyon Mackenzie King -- his must of whistled -- like he was callin' his little dog to heel...

MOTHERWELL: Harry! For God's sake -- get set up!

HELEN: Ridicule!

DADDY: Diefenbaker -- whole German brass band!

MOTHERWELL: How about Trudeau?

DADDY: Now -- Tommy Douglas -- true an' honest like he blew 'em straight through a brass curtain rod...

MOTHERWELL: Trudeau?

DADDY: Like most Baptist ones -- generally are.

MOTHERWELL: Pierre Trudeau.

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HELEN: Stop it!

MOTHERWELL: Trudeau?

DADDY: Nothin' simple -- he'd cut long ones -- an' complicated -- great control -- like a pebble skippin' over the water.

HELEN: And you have no intention of editing what he...

MOTHERWELL: Of course I have -- doing a film isn't just shooting...

DADDY: Ain't practical, though -- no way of lettin' the voters know how a man does that.

HELEN: That's enough of that, Daddy!

DADDY: Only ones can know are his wife an' family.

HELEN: Daddy -- this film is for television -- whatever you say will go from coast to coast!

DADDY: And his doxy. (PAUSE) Coast to coast?

MOTHERWELL: That's right.

DADDY: Uh-all-the way -- Atlantic -- to the Pacific?

MOTHERWELL: That's right.

DADDY: Uh...

SOUND: DADDY CUTS ONE, AND, LIKE THE RIFLE SHOT, DECIBELS HIGHER THAN REAL LIFE.

MOTHERWELL: Cut!

DADDY: Vote for me!⁶⁷

In the tradition of Jake Trumper, Daddy Sherry is a man given to flights of imagination and demonstrating a clear

⁶⁷ "The Kite - 2," pp. 75-78.

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tendency to embellish the facts of a story, but when it comes to cutting to the quick on an issue, he does it better than anyone around him. In the novel, Daddy decides to die a few days before his one hundred and eleventh birthday and makes the necessary preparations, picking his coffin and making his funeral arrangements. In the play, Mitchell pushed the scene further by having Daddy propose to Motherwell to have his death broadcast on national television. The alternative, he emphasizes, is a film about a boring birthday celebration. The documentarist is shocked at first, but then goes along with the plan, forsaking human values for an obvious and all too easy opportunity at fame and career advancement. But, of course, Daddy has been manipulating Motherwell (whose whole name he has never used since their first meeting, simply calling him Mr. Mother...) and, when the CBC crew shows up at the appointed time, the centenarian announces that he has decided to continue living:

DADDY: What you want Mother -- Mother-fucker. I ain't doin' it today! Man can't go and die in spring! Wouldn't be decent!

MOTHERWELL: Aw-shee-yit.⁶⁸

By pulling the rug out from under the members of the media, Daddy has managed to exact a small measure of revenge for the harm that he considers journalists do to society on a

⁶⁸ "The Kite - 2," p.114.

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daily basis by putting sensationalism ahead of fact and commercialism ahead of professional ethics. The whole episode with the CBC documentary crew is not artificially appended to the story. On the contrary, it complements and broadens the social critique already contained in the novel. On the surface, the play's humour is rooted in the traditions of vaudeville and may perhaps not appeal to all tastes, but it is nevertheless vintage, undiluted W.O. Mitchell.

The play ends much as the novel does, but this time there is no philosophical revelation for the David Lang / Dr. Richardson character, only the promise of a continued romantic relationship with Helen. Daddy's lesson to the world is still "never settle for less," but this time it is interpreted as a reinforcement of the two lovers' feelings for each other.

There is a greater and more complex dimension of social satire beyond the shock value of Daddy Sherry's character. It is the stuff out of which the Jake and The Kid stories and serial were woven, and it can be found in all of Mitchell's work. As Mitchell himself has said, The Kite is the most antic thing he has written, but underneath... there is a foundation of solid social commentary laced with satire that cannot be ignored.

CONCLUSION

With the 1983 version of "The Kite," Mitchell thumbed his nose at his detractors, through the character of Daddy Sherry, and bowed out of a long and fruitful career on radio in a most sonorous manner. In his last radio drama effort, Mitchell put a cap on the 'Jake and The Kid' wellspring that had helped make his name famous, and yet had haunted him through the years. The medium of radio had shown itself to be a rich proving ground for his talent, but it was time for him to take the lessons he had learned and pursue his one true vocation, the novel.

For many years, Mitchell looked upon his radio experience as a long detour down a side road called commercial success. But in the final analysis, radio was the ideal sounding board for a writer so fascinated by the spoken word. Though Mitchell struggled through his first radio dramas in terms of formal technique and narrative structure, the variety of work he did for radio considerably refined his writing style in both media.

It is clear to anyone familiar with Mitchell's novels that his experience with writing for radio was beneficial to him in the longer term. Indeed, the continual exposure to

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another medium for a solid fifteen years, with all that it implied in terms of adaptability of intellectual focus and artistic flexibility, kept Mitchell alert in terms of the conventions of one medium in relation to the other at any given phase of the writing process. And since, in terms of his own style of writing, the two media proved to be complementary, the ultimate benefits to his art were enormous.

In How I Spent My Summer Holidays, written toward the end of his radio career, Mitchell used a first-person narrator for the first time in one of his major works of fiction, echoing back to the technique that had served him well in all three radio adaptations of his previous novels. When one reads How I Spent My Summer Holidays with the mind-set of a radio listener, one quickly comes to realize that the novel is operating on a confessional level which breaks down many of the distinctions between the two media, and can be listened to as much as it can be read. The tension between narration and dialogue is defused as the unobstructed and uninterpreted human voice takes centre stage. In Mitchell's later novels, we can still perceive, if we care to lend an ear, the legacy of his radio influence, perfectly meshed with the fluid narrative style that has become synonymous with W.O. Mitchell.

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Yates, Alan, On Mining the Subconscious Notebook, [documentary profile], sound recording, University of Calgary Libraries, 85 mins.

-----, On the Stage of the Mind's Eye, [discussion], sound recording, University of Calgary Libraries, 70 mins.

APPENDIX A

PUBLISHED BIBLIOGRAPHIES OF W.O. MITCHELL'S WORK

The following works provide the most complete and up-to-date record of the author's writings:

Canadian National Theatre on the Air: 1925-1961 - CBC-CRBC-CNR Radio Drama in English, A Descriptive Bibliography and Union List, Howard Fink ed., University of Toronto Press, Toronto: 1983.

Canadian National Theatre on the Air II: 1962-1985 - CBC Radio Drama in English, A Descriptive Bibliography and Union List, Howard Fink ed., Quarry Press, Kingston: TBP, 1994.¹

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¹ The surviving plays cited in these two comprehensive bibliographies are located in the radio drama archive of the Centre for Broadcasting Studies, Concordia University, Montréal.

APPENDIX B

W.O. MITCHELL'S FICTIONS AND STAGE PLAYS:

a) Complete published work in book form

According to Jake and the kid: A Collection of New Stories. McClelland & Stewart, Toronto: 1989.

The Black Bonspiel of Wullie MacCrimmon (stage play), Frontier Publishing, Calgary: 1965.

The Devil's Instrument (stage play), Simon and Pierre Publishers, Toronto: 1973.

Dramatic W.O. Mitchell (stage play anthology), Macmillan of Canada, Toronto: 1982.

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The Kite (novel), Macmillan of Canada, Toronto: 1962.

Ladybug, Ladybug (novel), McClelland & Stewart, Toronto: 1988.

Roses Are Difficult Here (novel), McClelland & Stewart, Toronto: 1990.

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The Vanishing Point (novel), Macmillan, Toronto: 1973.

Who Has Seen the Wind (novel), Macmillan of Canada, Toronto: 1947.

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b) Selected unpublished work

The Alien (novel typescript), c. 1953, in The W.O. Mitchell Papers, University of Calgary Archives.

Roses Are Difficult Here (novel typescript), c. 1958, in The W.O. Mitchell Papers, University of Calgary Archives.

c) 'Jake and The Kid' short fiction published in Maclean's magazine¹

"You Gotta Teeter" (short story), in Maclean's, Vol. 55 (no. 16), 15 August 1942.

"Elbow Room" (short story), in Maclean's, Vol. 55 (no. 18), 15 September 1942

"Wimmen Is Humans" (short story), in Maclean's, Vol. 55 (no. 23), 1 December 1942

"Voice for Christmas" (short story), in Maclean's, Vol. 55 (no. 24), 15 December 1942

"Gettin Born" (short story), in Maclean's, Vol. 56 (no. 9), May 1 1943

"Woman Trouble" (short story), in Maclean's, Vol. 57 (no. 13), 1 July 1944

"Old MacLachlin Had a Farm" (short story), in Maclean's, Vol. 57 (no. 18), 1 September 1944

"Frankincents an' Meer" (short story), in Maclean's, Vol. 57 (no. 24), 15 December 1944

"Somethin's Gotta Go" (short story), in Maclean's, Vol. 58 (no. 13), 1 July 1945

¹ For the most complete listings of other published and unpublished titles of W.O. Mitchell's short fiction, see the bibliographic material in APPENDIX A.

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"The Liar Hunter" (short story), in Maclean's, Vol. 58 (no. 16), 15 August 1945

"Two Kinds of Sinner" (short story), in Maclean's, Vol. 59 (no. 11), 1 June 1946.

"The Day Jake Made Her Rain" (short story), in Maclean's, Vol. 61 (no. 5), 1 March 1948.

"The Princess and the Wild Ones" (short story), in Maclean's, Vol. 65 (no. 6), 15 March 1952.

"Crocus at the Coronation" (short story), in Maclean's, Vol. 66 (no. 11), 1 June 1953.

"The Golden Jubilee Citizen" (short story), in Maclean's, Vol. 68 (no. 13), 25 June 1955.

"How Crocus Got its Seaway" (short story), in Maclean's, Vol. 72 (no. 13), 20 June 1959.

APPENDIX C

W.O. MITCHELL'S RADIO DRAMAS:¹

- a) Complete list of radio drama adaptations of W.O. Mitchell's fictions

"The Alien" (radio play script), produced by Gustaf Kristjanson, 1st broadcast 10 July 1960, Winnipeg, Trans-Canada Network, 31 pp., 60 mins.

"The Alien" (radio play script), produced by Esse W. Ljungh, 1st broadcast 14 January 1968, Toronto, National AM Network, 43 pp., 60 mins.

"Back to Beulah" (radio play script), produced by Ron Hartmann, 1st broadcast 26 October 1974, Toronto, National AM Network, 45 pp., 60 mins.

"Chaperon for Maggie" (radio play script), produced by Andrew Allen, 1st broadcast 1 May 1949, Toronto, Trans Canada Network, 49 pp., 60 mins.

"The Kite - 1 " (radio play script), Gustaf Kristjanson, prod., 1st broadcast 12 June 1964, Winnipeg, National AM Network, 40 pp., 60 minutes.

"The Kite - 2" (radio play script), produced by Fred Diehl, 1st broadcast 26 February 1983, Toronto, National FM Network, 124 pp., 90 minutes.

"The Liar Hunter" (radio play script), produced by Andrew Allen, 1st broadcast 21 May 1950, Toronto, Trans-Canada Network, 44 pp., 60 mins.

"Who Has Seen the Wind" (radio play script). produced by Gustaf Kristjanson, 1st broadcast 20 July 1955, Winnipeg, Trans-Canada Network, 39 pp., 60 mins.

¹ This appendix does not include individual titles of W.O. Mitchell's Jake and The Kid serial. For the most complete listings of these titles, see the bibliographic material in APPENDIX A.

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"Who Has Seen the Wind" (radio play script), produced by Esse W. Ljungh, 1st broadcast 15 May 1966, Toronto, National AM Network, 41 pp., 60 mins.

b) Radio dramas broadcast in the "Foothill Fables" series:

"After Mary's Boy" (radio play script), produced by Esse W. Ljungh, 1st broadcast 25 December 1961, Toronto, Trans-Canada Network, 20 pp., 30 mins.

"Armageddon" (radio play script), produced by Larry Gosnell, 1st broadcast 1 december 1963, Toronto, National AM Network, 24 pp., 30 mins.

"Below the Salt" (radio play script), produced by James Kent, 1st broadcast 21 January 1962, Toronto, National AM Network, 20 pp., 30 mins.

"The Contenders" (radio play script), produced by Esse W. Ljungh, 1st broadcast 10 November 1963, Toronto, National AM Network, 22 pp., 30 mins.

"The Daring Old Man on the Flying Trapeze" (radio play script), produced by James Kent, 1st broadcast 11 March 1962, Toronto, Trans-Canada Network, 23 pp., 30 mins.

"Do Not Go, My Love" (radio play script), produced by James Kent, 1st broadcast 18 March 1962, Toronto, Trans-Canada Network, 19 pp., 30 mins.

"Green Thumb - Red Finger" (radio play script), produced by James Kent, 1st broadcast 4 February 1962, Toronto, Trans-Canada Network, 22 pp., 30 mins.

"The Hero" (radio play script), produced by James Kent, 1st broadcast 18 February 1962, Toronto, Trans-Canada Network, 19 pp., 30 mins.

"The Hobbyist" (radio play script), produced by Larry Gosnell, 1st broadcast 12 January 1964, Toronto, National AM Network, 26 pp., 30 mins.

"Hurrah for Civilization" (radio play script), produced by Larry Gosnell, 1st broadcast 24 November 1963, Toronto, National AM Network, 25 pp., 30 mins.

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"Incident At Frog Creek" (radio play script), produced by James Kent, 1st broadcast 25 March 1962, Toronto, Trans-Canada Network, 22 pp., 30 mins.

"Lullaby for a Hunter" (radio play script), produced by Larry Gosnell, 1st broadcast 5 January 1964, Toronto, National AM Network, 27 pp., 30 mins.

"Maggie" (radio play script), produced by Larry Gosnell, 1st broadcast 29 December 1963, Toronto, National AM Network, 23 pp., 30 mins.

"Move Over, Magellan" (radio play script), produced by James Kent, 1st broadcast 25 February 1962, Toronto, Trans-Canada Network, 18 pp., 30 mins.

"No Man Is" (radio play script), produced by Larry Gosnell, 1st broadcast 15 December 1963, Toronto, National AM Network, 17 pp., 30 mins.¹

"Old Croaker" (radio play script), produced by Esse W. Ljungh, 1st broadcast 27 October 1963, Toronto, National AM Network, 20 pp., 30 mins.

"One for All and All for One" (radio play script), produced by James Kent, 1st broadcast 11 February 1962, Toronto, Trans-Canada Network, 19 pp., 30 mins.

"Sacrament" (radio play script), produced by James Kent, 1st broadcast 28 January 1962, Toronto, Trans-Canada Network, 24 pp., 30 mins.

"Salt of the Matter" (radio play script), produced by Esse W. Ljungh, 1st broadcast 7 January 1962, Toronto, Trans-Canada Network, 22 pp., 30 mins.

"Sixty Percent Sire" (radio play script), produced by Esse W. Ljungh, 1st broadcast 31 December 1961, Toronto, Trans-Canada Network, 20 pp., 30 mins.

"The Soft Trap" (radio play script), produced by Larry Gosnell, 1st broadcast 8 December 1963, Toronto, National AM Network, 25 pp., 30 mins.

¹ This play, included in the "Foothill Fables" series, had originally been written as an individual radio drama. See section c) of the current appendix.

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"Sons and Fathers" (radio play script), produced by Larry Gosnell. 1st broadcast 17 November 1963, Toronto, National AM Network, 23 pp., 30 mins.

"Stylite" (radio play script), produced by Esse W. Ljungh, 1st broadcast 3 November 1963, Toronto, National AM Network, 23 pp., 30 mins.

"The Trophy" (radio play script), produced by Larry Gosnell, 1st broadcast 19 January 1964, Toronto, National AM Network, 22 pp., 30 mins.

"The Wrong Trail" (radio play script), produced by Larry Gosnell, 1st broadcast 22 December 1963, Toronto, National AM Network, 19 pp., 30 mins.

"Yes, My Darling Daughter" (radio play script), produced by James Kent, 1st broadcast 14 January 1962, Toronto, Trans-Canada Network, 25 pp., 30 mins.

c) Original radio dramas (not broadcast as part of the Jake and The Kid serial or the Foothill Fables series)

"The Black Bonspiel of Wullie McCrimmon" (radio play script), produced by Peter McDonald, 1st broadcast 30 July 1950, Toronto, Trans-Canada Network, 22 pp., 30 mins.

"The Black Bonspiel of Wullie McCrimmon" (radio play script), produced by Andrew Allen, 1st broadcast 21 February 1951, Toronto, Trans-Canada Network, 43 pp., 60 mins.

"The Devil's Instrument" (radio play script), produced by Andrew Allen, 1st broadcast 27 March 1949, Toronto, Trans-Canada Network, 50 pp., 60 mins.

"Ingredient 'H'" (radio play script), produced by Peter McDonald, 1st broadcast 20 September 1959, Toronto, Trans-Canada Network, ?? pp., 60 mins.

"More Weather" (radio play script), producer unknown, 1st broadcast 6 April 1964, Toronto, National AM Network, 22 pp., 30 mins.

Mitchell / des Ormeaux

"No Man Is" (radio play script) produced by Frank Nicholson, 1st broadcast 29 May 1961, Toronto, Trans-Canada Network, ?? pp., 30 mins.¹

"Open Up the Door and Let Her Come Right in" (radio play script), produced by Gustaf Kristjanson, 1st broadcast 16 September 1962, Toronto, Trans-Canada Network, 39 pp., 60 mins.

"Out of the Mouths" (radio play script), produced by Peter McDonald, 1st broadcast 2 July 1950, Toronto, Trans-Canada Network, 26 pp., 30 mins.

"Phlox, Stocks and Hollyhocks" (radio play script), produced by James Kent, 1st broadcast 4 March 1962, Toronto, Trans-Canada Network, 21 pp., 30 mins.

"Prairie Chicken Dance" (radio play script), produced by R. S. James, 1st broadcast 29 August 1960, Toronto, Trans-Canada Network, ?? pp., 30 mins.

"Royalty is Royalty" (radio play script), produced by Gustaf Kristjanson, 1st broadcast 23 June 1963, Toronto, National AM Network, 33 pp., 60 mins.

"Sand Valley Centennial" (radio play script), produced by K. Sadlemyer, 1st broadcast 30 March 1967, broadcast location unknown, ?? pp., ?? mins.

"Weather, Weather, Weather" (radio play script), producer unknown, 1st broadcast 30 March 1964, Toronto, National AM Network, ?? pp., ?? mins.

"The White Christmas of Raymond Shotclose" (radio play script), producer unknown, 1st broadcast 24 December 1962, Toronto, National AM Network, ?? pp., 30 mins.

¹ This radio play, in a new production, was eventually re-broadcast as part of the Foothill Fables series. See section b) of the current appendix.