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The Radio Plays of Len Peterson

Joan L. Thompson

A Thesis
in
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of
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ABSTRACT

The Radio Plays of Len Peterson, 1939-1961

Joan L. Thompson

The body of dramatic works performed on CBC Radio between the late 1930s and the early 1960s, the Golden Age of Radio in Canada, represent an important stage in the development of an indigenous theatre in Canada. One of the major contributors to this development, in terms of his thematic concerns as well as his dramatic techniques, is Leonard Byron Peterson. Peterson's work for radio ranges from comedy to documentary to dramas dealing with themes of a serious nature. It is this last category of plays that will serve as a basis for a textual analysis of Peterson's radio drama focusing on the dramatic techniques developed by Peterson for the medium. These techniques of plot structuring, narrative, and characterization depend largely on the exploitation of the power of the spoken word to suggest images, moods, personalities, and scenes. Freedom from the visual image allows the radio drama writer to evoke levels of reality other than the everyday material world. In Peterson's work, there is a sense of progression from his early work, which tends to take place largely on the realistic level, to his later plays of the 1950s and early 1960s, which portray the world of man's subconscious and his

dreams.

This analysis is based on the production scripts found in the Centre for Broadcasting Studies at Concordia University.

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INTRODUCTION.

Radio drama is the missing link in the history of drama in Canada. Up until the late 1930s, there was very little in the way of original drama; the late 1950s was an exciting period of original Canadian TV drama while the late 1960s and 1970s saw a sudden growth in Canadian traditional theatre. While this interest was certainly influenced by the surge in nationalism that accompanied the country's centennial, neither writers nor an audience can be produced out of thin air without any previous training and experience, especially in a country that (as Michael Tait notes in his essay, "Drama and Theatre") had difficulty supporting live theatre in the 1950s, even in the larger centres (1966, 654-655). It was the CBC, through its television and especially its radio productions, that nurtured drama in Canada through the 1940s and 1950s. It not only provided actors with work, salary, and prestige (Tait, 1966,656) and established a tradition of drama within Canadian society, but fostered the development of an indigenous Canadian drama, a fact which, until recently, has been largely ignored becuase of the ephemeral nature of the radio medium. Certain radio authors, such as W.O.Mitchell, Lister Sinclair, George Ryga, Harry Boyle, and Fletcher Markle, went on to work in other media and forms and have therefore become well recognized in Canada. Far too many, however, whose contribution to the establishment of Canadian drama was no

less, have largely been ignored--Joseph Schull, Mac Shoub, Hugh Kemp, and the subject of this thesis, Len Peterson.

Peterson is one of the major figures in Canadian radio drama, and his career, which started in 1939, spans the two decades of the Golden Age of radio and continues on to the present. His work is significant in the history of drama in terms of both thematic concerns and dramatic techniques. A controversial writer, he continually challenges conventional theatrical and social beliefs and practices. This won him international recognition in the form of Ohio State Awards, given by the Institute for Education by Radio in Columbus, Ohio. Peterson also won recognition in Canada, where his work aroused both great admiration and violent criticism, making his name well-known in both CBC offices and in the House of Commons.

The focus of this thesis will be a literary analysis of the techniques by which Peterson manipulated the elements of his plays to convey his point of view in his major dramatic works for radio from the Golden Age. Because radio drama is relatively unknown as an area of study, I will begin by establishing the milieu in which Peterson worked: the history of Canadian drama until the Golden Age and the nature of the radio medium itself as it applies to drama; I will also give an outline of the range of Peterson's work.

Before World War I, theatre in Canada was largely a matter of British and American repertory companies, whose visits temporarily ceased with the start of World War I. There were indigenous dramatists, such as Charles Mair, Charles Heavysege, Eliza Lanesford Cushing, Sarah Anne Curzen and Nicholas Flood Davin. However, because of a lack of demand for native drama, many playwrights could only write "closet" dramas, plays that, as Michael Tait says in "Playwrights in a Vacuum", were "denied the vitalizing contact with the coarse realities of stage production" (1972,13). Canada seemed too sparsely populated to support a theatre of its own. Moreover, perhaps because it was a fairly young country just emerging from its colonial stage, there were difficulties in finding popular support for a theatre which said little about what the majority of Canadians had actually experienced.

Merrill Denison, one of the first writers of radio drama in Canada and one of the writers for Hart House, which was established in Toronto in the 1920s to encourage Canadian playwrights, was an early critic of Canadian writers who ignored the world they lived in:

> With too few exceptions, Canadian authorship had been selling Canada short--making little or no attempt to establish the basis for a Canadian identity, either by recalling the heroic struggle of the past or by inter-

> pretating contemporary life as it is seen through the eyes of a Canadian. (Denison, 1920 or 1921, in Goldie, 1977, 15)

Nevertheless, Hart House did not, as had been hoped, become another Abbey Theatre, possibly, as Goldie conjectures in his paper on Denison, because Canada could still not support the establishment of its own theatre financially (1977,17). However, the advent of radio in the 1920s gave Canadian theatre a chance. Radio actually grew very quickly in the 1920s; by 1923, there were over 40 private Canadian stations on the air (Fink, 1981, 227). Canadian National Railways founded the CNR Broadcasting network in 1924. It played a major part in establishing radio as a popular medium in Canada. Radio was used by the CNR not only as a means of transmitting travel information to its passengers, but as entertainment as well. The Canadian Radio Broadcasting Company (CRBC) was created by the Canadian government in 1932; it took over the CN studios, equipment, and staff. Drama had been part of radio all along, especially in Vancouver (Jackson,1966,53), and the CRBC network carried on the tradition. When the CRBC's administrative problems were solved through the creation of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) in 1936, the Drama Department became the most important program department in the Corporation (Fink, 1981,228).

The nature of broadcasting in Canada encouraged many

new writers such as Len Peterson, Fletcher Markle, Tommy Tweed, Lister Sinclair, and Harry Boyle to come forward and express their ideas. As a medium, radio was accessible to a wide range of audiences and it largely eliminated the financial barrier to theatre for producers as well as audiences. Furthermore, while Canadian radio could not compete with its American counterpart in terms of the sheer number of productions broadcast, it did offer writers an opportunity to have original works performed. A large percentage of Canadian programs, both public and private, was devoted to original Canadian works produced in anthology form on the regional or national weekly drama series (Jackson, 78-79).

Another major factor, dealt with in Howard Fink's article, "The Sponsor vs. The Nation's Choice" (1981), was that CBC radio did not depend solely on commercial sponsors and therefore was not subject to the restrictions which curbed the scope of most American radio writers:

> The price of an American programme's failure to be competitive was, simply, the loss of sponsorship; and without a sponsor, frequently, a programme simply just disappeared, no matter what its positive qualities. In <u>The Sponsor</u>, Barnouw is eloquent on the effects this had on the quality of programming: in the main, programmes were safe, 'wholesome', offended no one, especi-

> ally not the sponsor or his product, and were created according to a formula proven by audience response (187).

This situation became even more acute when the creation and production of most American radio programs was taken over by the advertising agencies that represented the sponsor (Fink,187). Because most Canadian radio drama was not sponsored but produced by the CBC, a publically funded network, there was no such pressure. Although certain plays, several by Peterson, in fact, sparked a public reaction that resulted in the producer of the STAGE series, Andrew Allan, being called on the carpet (Peterson, 1982,29), Canadian playwrights were nevertheless mainly free to write about the truth as they saw it.

The producers of Canadian radio drama, especially the four major producers of the CBC National Drama Department, Andrew Allan, Esse Ljungh, J.Frank Willis, and Rupert Caplan, encouraged the writers in their work. Though each producer specialized in a different area of drama, the four worked closely together, creating what Fink has described as "an atmosphere of artistic ferment" (236-237). Writers were encouraged to express their views and, as Andrew Allan explained in his autobiography, the preoccupation with social problems, especially in the early years of the STAGE series, was shared by all of those involved in radio drama at the time:

> If many of our plays in the first years had what was called "social content", this was because the writers--in fact, all of us --were products of a Depression and a War. Ideas bred from these twin phenomena were inevitable, unless you put artificial curbs on them. And we had determined not to apply those curbs. (Allan,1974,109)

Furthermore, the supervisor of the CBC Drama Department himself gave full support to his writers by defending them against the criticism their work aroused. For Allan, allowing new ideas to be aired was a question of principle:

> One of Len Peterson's later plays, "The Man with a Bucket of Ashes", roused such a violently unfavourably reaction that a Monday morning meeting of CBC top brass spent a couple of hours castigating it. At the end of the indignation session, the chairman asked me if I had anything to say. I said I thought the matter had been pretty thoroughly covered. "Perhaps you wouldn't mind telling the meeting," he said, "exactly why you did this play."
>
> "I think," I said, "I did it because I was afraid. I was afraid of being pointed out in the future as the man who hadn't

done this play " (Allan, 111).

It was in this atmosphere of literary and dramatic freedom that Peterson's talent developed.

Leonard Byron Peterson was born in Regina, Saskatchewan in 1917. He graduated with a BSc. from Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois in 1938. Because he had a typewriter and "a lot of things to get off his chest" (Peterson, interviewed by Thompson, Nov. 1980), and because he had been exposed to the major American sustaining radio drama series (Peterson, interviewed by Fink, 1982), he began writing for radio. The first play he sent to the CBC was "It Happened in College" (1939). As Peterson says, his early plays were not acceptable to Toronto, the "centre" of English culture in Canada, and he suggests this is the reason they were sent to "the provinces" (Peterson, by Thompson) where Esse Ljungh in Winnipeg and Andrew Allan in Vancouver took notice of his work. When the National Drama Department of the CBC in Toronto was taken over by Andrew Allan, Peterson was involved in the planning for the STAGE series.

Peterson, as mentioned above, had already had a good deal of exposure to radio drama in North America before he started writing, but disliked most of its content (Peterson, by Thompson). Not content to write simple love stories or pat comedies, he was more interested in examining society from the point of view of its misfits. His ability to

write plays which effectively brought to light the unacknowledged--or the purposelly ignored--in society won him awards throughout his career, from the Ohio State Awards (for several plays, including "Burlap Bags", "They're All Afraid" and "Paper in the Wind") to ACTRA awards.

Peterson's work in radio covered a broad range of genres. In this thesis, I will be dealing only with his serious dramas, that is those plays which deal with fundamental issues of man's existence. However, Peterson also wrote comedies, such as "Now What Does He Know What He's Getting" (1944) and "Cervantes of the Woeful Figure" (1947), adaptations, such as "Maria Chapdelaine" (1947) and "Enemy of the People"(1946), and documentary plays which acquainted the audience with the different parts of the country: "Quebec" (1943), "Prairie Town" (1943), and "Long Portage" (1945).

During the war, he wrote a number of plays on wartime themes. These plays, some of which were broadcast by the BBC as well as the CBC, often dramatized the role of the ordinary man as a hero in the war effort: "Look at One of Those Faces" (1942), "The City" (1943), and "Prairie Soldier" (1944). One of these plays, "Within the Fortress" (1944), to be discussed in detail in Chapter 2, is unusual in that it looks at the war from the point of view of a German soldier.

There are also the plays, approximately seventy in all, that Peterson wrote to dramatize various mental problems

for the weekly Mental Health Series, IN SEARCH OF OURSELVES. This series was sponsored by the Canadian Mental Health Association and was aired between 1948 and 1955. Because of the educational aims of the series, the plays are often written in a naturalistic style which is not of particular interest since Peterson had already abandoned it in much of his other work of this period. His approach to the subject of mental health is, however, of interest as it relates to his preoccupation with other social problems and to the characters and themes of some of his serious plays. He was given a free hand in choosing his topics by the producer of the series, Marjorie McInenny. Before each new season of the series, Peterson would discuss various ideas with her and psychiatrist Jack Griffiths, President of the CMHA, who provided the commentary at the end of each play. Peterson would work on these ideas and generate a list of subjects, which he would write into plays (Peterson, by Thompson).

While this series provided Peterson with a stable source of income, he also felt it filled an important need in society, for many of the topics were based on situations he saw around him, and many of the plays dealt with subjects that were very sensitive, if not taboo, at the time (Peterson, by Thompson): "The Unmarried Girl Becomes a Mother" (1950), "Sex Education" (1949), "The Man Who Married a Mad-Woman" (1951), and "The Man Who Is Different" (1948) which is about misogyny. Other plays helped to relate aberrant forms of behaviour to underlying problems: in "The

Careful Boy"(1949), an insecure boy's inability to please his difficult father leads him to seek refuge in a world of resentment and revenge; in "Adolescent Rebellion" (1948), a strong-willed teenage girl rebels against her authoritarian parents; in "The Woman Who Is Prone to Accidents"(1948), a woman unconsciously uses "accidents" to avoid facing her difficulties with her marriage. Peterson often attacks attitudes which are prevalent in society and which have a negative effect on the mental health and well-being of an individual. "A Feeling of Inferiority" (1950) is about the victim of anti-semitism; "They Broke His Spirit"(1950) is about the detrimental effect of corporal punishment, and "The Minister Who Was Indiscreet" (1953), about a minister's frustration at the impossible demands of his parishioners. Peterson's very concrete and realistic dramatizations of various mental problems must certainly have helped to demystify them to some degree. The plays are also interesting because, although they are written in an early style and form that Peterson was moving away from in his serious dramatic work of this period, they share certain characteristics of his serious work: a preoccupation with current problems, a concern for the underdog or the persecuted, isolated individual, and techniques of dramatization using language, characters, and situations to which an ordinary audience, rather than an elite, could relate.

Peterson's most significant contribution to Canadian radio drama lies in the plays treating serious themes, fif-

teen of which I will discuss in this thesis. Written between 1938 and 1961, most of them were heard in the STAGE series. In all of these plays, Peterson shows his concern with the problems of man's existence, but his perspective on these problems changes from one period of his work to another. In his first period, to about 1947, Peterson attacks the oppressive tendencies in society. He sees oppression in the judicial system, in the working world, and in people's fear to speak and act freely. In the second period, from the late 1940's to the mid 1950's, Peterson focuses inward on the failure of the individual in the face of life's problems, his hypocrisy, selfishness, cowardliness, and lack of integrity. In the third and last period, from the mid 1950's to the early 1960's, Peterson's perspective is more explicitly universal as he shows man's behaviour in terms of the myths which describe these patterns of behaviour. The source of the problem is not social or individual, but metaphysical, a result of the conditions of man's existence.

These changes in perspective are reflected in Peterson's treatment of the central figure, a topic I will discuss more thoroughly in the following chapters. None of these figures is a hero in the classical sense, a fact indicative of Peterson's ironic stance. Those in the first period are victims of their society, and those of the second period, of themselves. The central figures of the third period have the most dignity as they struggle against the weight of man's history and the forces of destiny. Typical

of the ironic heroes in Frye's delineation of modes in THE ANATOMY OF CRITICISM, they are very human figures.

Because Canadian radio drama was intended to reflect and respond to the spectrum of Canadian social realities, it is, perhaps, helpful to look at Peterson's heroes in the light of Sean O'Faolain's hypothesis in THE VANISHING HERO (1956):

> ...the Hero is a purely social creation. He represents, that is to say, a socially approved norm, for representing which to the satisfaction of society he is decorated with a title (14).

According to O'Faolain, the Hero and the Villain of the traditional novel represented conflicts between socially accepted values that they defined (15). Because many traditional certainties have become less widely accepted in the twentieth century, it "will be evident that the Hero as a personification of those certainties would also have to become less and less sure of his position" (16).

This can certainly be said of Peterson's heroes of the first period; the hero is often caught between older, traditional values and twentieth century situations; he must come to terms with the labour movement, the war and post-war world, and social injustice. It can also be said of the second period characters, rather unattractive people, who reflect the disillusion and confusion of the late 1940s

and early 1950s. It is more difficult to apply it to the heroes and heroines of the third period who, though they may not understand why they are victims, persist in their struggle with a large degree of moral certainty.

O'Faolain goes on to say, however, that the Hero has been replaced by the "anti-Hero", who is not a social creation but the author's own personal creation (16-17). As such, he is a much less tidy concept as he tries in his confused manner to establish his own "supra-social" codes.

> Whatever he is, weak or brave, brainy or bewildered, his one abiding characteristic is that, like his author-creator, he is never able to see any Pattern in life and rarely its Destination (17).

While this may be applied to a few of Peterson's heroes, it is not true of the majority and definitely not true of Peterson himself. His heroes are not "good" or "heroic" in the traditional sense because Peterson does not believe in the concepts of "good" that prevail in society. His heroes' states of mind do not reflect Peterson's own state of mind, but are tools for conveying his message, a message of which Peterson becomes more and more certain.

Peterson's only novel, CHIPMUNK, published in 1949, is an ironic satire of conventional social attitudes in post-war Canadian society. Like the chipmunk of the title, its central figure, Claude Widgewood, is a small, nervous crea-

ture in a world of giants. Claude is a classic bumbler, a naive, ineffectual man who lives less intensely in his real life than he does in his imagination, discovering his father's identity, fighting the Communism that lurks behind all unionists, or achieving the confidence he sees in others. His life is a constant quest for security which he seeks in the "giants" who surround him: his mother (until her death), his boxer friend, Mott Kilsoodski, and his wife, Faustina, whom he describes as "more real than a woman should be"(65). Weak though he may seem--to others and to himself--Claude survives all three of these giants.

Peterson's satiric novel of the mainstream values of Canadian society that Claude represents reflects the same alienation as his plays of this period, the idealism of the war years having been shattered by the realization that prejudice and ignorance still remain. Claude sees Communists and RCMP Security Officers lurking behind telephone poles ready to pounce on him if he takes a step one way or another; he mistrusts unions as an arm of Communism, regards a gang of boys who play dice for money as juvenile delinquents, and has an exaggerated sense of respect for his superiors. Furthermore, Claude, like the Canadian public of the time, has little confidence in himself and constantly looks to others for protection.

The ironic tone of the novel derives from the narrative point of view, which was perhaps influenced by Peterson's experiments with narrative technique in radio. The story is

narrated in the third person but reflects, for the most part, the naive perspective of Claude. His personality and judgement are constantly undercut by his perception of reality and his own preposterous imaginings, as well as by his reflections about himself:

> But being insignificant--pushed around--and treated as a fool was sometimes more painful than being beaten up. But that was an exaggeration, wasn't it? People didn't take him for anything, he was just around. That's the impression he made. More than once he'd been told when he took off his glasses he didn't seem to have any particular face at all (12).

Because of statements like this, it is hard to take Claude seriously, and yet the novel offers no alternative within Claude's circle. Furthermore, he is a survivor.

In dealing with radio plays, as with other dramatic forms, one is always faced with the dilemma of whether to base the discussion on the script or on the production itself. As with all dramas, there is the difficulty of examining a work which was not intended to be read but to be performed. In radio drama, this is further complicated by the fact that the author's cues for sound effects and music are by their nature far less specific on paper than are stage

directions. Finally, as Donald McWhinnie explains in his book, THE ART OF RADIO (1959), the words of a radio script may not read well silently because they are written for a medium which magnifies their impact:

> The good radio script usually appears underwritten in comparison with a stage play, simply because the actor's voice in close focus invests words with extra magic and power; a seemingly prosaic sentence may conceal emotional riches which only become apparent with the act of speech (124).

These objections notwithstanding, I am going to base my study of the plays on the scripts rather than the productions. First, the scripts contain Peterson's conceptions of the play. Since radio productions are the "collective" creations of the producer-director, actors, composer and sound technician, the sound version will not give an altogether pure rendering of the author's conceptions. Secondly, many of the audio reproductions of Peterson's plays are not available and a balanced study of his work based on audio versions alone would be severely restricted. Therefore, my main texts will be the written scripts; although I will refer to sound effects, my comments will be based mainly on Peterson's inclusion of these effects in the script.

Today, radio is generally regarded as a rather unspec-

tacular medium. Unlike video, film, and live theatre, it cannot dazzle its audience with visual effects. Composed only of silence and sound--music, sound effects, and words--it may seem a poor sister, something to fall back on for background noise or news, weather, and sports updates. Its power to influence, however, is highly underrated. Although dependent on only one sense, it has direct access through this sense to a much richer inner mental stage than could ever be constructed, the visual world of a man's imagination and the world of his interior life, containing his fears and dreams as well as the memories of his past experience, most of which lie forgotten until brought to the surface in some way. Martin Esslin, former head of BBC Drama, discussed this aspect of radio drama in an interview with Alan Yates:

> It's the only medium in which you can paint pictures which will be totally convincing in their own way to each individual member of the audience and, of course, it gives you an enormous possibility to build up pictures. The result of that is that the radio play is therefore an art form which is very, very subtly adapted to the conveying of subtle states of mind and particularly images in the mind, whether they be dreams or wishes or memories or remorse or whatever it is (Esslin, by Yates, 1978).

Furthermore, radio allows the writer to manipulate the audience. As McWhinnie points out, radio--like film--is an instrument of great power. Not only can it select a focus at any given moment, but it can change this focus with speed and accuracy (34). This gives the producer great control over the audience's experience.

Moreover, the lack of visual image may be an advantage in that it can allow a more direct and intimate experience of a situation, especially in drama. In live theatre, the individual in the audience is separated from what is happening by a physical distance; the presence of other spectators and other actors on the stage can also diffuse the effect of his relationship with the speaker. In film and video, the experience can be more intimate, but the visual image may interfere with the spectator's experience if it does not correspond to his own preconceptions. Furthermore, the presence of an image itself allows the spectator to step back and separate himself from what is happening. A radio voice, on the other hand, speaks directly into the listener's ear, without the intermediary of an image or, for that matter, the printed word, and thus, as McWhinnie explains, radio "invades the listener's own solitude, re-creates the illusion inside his own head" (36). This intimacy is radio's greatest strength as a dramatic medium.

The four basic elements of radio--silence, sound effects, music, and words--replace the visual cues in film or theatre--the costumes, make-up, facial expression, gesture,

movement, lighting, and set--to convey characterization, location, and mood. Although I will not be dealing with the audio productions, I will give a brief outline of the effects of the first three elements because they are indicated in the script. Silence, of course, is the most basic element of the four, the backdrop against which all takes place. It is silence which

> paradoxically...is at the heart of the radio experience: an intimate, it might almost be unspoken, communication between writer and listener, far removed from the rhetoric of the amphitheatre or the noisy dazzle of pictures moving on a screen (McWhinnie, 11).

Although words, music, and sound effects may fill the silence temporarily, it is always present and is most obvious when communication falters between the characters. In a medium communicating primarily by sound, a pause of a fraction of a second is felt. The silence which surrounds a monologue is as important as the words that break it, conveying as it does a sense of the speaker's aloneness, the aloneness that is the basis of all human experience.

Sound effects and music are generally more suggestive than their visual dramatic counterparts which have a fairly explicit relationship to their referents. The basis of the suggestive power of music and sound effects is somewhat

paradoxical, involving the collective concepts evoked by certain sounds and, at the same time, the individual's own very personal associations with these sounds. An additional advantage for radio is the economy of these devices: sound effects and music don't depend on words which might clutter the listener's mind and need only be heard for a few seconds to be understood.

Sound effects can be used to set both the physical and the emotional stages. Not only can they indicate locale, time, action, and characters' entrances and exits, but they can also be used to convey mood, by themselves or as part of a montage sequence. This is certainly true of music, which W.O.Mitchell described as a kind of "emotional staining" in radio plays (Mitchell, interviewed by Yates). Whether it be used to suggest an aspect of a character, like the haunting oboe music that is associated with Lillian in "Lilith" (Peterson), to evoke a location or certain kind of scenery, like the carnival music in "Cold Comfort and Candy Floss" (Peterson), or to make the transition between one scene and another (a "bridge"), it influences the listener's reaction to whatever is happening in the play.

Important as these three elements are, their only real meaning is in conjunction with the fourth element, language. In radio, the spoken word naturally carries more weight than in a visual medium where other elements compete for the listener's attention and distract him from what is being said. The language used in radio dramas, therefore, is often akin

to poetry in that each word is of importance. Descriptions, for example, are often not detailed, nor need they be, for the imagination seizes on each word and elaborates it in images. Furthermore, because of the power of the word, lyrical passages, though relatively brief compared to those in fiction, can colour a whole series of scenes, and patterns of imagery can be used to structure a play. The dialogue in radio drama is of particular interest in terms of characterization, as the choice of words and syntax, the dialect, recurring images and the general style of address tell us a great deal about a character. The listener's response to these linguistic cues is often intuitive, based on what is suggested rather than explicitly stated. Radio drama--good radio drama--exploits language to its fullest, using its richness and evocative power, its musicality, and its rhythm to bring the drama to life.

Radio's limitation, then, the lack of visual image, is also its strength, for it permits a great deal of flexibility in terms of time, space, and characterization. On the stage of the mind, moving from a crowded street to a country scene, or from the present to the past, poses no problem, nor does the existence of characters such as Death or ghosts. Dependent upon author and producer for clues as to what is happening, where, and when, the listener is in a totally subjective position. As Martin Esslin explains, this makes radio particularly effective in conveying uncertainty:

> ...and of course, this is a matter which has great expressive power because there are many situations in life in which this uncertainty exists, that is, totally subjective states of mind in which the same uncertainty exists, and which no other art form, no other performing art form, can convey, neither the cinema, nor the theatre (Esslin, interviewed by Yates, 1978).

Peterson's manipulation of this subjectivity for dramatic purposes, as well as his sensitive themes, is responsible for making his work stand out from that of his peers. In this thesis, I will examine fifteen plays from the three different periods of his radio writing between 1939 and 1961 to show in detail the techniques that Peterson uses.

My study ends in 1961 for several reasons. This period parallels the Golden Age of radio drama in Canada. Moreover, the Concordia radio drama collection stops in 1961 and Peterson refused my request for data on the drama he has written since then. Finally, the volume of materials available was sufficient for a first attempt at analysis. A more comprehensive analysis, once the post 1961 works have been collected, is the subject for another thesis. In this present thesis, I wish only to begin to lay the groundwork.

CHAPTER II

THE EARLY PLAYS: SOCIAL IDEALISM AND THE SOCIAL HERO

Peterson's first period, from about 1939 to 1946, was marked by the idealism of wartime Canada and a sense of social responsibility. His realistic plays from this period are strongly didactic and concerned with specific social problems. "The End of the Line" (1942) deals with the idea of society's responsibility for the crime of the individual, and "Paper in the Wind" (1946) with a returning soldier's disillusion with post-war society. "They're All Afraid" (1944), for which Peterson won the Ohio State Award, is about the individual's submissiveness to social norms, and "White Collar" (1946), about the underhanded tactics used to break the union movement. The fantasy plays, "Within the Fortress" (1944) and "Burlap Bags" (1946), also didactic, are broader in their scope. "Within the Fortress" deals with the different attitudes behind the Nazi war effort and "Burlap Bags" with the hypocrisy and absurdity of our society.

The central figure in these plays is generally a misfit who is at odds with conventional society. Within the didactic framework of the play, however, the values he represents or expresses are the ideal, despite the fact that his actions or lifestyle itself may seem unacceptable. Tannahill, in "Burlap Bags", becomes a reclusive hypochrondriac who commits suicide; Arnie, in "They're All Afraid"

hits a Negro washroom attendant for no apparent reason; in "White Collar", Cooper betrays his fellow workers who are organizing a union. In order to bridge the gap between the conventional judgement of these actions and the point he is making through these characters, Peterson must win the listener's sympathy for his heroes. He does so by subjectifying the experience.

Because radio drama was entering a new phase in Canada in the 1940's, there was a great deal of experimentation in technique at this time. Many early productions were what David Wade in his article, "Popular Radio Drama", describes as being theatre for the blind (109-110). The writer and producer worked towards a visual re-creation of action for the "blind" listener, using an impersonal narrator to describe the scene and characters, extensive use of sound effects, and easily identifiable, stereotypic characters. Peterson quickly moved away from this type of objective reality in both his realistic and his fantasy plays and began to experiment with ways of conveying his own point of view. In his realistic plays, he did so chiefly through narrative technique and characterization whereas in the fantasy plays, the plot structure and language were more important. In the following chapter, we will examine the development of these techniques for conveying point of view, starting with the more objective plays, which use an impersonal narrator, and ending with the fantasies.

In the first two plays, "The End of the Line" and "Paper in the Wind", Peterson uses an impersonal narrator. In "The End of the Line", Seppe, a rather outspoken old janitor at the police station, constantly harps at the police for their complacent and simplistic attitude towards accidents and crimes. He argues with the police captain that criminals are only desperate people driven to crime by social pressures and that every individual in society is as guilty as the man holding the murder weapon. He also claims that, because murder is a question of circumstance, he is as capable of murder as the next man. The next day, a young woman arrives at Seppe's boarding house to try to convince his landlady to stop blackmailing her father. After a heated discussion, the young woman, out of fear for her own safety, shoots the landlady. Seppe decides to save her and arranges the evidence so that he will appear to be the murderer. Although his plan works, the young woman confesses and the police captain points out that Seppe is not, in fact, capable of murder and that he, Cap, is able to recognize a murderer.

The narrator plays a very small part in this play in terms of "seeing" for the listener, but is important in evoking the archetypes associated with the two major characters, Seppe and the Girl-Woman. He does so in terms of stereotypes or clichés:

NARRATOR: Shuffling along the main corridor of
the city police station is an old man...
grey, uncombed hair...bent knees...shirt
and overalls too big for his meatless
frame... (1)

The young woman is described as Seppe sees her:

NARRATOR: ...He looks up as he climbs the porch
steps and sees standing at the door a
young woman...maybe a girl...a girl-
woman...pressing the door bell...(6)

Peterson does not attempt to create full characters but uses the characters to make a point, in this case about justice. Moreover, while the descriptions may read like clichés, it is important to remember that a radio play is spoken, not read, and these verbal clichés serve to strike a responsive chord in the listener's imagination, acting like a kind of verbal shorthand. In this case, the image of the old, worn man symbolizes wisdom gained through suffering and supports Seppe's beliefs about justice while the girl-woman image, suggesting purity and innocence, establishes her as the hapless victim.

The narrator plays a greater role in "Paper in the Wind", which is about a young man who has just returned from the war. Claude's father, H.J.Riddiford, a well-to-business executive, wants him to go into business but

Claude, having experienced the horrors of war, cannot accept his father's complacent materialism and leaves home to try to build a juster society.

The characterization in this play is more complex than in "The End of the Line". While both Riddiford and his son can be seen as types, the prosperous businessman and the young rebel, Riddiford's general uneasiness about the situation and Claude's war experiences lend them more depth. Claude emerges as the hero in the last major scene of the play, but for the most part, he stays in the background and is seen from Riddiford's point of view. In fact, the father and son can each be seen as fragments of the traditional hero figure, the man with power and respect in the community and the man of principle. At the end of the play, when Claude has left, Riddiford's love for his son and his questions about the chances for social change pave the way for the reuniting of the two fragments of the hero and the realization of a more just society.

The narrator's function in the play is to expose the complacency of Riddiford's viewpoint, thus promoting Claude's (and Peterson's) point of view. Claude himself says little until the final argument with his father; the first two-thirds of the play is dominated by Riddiford, his values and his concern about his son's rebellious attitude. The narrator balances Riddiford's view of the situation by presenting the social reality of which Riddiford seems

oblivious. The following description, one of a series that begins the play, is an example:

> NARRATOR: A middle-aged couple passed, strolling, saying nothing, looking in the windows. There was a homeless, rootless quality about them. A man with a lunchpail, and wearing an army tunic with all the patches removed, crossed the street and disappeared into a building. A drunk standing on the sidewalk weaving, suddenly staggered forward as though the street had been tipped up...(1)

The suggestion of social injustice and alienation is missed by Riddiford, who makes a joke out of the drunk and then continues to contemplate his growing reputation as a spokesman for the business community. The description of Riddiford's drive home emphasizes the ease of his life in comparison with that of the people he has just seen:

> NARRATOR: He drove out of the parking lot.
> SOUND: CAR PICKS UP SPEED
> NARRATOR: And swung over toward University Avenue where he could get a clear, fast, drive out to his home. (4)

While this use of narrative is effective in the play, the narrator of "Paper in the Wind" sometimes be-

comes overbearing, as when he gives descriptive details of the action that are unnecessary, such as, "Riddiford put the car in the garage, and went into the house."(4). As this is not significant to what happens in the next few scenes, it merely clutters the listener's imaginary stage. Furthermore, lines such as "Riddiford felt uneasy" (7) which are, incidentally, cut from the May 5, 1948 production script, are unnecessary and would be more convincing coming from Riddiford. Peterson seems to have recognized the awkwardness of this narrative technique for he rarely uses it again. A more successful approach is the technique he uses in "White Collar" and "They're All Afraid", where the characters themselves create the perspective from which to judge the events in the play.

"White Collar"(1946) is about a storeclerk, Cooper, who, because he is having financial difficulties, unwittingly gets involved with Mattingly and his plan to break up the union being formed in the store where Cooper works. When the plan succeeds and the union organizers are fired, Cooper realizes that, having betrayed his friends, he has left himself no choice but to continue with Mattingly as an anti-union agent.

Cooper is an ironic hero in that his actions themselves are not heroic, although his motives are. Caught between responsibility for his family and loyalty to his fellow workers, he tries to do his best yet fails to live up to his principles. In order to win the listener's sym-

pathy for Cooper's position, Peterson has Cooper himself narrate the story. His direct appeal to the listener is itself a major tool in winning the listener's support, but equally important is the view Cooper conveys of himself as a victim.

Cooper's appeal to the listener begins in his opening speech when he explains the difficulty he has had earning enough money for his family:

> COOPER: I worked hard at Everett and Sons department Store, and tried to earn enough money to bring up a family. (1)

Once he realizes what he has been drawn into, he tries to get out of it, but an episode of his wife's chronic illness reminds him of his priorities and he realizes that he is trapped:

> COOPER: As I walked out of the bedroom I knew I couldn't...risk my job. Nora and the kids were more important than...Anything might happen: more doctor's bills, druggist's bills, hospital. When you have to skimp you get so cowardly you're afraid of anything new or different in your life, you run away from it! That's the way I felt about the Union. I couldn't take a chance, not if it had nine chances out of

ten of being successful. (10)

Cooper's awareness of his weakness makes him a pitiable figure whose situation makes the listener conscious of the need to protect people like him.

Because the other characters in this play are seen through the eyes of the narrator-hero, they too reflect his personal perspective. Thus Harold Tolliver's statement that characters in fiction "are understandable only as part of an elaborated system of meanings that prevails over their creation" (253) takes on a slightly different meaning when applied to radio plays narrated by the hero, since the characters portrayed by the hero are understandable only in terms of the narrative perspective and thus reflect back on him.

Cooper's perception of the three other main characters reinforces the listener's sense of Cooper's low self-image and defeatism. Two of these characters tower over him. One is Mattingly, who, in the course of the play, evolves as a kind of Satan figure in Cooper's eyes. While Mattingly seems to be merely a smooth-talking, confident man at first, Cooper sees him quite differently when he realizes he has been manipulated:

> COOPER: The son of a ...He probably picked me
> because he knew I had a lot of bills,
> and a wife who's sick, and...(12)

The other character is McBride, Cooper's co-worker and closest friend. Although he is one of the union organizers, Cooper protects him so that he isn't fired with the rest. McBride is in the same financial and domestic situation as Cooper, but his reaction is to fight for what he considers to be right:

> MCBRIDE: ...What has all this progress done for me? Two hundred years ago stupid clerks did just as well as I'm doing. That's why I...I worked so hard for this Union! I thought maybe it could change things a little. Why shouldn't we have a better living, more money and fewer hours at our dull jobs? What is progress if it doesn't give us that? I think it can give us that, and it's being held from us. (20)

While both these men represent alternatives to Cooper in his present situation, Mattingly comes across as a stronger force in Cooper's life, reinforcing his sense of impotence.

The third character, Cooper's sickly wife, Nora, plays a very small yet significant part. In the two brief scenes in which she appears, she seems to be a sympathetic person, yet Cooper's narrative indicates that he sees her and the children as a burden and perhaps even blames them

for his situation:

COOPER: ... Why should a man's wife and kids make him so weak and timid? They do! A single man hasn't any responsibilities, yes, it's easy for him! But for men like me...(11)

The fact that Cooper refuses to confide in his wife about the situation he has become involved in further increases his sense of victimization and alienation.

Cooper's lack of self-confidence is also revealed in the way he uses language. He has little, if any, self-esteem and suggests that even if he did not have any family responsibilities, he could not make a success of his life:

COOPER: ...No hope of me doing any better, my life's just not cut out that way, and ...and,,,Your ambitions and dreams and plans go after awhile. (11)

This attitude is further reinforced in his argument with Mattingly about unions. Cooper cannot reply to Mattingly's points except with a question, "What about our underhanded methods?" (7) or a conjecture,"Maybe the Union will do some good " (7), both of which indicate a lack of certainty. He also justifies his own opinion of unions by evoking the authority of public opinion:

COOPER: I don't need the money that badly. I...
I...Public Service! Unions are recognized now as a necessary part of our society. They're approved... (5)

Cooper may believe unions are necessary but his use of the passive shows that he feels his opinion must be justified by others to make it valid.

Arnie, the young office worker who is the hero-narrator of "They're All Afraid" (1944), is a much more confident character than Cooper. Frustrated by his own meekness and the meekness of those around him, both at work and at home, he attacks a Negro washroom attendant who has been serving him obsequiously in order to get a better tip. While his action itself accomplishes nothing, the perspective created through the narrative role, in the plot structure, characterization, and lyrical passages makes his actions understandable and wins the listener's sympathy.

The fact that Arnie is a more aggressive character than Cooper is reflected in his narration of the story. Whereas Cooper began by apologizing, in a sense, for what he'd done, Arnie begins the play by returning to see Sam, the washroom attendant, to explain ~~why~~ he hit him. He then narrates the events of that particular day in such a way as to make his action understandable, if not justifiable. At work, the supervisor had humiliated Arnie and his co-

workers. Arnie then looked forward to getting home but when he arrived, his mother was upset not only that her husband hadn't come home but that her son might be disrespectful to his supervisor. Her husband, although she refused to admit it, was at the tavern drowning his sense of inadequacy. Arnie expects to find some release from this sense of social repression in an evening with his girlfriend, but she too is a victim, afraid to risk her parents' disapproval by marrying Arnie, the son of a drunk. At this point, when Arnie goes to the washroom and takes out his frustration on the attendant, he has built up the story so that the listener, while he may not agree with the action, can understand it.

Arnie also seems to have high expectations of himself which are based, at least in part, on the other characters' opinion of him as someone who has the potential to break free of society's constraints. His co-worker, McKim, tells him he has too much spirit to stay at his present job (6), his mother worries about his rebelliousness (11), and his father tells him that he and his generation must correct the mistakes his own generation made in the world (17). That he fails to live up to these expectations in the end and not only hits an innocent washroom attendant but then offers him money as a recompense increases his sense of failure.

Intellectual detachment from the other characters is another factor which differentiates Cooper and Arnie.

Cooper doesn't stand back and describe either Mattingly or McBride in the narrative and, as a result, they seem to tower over him. Arnie's descriptions of the other characters, however, set him at a distance from them in such a way that he stands above them. Seen through his eyes, they are beaten people who have given up fighting for respect. He shows the submission of the office staff by contrasting their past and their present:

HOLBROOK: (WOMAN IN A MONOTONOUS TONE)..two four two eight, four eight six five eight, eight two five one W, eight two seven three J,(FADES INTO BG) five two oh seven two, eight four nine three oh, two nine eight five nine Z, three three three five six, eight oh oh oh one, seven nine eight one five W, ETC.

ARNIE: That's Miss Holbrook. She used to be a lot of fun when I first came here. She used to sort of sing those numbers out; when she was checking them with somebody... different pitch and rhythm, but now it's that maddening tone all the time...I d'know...And she's beginning to look like Miss Benchley and Miss Dompierre, two of the company's oldest and most faithful employees. She caused a scandal at the first company banquet and dance I went to by getting drunk, and they were going to can

her but they didn't. There's no danger of her creating another scandal. She's too much like Miss Benchley and Miss Dompierre now, Sam. (4)

The monotonous intonation of numbers that accompanies Arnie's speech brings present reality into focus.

In a few words of physical description, Peterson, through Arnie, captures an element that colours the listener's perception of that character, as in the following descriptions of Arnie's supervisor and his mother:

ARNIE: ...Daykin is almost bald, but he has a few...maybe a dozen long hairs...that he combs across the top of his shiny, pale skull. He smokes cork tip cigarettes.(7)

ARNIE: ...I never noticed before how tired she was. She was an old woman. Her eyes never answered back. They gave in right away. She was old and weary. Nothing was gay for her any more. As she leaned over I noticed a ridge of fat on the back of her neck. And that seemed to bother me more than anything else!...(13-14)

In both cases, Arnie focuses on one detail that evokes

something of the pitiful in the individual and although Daykin is further up the social hierarchy than Arnie's mother, this focusing reduces them to a common denominator.

Arnie is also able to detach himself from the action on the realistic level and describe what is happening in a lyrical passage. The effect of this lyrical tone is analagous to that which Harold Tolliver describes in Animate Illusions: Exploration of Narrative Structure:

> When a novelist includes lyrical passages in extended stories, he makes use primarily of the lyric's stabilizing of mood or perception in a single dominant tone--elegaic, joyful, ironic. In a comparatively richly inwrought and highly rhythmic language, he establishes gathering points in what otherwise tends to be a discursive, extended and circumstantial mode. Like the lyricist, he thereby lifts certain moments partly out of the unfinished movement of narrative and suggests a comprehensive attitude toward the work or part of it. (170)

This pointing and establishment of a mood of despondency is, in fact, the effect of Arnie's long speech after his humiliating scene with his supervisor:

ARNIE: All the rest of the afternoon I kept saying to myself: Arnie, you dishrag, you dishrag, you dishrag. Why was I so meek? Why didn't I ever speak out what I thought, what was inside me? Why didn't anybody else? Why didn't anybody in our whole office? What've we all sunk to? Must we burn inside all our lives... seven hours a day...until we're superannuated? Full of fear, so full of fear that it stops up our throats, and makes us tremble as though our lives were on the block. And why? Because we don't want to provoke our sup more than necessary. It's so easy to stand here now and weigh it, but at the time... (9-10)

The repitition of "dishrag" and the series of questions create a rhythm which, with "sink" and "burn", culminates in the images of inner hell, and the mood thus established by this passage colours the scenes which follow.

It is by combining the roles of hero and narrator that Peterson achieves the subjective perspective necessary to make his point. The way in which the hero-narrator relates the events of the play, his perception of the other characters, and his language all convey his character and point of view and in doing so, win the listener's support. Coop-

er , as an ironic hero, is a weak and vulnerable figure from the beginning, yet his betrayal of his principles and his friends arouses pity rather than hatred as well as a sense of the injustice of the situation. Arnie, on the other hand, comes across as a stronger figure and although his failure to live up to his own (and the listener's) expectations is disappointing, one does not pity him but shares his anger.

The fantasy plays, "Within the Fortress" and "Burlap Bags", take place largely in the hero's mind, showing objective reality as it is experienced by the individual. In this sense, these plays are less subjective than realistic plays like "White Collar" and "They're All Afraid", for while they are narrated by the hero, he plays a more passive role in that he merely recounts his own thoughts or activities. The fantasy segments are independent of his control. This form not only allows Peterson more freedom to exploit the poetic aspects of language but, because the dream world or world of the imagination is not limited by realistic conventions of time, space, and character, Peterson is able to attack a wider range of social problems. In "Within the Fortress" for example, he deals with the many different attitudes which lead a nation to war, and while the play is about Nazi Germany, the attitudes shown are universal. "Burlap Bags" is a bitter and scathing indictment of almost every aspect of twentieth century western

society. In both cases, the impression of incoherency and disjointedness created by the fantasy form conveys a sense of fragmentation within society.

Unlike many of the structures in realistic plays, which are imposed by realistic conventions of time, space, and character, the structures of fantasy are organic, arising from the medium of radio itself. The narrative frame, the narrative role itself, the interplay between the narrative and the dialogue, and even the language function as part of the structure and meaning of the play, and their strength lies in the fact that radio consists of sound alone. In the following examination of "Within the Fortress" and "Burlap Bags", I will look at these four elements to show how they structure the meaning of the plays and convey Peterson's point of view.

"Within the Fortress" follows the reminiscences of Konrad Olmers, a German social scientist who tries, unsuccessfully, to remain detached from the attitudes of Nazi society. The play moves back and forth from scenes of German life showing the rise of the Nazis, anti-Semitism, and the war movement to scenes of Olmer's private life, which gradually becomes submerged in the fate of Germany. The organization he is working for is taken over by the Nazis, he ends up writing propoganda and analysing troop morale, and finally his wife is killed in an air raid. As the play ends, Germany is losing the war and Olmers is completely demoralized by what he has seen. The only glimmer of light

for him lies in the prospect of seeing his son again.

"Burlap Bags", the other fantasy play, traces the mental breakdown of the hero, Tannahill , as he describes it in his journal, which is found by a dissolute fellow named Manitoba during the general raid by the other occupants of the boarding-house on Tannahill's room after his suicide. Tannahill's problems begin when he suddenly sees the absurdity of conventional existence. Unlike the people in his dream who wear burlap bags over their heads so they won't see clearly, Tannahill refuses to hide from the truth. Increasingly disillusioned with what he sees, he eventually loses all hope and kills himself.

In both plays, the techniques Peterson uses break down the listener's everyday sense of time and space to create a distillation of reality. Fluid changes from scene to scene, ephemeral characters who speak a line or two and then disappear, series of images and disjointed fragments of dialogue all evoke the world of dreams, memories and reflections. In "Within the Fortress", glimpses of Olmer's harmonious and peaceful family life suddenly dissolve into scenes of violence and snatches of conversation which show the frustration, anger, and confusion in German society as the Nazis gain power and go to war. In "Burlap Bags", the same techniques--a plot which drifts from Tannahill's descriptions of the successive stages of his breakdown to bizarre images and anonymous voices expressing nonsense or pain--create the nightmarish vision of life that eventually

drives Tannahill to suicide.

In this disjointed and often confusing dreamworld, the narrative is an important structural element. The hero-narrator figure and his story, standing out from the rest of the play as they do, function as a focal point. Not only is the hero almost the only consistent character in the fantasy or dream world--Olmer's wife is the only other--but his narrative, as we will see shortly, proceeds in a linear fashion, unlike the rest of the play, and provides a sense of continuity.

The heroes themselves are sympathetic figures who represent the ideal values in each play, but who are alienated from their respective societies. Olmer's goal as a sociologist is to study social attitudes objectively in order to be able to help the world (5) , but he learns that he cannot remain uninvolved. Like Cooper in "White Collar", he is forced to choose between his principles and his family responsibilities. Despite the fact that he compromises the former by serving the Nazi regime, he remains a sympathetic figure because he is a victim of social forces. His self-disgust and sense of defeat only increase the listener's sympathy for him.

In "Burlap Bags", Tannahill's alienation from society takes a more extreme form, that of a mental breakdown which starts when he first begins to see the absurdity of conventional attitudes in culture and politics. As he examines the various institutions and beliefs of society more close-

ly, his disillusion turns to despair. Yet his reaction, insanity and eventually suicide, is a confirmation of his ideals, and the final conclusion must be that it is those conventional beliefs and institutions that are insane and not Tannahill, who is literally driven "out of his mind" by his knowledge.

While the narrative and the dialogue are not completely independent in the fantasy plays, the tandem relationship that exists between them in the realistic plays is less obvious and, in fact, the narrative often seems to interrupt the fantasy segment. By separating the narrative, which represents the ideal values, from the fantasy segments portraying society, Peterson emphasizes the alienation the hero feels. Furthermore, it is through the interplay between these two elements that the theme is worked out.

In "Within the Fortress", there is a distinct contrast in tone between the narrative and the dialogue at the beginning of Olmer's story. In the early 1930's, Olmers is able to maintain a distance between his personal life and the events taking place around him. Amid the confused, angry, and unhappy voices, he is the cool, detached, and analytical social scientist who seems in control, at least of his private life. However, as his private life is gradually invaded by the Nazis, his narrative begins to echo the defeat felt by the German people. By the end of the play, Olmers and his countrymen are lamenting their

defeat simultaneously, but with a significant difference. While the people are lamenting the fact that Germany is losing the war, Olmers is lamenting a greater loss, that of his ideals and his belief in mankind.

In "Burlap Bags", the language and form of Tannahill's very coherent and rational description of his mental breakdown in his diary stand out against the disjointed dialogues and bizarre images of society in his head, producing a schizophrenic vision, with Tannahill's ideals on one hand and reality on the other. However, the dialogue, in fact, parallels the narrative throughout Tannahill's breakdown. As his disillusion and despair increase, the absurd dialogues and caricatures of accepted authority figures such as politicians and religious leaders are replaced by nightmarish scenes of bondage, the monologues of lost and lonely people, and visions of mutilated bodies. In the final stage of Tannahill's breakdown, the rational narrative is not to be heard and we are left with the absurd conversation of Tannahill's imaginary Piano Box people in a parody of communication.

These Piano Box voices are part of another major structural element in the fantasy plays, an introduction and conclusion to a play or a section of a play which acts as a kind of frame for the content of that section. This frame not only provides a link between the dreamworld and reality, but orients the listener by establishing and reinforcing the narrative perspective.

In "Within the Fortress", the framework is fairly straightforward. Within the first two minutes of the play, the listener learns that although Olmers is a German officer, the manner of his salute, "Heil Hitler", and the reference to a joke about Hitler (1) show that he is not a dedicated Nazi. Furthermore, his first reflections reveal the two preoccupations which will govern his memories, his son, and by extension, the ideal world of his homelife, as well as the sense of alienation he feels.

> OLMERS: Ernst...Ernst...Ernst...Ernst...Ernst.
> Tonight I shall see him. And grip his tiny shoulders in my hands. He'd be embarassed if he knew I thought he was tiny. He's nearly thirteen, he writes, two months after his twelfth birthday. Wants to pull the years down on top of him. Feeling his manhood. Excited about my getting another medal. He doesn't know about medals. I haven't been with him enough to tell him much. (2)

The crushing knowledge of adulthood and the disillusion with political and military goals referred to in this first speech are echoed in the conclusion to the play:

CHORUS: We are losing...losing...we are...we are losing

OLMERS: I am supposed to help stop that. I've been ordered back to Berlin to make a report on morale on the Eastern Front around Krivoi Rog. I cannot stop that. I couldn't stop the hate and the war, and now I cannot stop the peace, but I'm forced to make an effort, and I feel a great disgust.--But I shall see Ernst.

the war.(BUILDS) We are losing...losing ...we are losing the war. We are losing ...losing...we are ...we are losing the war. We are losing ...losing...we are ...we are losing the war. We are losing.. .losing...we are... we are losing the war...We are losing ...CHORUS:(FULL AND STRONG) losing the war! We are losing the war! (27-28)

Despite Olmer's great disgust with what he has seen, he still looks to his son and the promise for the future that Ernst represents. The message of the play, then, is that although the war has been a horrible experience, not only in terms of the violence and injustice perpetrated on the innocent but in terms of the stupid and selfish attitudes that caused it, there is hope for the future.

The frame structure in "Burlap Bags", actually two

frames, creates a much bleaker perspective. The first dialogue between the two loafers who read Tannahill's journal reveals that Tannahill is considered to be an outsider, someone who doesn't fit into his society.

> MANITOBA: ...He was a bit nuts, never spoke.
> And wore glasses half inch thick. And
> you shoulda seen his room, Finley, full
> of medicine bottles. (2)

After reading the journal, they still consider him crazy and go back to their own petty and inane preoccupations, drinking beer and sneaking into a "rags-to-riches" movie that is even farther from reality than Tannahill's fantasies. Clearly, Tannahill's revelations have had no impact on them and there is no hope of changing society.

The second frame structure in "Burlap Bags", to which I referred earlier, begins and ends Tannahill's journal, enclosing his fantasy. The dialogue of his imaginary voices, locked inside a dark, empty piano box, indicates the decline of Tannahill's contact with reality. The first dialogue is an absurd parody of real conversation in which the system of logic that governs the real, waking world is breaking down:

> C: We're not in a room.
> B: Yes, we are.
> C: No, we're outside, walking down a street.

> D: We're in a piano box. But it's lucky
> the piano's been taken out. Be rather
> crowded otherwise. (5)

Tannahill recognizes this as a symptom of his disillusionment and explains that, since he has lost his beliefs and hopes, "Those crazy creatures in the dark were as sensible as any..." (6). By the end of his journal, the conversation of these imaginary people has become completely absurd, disconnected, and disjointed, indicating that Tannahill has lost all contact with reality:

> D: It's lucky the piano's been taken out.
> Be rather crowded otherwise.
> C: I've been sucking on mine, and I don't
> feel sick at all.
> A: Let's dance.
> D: I dance for knowledge as well as amusement.
> A: You're very practical.
> D: Yes, I know. (22-23)

The merging of the narrative and the dialogue in this meaningless chatter is a double metaphor for Tannahill's insanity and for the complete breakdown in society.

The double frame structures the play so that Tannahill's alienation is experienced from two points of view. Tannahill's own bleak, despairing vision of the world, con-

tained within the inner frame, is confirmed by the outer frame which shows that his vision has not been understood and therefore, that man's inane and absurd existence will continue. The separation of the two worlds in this way makes a statement about the relative validity of the different levels of reality. Because radio is sound only, Tannahill's fantasy world is experienced on the same level as Manitoba and Finley's and his vision, as nihilistic as it is, is at least as convincing as their petty preoccupations.

The fantasy form of these two plays allowed Peterson to exploit the evocative power of language more fully not only to convey mood but to reinforce the hero's perceptions. At the beginning of "Within the Fortress", for example, much of the imagery focuses on dreams, especially unfulfilled dreams, and the incongruous juxtaposition of images conveys the disillusion and frustration with reality felt by many Germans during the 1930's:

> TIMID: When I was a little boy I dreamt that I'd be a field marshall some day. When I was going to school I dreamt that I'd be an explorer like Roald Amundson. Then I dreamt that I'd be an inventor like Marconi.
>
> CANDID: Now you know you'll always be a clerk in a grocery store.

TIMID: No, some day I'm going to design planes and-- (6)

Olmers and his wife Aniela are also concerned with dreams, but their dreams centre around their baby son, Ernst. However, this same juxtaposition of images is an early indication that their dreams will be in conflict with future reality.

OLMERS: (CHUCKLES) Look at him sleeping. No dreams for him yet.

ANIELA: Ours for him.

OLMERS: (CYNICALLY) And Hitler's. The great Fatherland!

ANIELA: That fool!

OLMERS: His men broke up a Communist meeting here last night, eh? I heard a man talking about it on the street who was there. They threw potatoes.

BRAGGARD: The meeting, it wasn't a meeting for long! I was there. We threw potatoes with safety razor blades in them. (3)

The happy family scene pivots swiftly on the word "dreams" to the threat of Nazi interference and a scene of violence.

Peterson also exploits the musical aspects of language, especially the rhythm of the language, to build up the ten-

sion. The following scene marks the end of the pre-war era in Nazi Germany, during which the people have felt a great deal of frustration and dissatisfaction.

REVENGEFUL: Somebody's to blame for the state
the world is in.

VOICE 1: Who?

REVENGEFUL: Look around.

VOICE 2: Our birthrate is down. Our deathrate
is up.

VOICE 3: Our taxes are up. Our markets are
down.

VOICE 4: Unemployment's up. Breadlines longer.

VOICE 5: Suicides are up.

VOICE 6: It's not a bad idea.

VOICE 7: Emigration is up.

VOICE 8: Crimes are up. Crime against property
has tripled.

REVENGEFUL: Somebody's to blame for the state
the world is in.

VOICE 9: Not me.

VOICE 10: Not me.

VOICE 11L Nor me.

VOICE 12: Don't look at me.

MUSIC: SEGUE INTO BG MUSIC DEPICTING GROWING HATE...
OUT AT...

BITTER: It's the Jews! (7-8)

The ominous, threatening tone of the first line, which is used like a chorus, the staccato rhythm of the short sentences, and the repetition of the "up" statements create a tension that explodes in the irrational accusation against the Jews. The hysterical claims and chanting that follow complete the effect, creating an atmosphere in which Olmer's rational detachment is completely anomalous.

In "Burlap Bags", the imagery, in reflecting the various stages of Tannahill's breakdown, shows people who are progressively more distorted. The distortion is an absurd one with the people in the dark piano box, but the people Tannahill sees next are all wearing burlap bags on their heads. As his dream continues, people become less recognizable as normal human beings until they are just fragments of bodies.

TANNAHILL: And oh, what other unattached parts

MUSIC: SEVERAL SNATCHES OF MUSIC ON SOLO INSTRUMENTS IN BG

I saw! They were too common. The thick skin of someone who'd been hurt too much, the mask of a model, the distended stomach of a glutton, the sad eyes of a melancholic, the fist of a bully, the twisted back of a self-conscious cripple, the writhing nerves of a neurotic, the jewels on the neck and fingers of a dull, rich woman.(19)

In the final scene, however, the people are physically normal but distorted--even truncated--emotionally and psychologically. They cannot forget their griefs, losses, and failures and so cannot be happy. As Tannahill resigns himself to seeing the world without a burlap bag and hence to insanity, we return to darkness and the strange voices emerging from a piano box, but this time, as we saw above, their conversation is so disjointed that it makes no sense at all. The visual imagery then, in following the course of Tannahill's breakdown, also traces the breakdown and distortion in social institutions and beliefs to the point where the visual imagery dissolves into a sound image conveying the complete loss of meaning in our society.

By leaving the world of physical reality and entering the world of the imagination, Peterson was able to make great advances in the art of radio drama in Canada. Because of developments in narration, characterization, and the use of the language, the fantasy plays are much like poems. The extensive use of imagery and rhythm, the ephemeral characters, and a plot structure that moves, not from one event to another but from the perception or reflection of an event or feeling to another, are all felt more powerfully on the imaginative rather than the physical level. By bypassing the world of the physical stage in this way, Peterson brings the drama closer to the listener.

Peterson's first period was dominated by a concern for social problems and in his plays, he attempted to win the

listener's support for his social views through the hero. More often than not a victim of conventional attitudes and social forces, the hero's reaction is one that would not, probably, win the listener's support. Nevertheless, through the development of techniques of narration and characterization, Peterson shows that it is society that is at fault.

Because of the didactic aims of his work, a subjective rather than an objective perspective was more effective and the plays became the expression of an individual's reaction to a set of events rather than an account of the event itself. The techniques Peterson developed communicate this perspective in both the realistic and the fantasy plays, and moved radio drama as a medium from a theatre for the blind towards a theatre of the mind.

CHAPTER THREE

THE MIDDLE PLAYS: DISILLUSIONMENT

While Peterson's early work was generally very critical of society, such criticism at least implied a belief that society could change. In most of his serious dramatic plays in the next period, form the late 1940s to the mid 1950s however, the tone is one of bitterness. The didacticism of "The End of the Line" and "They're All Afraid" is replaced by a pessimistic view of man's condition. The focus of these plays is not social problems but the ethical problems of the individual. In "Everybody Likes Me" (1949), the protagonist is faced with--and fails to see--his own hypocrisy; in "Don Juan of Toronto" (1951), he must choose between freedom and compassion; in "Cold Comfort and Candy Floss" (1953), he is forced to see the dishonesty of his life; in "Man with a Bucket of Ashes" (1952), he must accept the responsibility for his life and his actions. Although society remains as unjust and hypocritical as it was in "Burlap Bags", the protagonist's problems--and failures--are wholly his own.

The disillusionment expressed during this period of Peterson's work no doubt stemmed, at least in part, from the world situation. As Desmond Pacey states, the Korean War, the continuation of the Cold War with the Soviet Union, the McCarthy witch hunt and the constant threat of annihila-

in an atomic war were reason enough to feel uneasy (Klinck, 1976,19). Despite the terrible sacrifices of World War II, oppression still existed and it is perhaps the ensuing sense of the futility of man's efforts that finds its reflection in Peterson's plays of this period.

Much of this disillusionment is expressed in terms of the eroded hero figure. In the earlier plays, the hero may well have been a victim, but he at least had the listener's sympathy. In the second period, he is a less sympathetic character, sometimes even unpleasant, and concerned only with himself. Peterson further increases the distance between the listener and the protagonist by removing the narrator, the means used in the early plays to win the listener's sympathy. In this chapter, we will look at the tension created by this distancing and its resolution through the plot, symbolism, and characterization, the vehicles through which Peterson's point of view is conveyed.

In its form, "Everybody Likes Me" resembles the early social criticisms such as "The End of the Line". The simplicity of the plot in itself is reminiscent of the earlier, naturalistic plays. Narrated by a third party, the plot line is linear and fixed within one period of time. The characters are consistent throughout the play and are portrayed realistically, while the language used is that of the day-to-day world. However, this play can be seen as a transition from Peterson's first period to this next. The tone is more ironic than didactic, the focus is on an individual, rather

than on a social problem, and the treatment of the two central figures, the narrator and the retarded boy, belongs to the second period in that neither is portrayed as a hero.

Lawrence is a retarded youth who, believing that the townspeople like him and appreciate his help, runs errands for them, does their dirty jobs, and tolerates their jokes. On this particular day, the joke sours when a group of youths goads Lawrence with the threat that he will be locked away in an institution when his sister dies. Realizing that he is not liked after all his efforts, Lawrence gets a gun to protect himself. When the townspeople, frightened by his sudden show of aggression, attempt to overcome him, he shoots three people.

If it were not for the ambiguous stance taken by the narrator, Stanyar, this play would fit in with the didactic plays. However, Stanyar's words are inconsistent with his actions. In the introduction, he expresses concern over the lack of love in the city and points to what happened to Lawrence as an example of the possible outcome;

> STANYAR: ...Just before I left the city I felt it was going mad. The insane grasping... the restless tearing about with no end in view except oblivion: escape through automation, noise, sensationalism and suspicion. There is little love in the City; you pay money for everything. But

> when love is taken away--look out. Last Saturday night some of the people of Kawagoma deprived a man of love. The town is quiet today.--There was no point in taking--ripping Lawrence's love from him. He was so happy in his idiocy till then. Some devil got into the people. I barely lifted a finger to prevent [it]...(1)

By his own admission, Stanyar did nothing to prevent either Lawrence's treatment by the townspeople or the subsequent killings. Moreover, at the end of the play, he is still blind to the significance of what has happened and sees evil only in the problems of the city:

> STANYAR: Oh, the people in Kawagoma are no better than the city people, but the outcome of their vileness is not so easily hidden. That makes for compassion. The City is nearly two hundred miles away, but any day I expect to see an explosion out over the horizon, rising high enough to be seen this far. (WARMING) Just deprive a few more people of their love... (31)

Stanyar's ambivalence, rising from his awareness combined with his inaction, deflects the focus of the blame from the townspeople onto himself.

Another factor that sets this play apart from the earlier plays is that the hero figure is fragmented. The central figure is Lawrence, but while his innocence and essential goodness are positive characteristics, he is an idiot, not to mention a helpless victim. Stanyar, on the other hand, is a survivor and by his critical attitude, sets himself above the ordinary man. No longer involved with man's problems, he is a detached observer: "STANYAR: ...The old revolutionary is dead, now I just watch"(1). While he is not the central figure in the play, the attitude expressed in his opening and closing speeches which, incidentally, function like the framing device of the earlier plays, makes him more than just an impersonal narrator. In fact, both he and Lawrence, as individuals, embody elements of the traditional hero. The effect of this fragmentation is to put the listener at a distance from both characters, since it is difficult to identify with either. Moreover, it means that there is no one figure to act as a focus for the listener's sympathy and thereby convey Peterson's point of view. Instead, the distancing techniques force the listener to take a critical attitude towards Stanyar and his hypocrisy.

With "Don Juan of Toronto", there is a stronger sense of the protagonist's alienation from society as he deals with the difficulty of rising above conventional morality and the "sickly consciences" (19) of his peers without los-

ing the compassion that gives meaning to life. Stuart Lowry, the Don Juan of the title, attempts to rebel against society by stealing $367 from his employer's safe and, with his lover, Irene, distributing it amongst poor people on the street. When he leaves her for another woman, Oudette, Irene informs on him. Reluctant to leave Oudette, whom he truly loves and who is pregnant with his child, he is gunned down by one of the office staff in a car chase.

Within the play itself, Stuart's alienation from society is expressed in terms of his relationships with his family, his fellow workers, and Irene, all of whom espouse conventional values and,in fact, see convention and morality as one and the same. They condemn Stuart for his philandering and his theft of the money. He, on the other hand, scorns their dull respectability, hypocrisy, and materialism. He is able to love Oudette because, being young and yet "wise with innocence"(27), she has not yet acquired conventional values and therefore does not judge him as the others do. Apart from this relationship which, ironically, leads to his death, Stuart rejects and is rejected by those around him, even before his theft.

Stuart's alienation is also felt in terms of his relationship with the listener. His character is such that it is difficult to feel sympathetic towards him. While he has good qualities,such as his lust for knowledge and life and a disregard for material gains, his cavalier attitude towards women and especially his arrogance are unattractive.

His motive for stealing and giving away the money, for example, is not only generosity but also a desire to prove he is better than his society.

LOWRY: ...Women are one thing; this's a greater proof of my morality. Oh, and now I'll learn what it is to be outside and above the tribe! (4)

Furthermore, while he criticizes the materialism and self-righteousness of Lindsay, the man who kills him, for endangering the lives of innocent people for a few hundred dollars (45), he himself leads the car chase because he is too proud to allow himself to be caught and judged by those he considers inferior.

LOWRY: Whoops! that was a close one! (LAUGHS) Chased not by the cops, but by a couple of pale-faced clerks! (CALLS OUT) Go on back to your desks and your comic books! Don't try to be heroes. You might get hurt. (44)

The lack of a narrative presence also acts as a distancing device. While the frequently mentioned intimacy of radio exists in the relationship between any speaker and the listener, it is at its most intense when one speaker, such as the narrator, has a continuous relationship with the listener. It is the narrator, for example, who brings

the other characters to the listener's ear, and who provides the continuity of story-line and mood so important in a non-visual medium. It is also the narrator who, through his commentary and through the contextual details he chooses to provide, determines the perspective in which the characters' actions and words are to be judged, particularly in the case of an involved narrator like Stanyar or the hero-narrators.

To remove the narrator from a radio play, then, automatically changes the perspective from which the events are experienced as well as the listener's relationship with the protagonist. The narrators of the earlier plays provided a sympathetic bond between the listener and the hero; in "Don Juan", this is not possible becuase there is no narrator. The listener's reaction to Stuart Lowry can be based only on his actions, the action of the play, and Stuart's language; because Stuart is not a very sympathetic character, his behaviour invites judgement rather than compassion.

While Stuart is totally believable as a character, the plot, specifically the apocalyptic ending, is not. Stuart's "crimes"--chasing women and stealing $367--are relatively minor and more likely to invite a psychiatric diagnosis than any serious punishment. That he should be gunned down in a violent car chase is completely out of proportion to what he has done. As a result of this ending, Stuart becomes a martyr for his cause.

The martyr image is reinforced by the religious symbolism in the conversations between Stuart and "?", the death

figure. The image of Stuart's "winding sheet of lovely colours", "blood, oil and water" (17), in the reference to his near death during the war, suggests he is a Christ figure. However, unlike Christ, Stuart chose joy over compassion, and the "catechism", as he calls one conversation with "?" (17), reviews the pact in which he renounced compassion.The prospect of death does not make him think of his immortal soul but rather arouses in him a lust for earthly joys:

> LOWRY: It's a goad and a scourge driving me
> into the arms of women, and through book
> after book. No, I don't want to forget.
> I kiss the sharp prongs and the whip
> lashes. (18)

The use of the phrase "a goad and a scourge" and the reference to whip lashes both suggest a liturgical context. In the following passage, a kind of Dionysian chant, even the rhythm and diction of the language are reminiscent of liturgical language:

> LOWRY: A few minutes with you and I'm not! My
> best friend! I get feeling heady. Ah,
> forty, sixty, eighty, ninety years of
> this is given to me! To look, to touch,
> to worship and be worshipped, to hurt
> and be hurt, to praise and blame, to
> sing, to drink, to love, and love again:- (18)

In drawing this parallel between Stuart and the archetypal hero figure, Christ, through plot and imagery, Peterson not only emphasizes Stuart's "un-heroism" but calls attention to the reason he is not a hero.

The death figure, or "?", as he is identified in the script, introduces a Faustian element which emphasizes the individual rather than social nature of Stuart's problem. It is Stuart who assumes this figure is "Death"; "?" was present on the two previous occasions when Stuart was almost killed: first during the war when his corvet was torpedoed and later when his car crashed. However, "?" is also a Satanic figure, representing the hedonistic, totally selfish side of man. He sneers at Torontonians' sickly consciences (17), and it was he who offered Stuart joy in exchange for pity and compassion after the latter was ready to renounce women because the girl he'd been with in the car accident had been killed (17-18).

It is because Stuart breaks this pact for Oudette that he dies in the end, for "?" has already warned him:

> ?: Stuart Lowry, all the elements but one needed to destroy you are around you now. The fateful one is the girl in whom you will find both joyful and compassionate love.(22)

On the symbolic level, Stuart's pact with "?" is an attempt to deal with the problem of self-concern in which there are

only two options: either to hold oneself responsible for the consequences of one's actions and renounce all joy or to seek only one's own happiness and renounce all conscience and compassion. In desiring both, Stuart is refusing to recognize the limitations of the human condition; the result is the failure of his rebellion and the end of his life. A function of Stuart's dilemma and therefore of his personality, "?"'s presence removes the problem from the social level and establishes it clearly at the level of the individual.

With "Cold Comfort and Candy Floss", Peterson returns to pure fantasy and creates a dreamworld in which Eric Broderson can come to terms with the life he has created for himself. Broderson, an irritable, middle-aged stockbroker who has embezzled money from a client, goes to the circus in search of the innocence and wonder of childhood, knowing that his crime will soon be discovered. While there, he has a heart attack and goes into a dream world in which he must recognize the dishonesty of his whole life.

The play focuses on the psychological rather than the moral aspect of the crime. In fact, embezzling the money is merely the social manifestation of a whole life of dishonesty. Beginning with his decision to give up art for a more lucrative and respectable career in business and his subsequent rejection of his parents, Broderson gradually betrays all of his personal values in order to become socially ac-

ceptable. Ironically, he feels he will regain his personal freedom from society when he learns that he will go to prison:

> BRODERSON: So: (MUSING: THE BURDEN LIFTED FROM HIM) I'll be able to paint again. In jail I'll get back to painting. Jail won't be a prison. I'll be freer there than I've been for a long time. (56)

Broderson's alienation is expressed both in terms of social reality and of his inner self. To convey the former, Peterson uses the same techniques he used in "Don Juan of Toronto". Broderson has an unpleasant personality; until the final scene when he wakes up and learns he will go to jail, he is irritable, suspicious, and cynical. Furthermore, there is no narrator to plead his case; instead the listener must depend on Broderson alone. Because the play takes place almost completely in Broderson's imagination, his inner alienation is conveyed through the elements of his dream, the three voices that follow him about, the circus imagery, and the language of the circus characters.

Unlike the heroes in the earlier plays, Broderson is not a victim of society but has consciously made the choices that have led to his present situation. Having betrayed his own values, his alienation is more extreme even than Stuart Lowry's, as he is alienated not only from society but within himself. This internal breakdown is expressed by the

three voices, "A","B", and "C", who accompany him throughout his dream, harassing, accusing, probing and, occasionally, helping him. Like "?", the death figure in "Don Juan", they are part of his personality, but their collective character, for one cannot differentiate between them, is much less fixed. While at times they sound like Broderson's conscience, they play many roles--moralist, judge, cynic, Devil's Advocate, and Guardian Angel--forcing him, eventually, to understand what his real crime is.

The circus image is important both as a symbol in itself and as a setting. It is generally associated with fun and good humour and indeed, many of the people Broderson meets there are enjoying themselves. Broderson, however, cannot enjoy himself despite the fact that he has come to the circus in search of innocence and good humour. Ever conscious of his guilt and crime, he feels himself to be the victim of a plot and is suspicious of everyone, even an old man he meets on the ferris sheel:

> OLD MAN: I've been sitting here all the time.
> I got on at the bottom when you did.
> BRODERSON: You're lying! You're part of the plot against me.
> OLD MAN: What plot against you?
> BRODERSON: A colossal plot. It's been going on for a long time.(HIGHLY AGITATED) And it's all wound up now, ready to spring!

OLD MAN: (MILDLY) There's a plot against all of
us, my dear man, if you want to find it.(19)

Broderson's fears of a plot are realized when the circus crowd and the old man turn against him at the end of his dream, confirming his own sense of his guilt, not as much for embezzling the money as for the life he has chosen to live.

As we saw in the early plays, the dream form allows for a much more subtle control of the plot. Because the constrictions of realism, in terms of both time and physical possibility, are no longer relevant, the play can proceed freely along metaphoric lines to mirror inner, psychological reality. In "Cold Comfort", the basis of the metaphor on which the plot is structured is the circus which, on the level of symbol, is associated with the world of fantasy and imagination. Furthermore, it supplies Peterson with a whole cast of characters and situations which, with little introduction or development, can be used to show Broderson the extent to which he has lost his identity. The young man guessing weights, for example, guesses Broderson's weight as nothing (13-14), and the Fortune Teller can't read his palms because there are no lines on them (39). In the Bug House (house of mirrors), Broderson's mirror reflections show him to be many different people, all of them unpleasant in one way or another. Finally, when he is made the star attraction of the Freak Show, the audience can throw

knives and hatchets through his body without hurting him physically (50-52). These tests, all of which challenge Broderson's assertion of his identity, form the basic structure of the plot.

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of this play is the way in which Peterson uses language to evoke the world of dreams and the subconscious. As we saw in the early fantasy plays, the musical qualities of language are particularly effective in an all-sound medium; in "Cold Comfort", language is the most important tool used to convey the different levels of the human mind, the conscious, the subconscious, and the unconscious. Broderson himself speaks in the everyday language of the conscious, but the characters within his dream often speak in verse which gives them the semi-real quality of dream people. Moreover, while the content of their speech may contain references to serious subjects, the verse form glosses over these to evoke the giddy incongruity of the dream world. The Pitchman's sales jingle is typical of this technique:

PITCHMAN: (FADING) Fellah, look after her,
That cupie Doll--
Innocent as we were
Before the Fall. (6).

The language of the three voices, "A","B",and "C", who accompany Broderson everywhere, has its own distinctive quality which goes beyond the jingle verse of the circus

people. In the following speech, for example, the rhythm of the language, the rhymes within the line, the seemingly incongrous images, and the use of word association evoke the disturbing and persistent logic of the subconscious:

> VOICES: Ah, then you intend to face the music?
> (PRANCING) The music, the music,
> The music of the Law.
> I wonder what number they'll give you.
> A boxcar number?
> You'll have no use for your name, Here
> the shears.
> Into the soup with his gobbledegook of
> a name. (4)

Separate from and yet part of him, these voices express Broderson's growing awareness of the extent of his culpability.

With "Man with a Bucket of Ashes", one begins to see the strong mythical structures that are characteristic of Peterson's third period. This play nevertheless belongs in the second period both in terms of its bitter view of mankind and his heroes and in terms of its focus, the moral dilemma of the individual. Interestingly enough, "Man with a Bucket of Ashes" is not a radio play in the same sense as the other plays we have seen. It was written for radio and is an effective work performed on radio, but this is because

it is simply a well-written play and not because of any techniques particular to radio drama as a form. It could, in fact, be performed on stage without making any changes at all.

The central figure of the play is Dave Clough, an old drifter unable to keep a job for any length of time, who is convinced that God has chosen him for a mission. Interpreting the flood which threatens the town of Baldock as a sign of God's wrath against man, he obeys what he believes to be God's voice and sacrifices his young son, Michael, in order to save the town and make God's will known. His wife, enraged in her grief, shoots him, and when Clough realizes that God has not protected him and that he will die without fulfilling his mission, his faith is destroyed.

"Man with a Bucket of Ashes" is Peterson's most bitter play of this period. Man's hypocrisy and potential for evil, already portrayed in "Everybody Likes Me" and "Don Juan of Toronto", find their strongest critic, not in Clough, but in Balla, the high-rigger in the lumber camp. He stands out from the other characters in the play as Clough's counterpart. A cynical man, he sees everything as a joke because he feels that is the only way to survive(48). During the war, he lost faith, not only in God and in some kind of Divine order, but in the moral values of communities like Baldock:

CLOUGH: My deed is a joke?

BALLA: Yeah, when I don't think of the little boy. I seen too many smashed-up kids in the war to feel the same's a lotta people in this village're feeling about your deed. The people in Baldock've killed a good many kids, and they're gettin' ready to kill a lot more. But they do it second hand, so they sleep okay in their beds, snorin'. They send the young fellahs out to do the killin'. People in enemy villages do the same, and sleep just as peacefully. Their fancy reasons for killing often ain't any better'n yours, Dave. (48)

This bleak vision of man's existence prefigures the darkness of Peterson's next period. Clough's belief in God's will is a desperate attempt to make sense of the suffering in his life. His first wife and family were killed in a fire which, according to his second wife, started when the wind fanned into flames a bucket of ashes Clough had forgotten to bury. Thereafter, Clough's life was a vision of hell:

CLOUGH: Most a my life, driftin', runnin' away from something, lookin' for something... failin' at everything...starin' out at the horizon, starin' into the dark, starin' into the dark, starin' into the past,

> starin' into myself...gettin' used to emptiness, gettin' used to horror sweepin' over everything like a flood. (16)

He sees his son Michael's birth as a sign of God's recognition of his suffering and believes that, if God asks him to sacrifice Michael as Abraham was to sacrifice Isaac, there is a reason. When God spares neither his son's life nor his own, he must accept not only that God does not care, but that there is no reason for man's suffering.

Clough's suffering is central to this vision of hell. Within the world of the play itself, he is alienated from his fellow men by his inability to hold even the easiest of jobs in a lumber operation, that of a whistle punk. Furthermore, his religious beliefs and his conversations with God and his dead wife, Tess, separate him from others just as madness would. This sense of alienation is reinforced with respect to the listener by the fact that there is no narrator to justify Clough's veliefs or make them understandable.

The key instrument used to convey Clough's alienation is the language. It is also what makes the play so effective when performed on radio. Both the images associated with Clough and the recurring images in his own speech set him apart from the other characters, much the way the liturgical language used by Stuart and "?" (the death figure) in "Don Juan of Toronto" set their conversations apart from the rest of the play.

There are two images associated with Clough, each of which signals a different aspect of his unheroic nature. The first is "whistle punk", the title of Clough's last job, used in a derogatory way by his wife and the citizens of Baldock to refer to Clough's low status within the community. The second image, introduced by Clough's wife just before she shoots him, is "bucket of ashes", a reference to Clough's responsibility for the fire which destroyed his first wife and family. The bucket of ashes is a symbol for the whole pattern of Clough's life in that he has brought unhappiness on himself, all the while claiming it was God's punishment for his sins:

> CLOUGH: What if Edna's right and it was the devil I met by the river? What if I have been draggin' a bucket of ashes around all these years?--still got hold of it. Maybe there's nothing to me, Balla, but destruction and failure. (50)

It is Clough's recognition of the validity of this symbol that causes him to throw himself into the river.

Clough's own language reflects his need to find, through God, the same sense of order in the world that he had as a child: "CLOUGH: When I was a little boy there was a god in the world. I tried to bring him back"(30). The only way he can explain the misery in the world is to see it as God's punishment for man's wrongs.

> CLOUGH: Lost faith in punishment long time ago; sometimes wish God went in for less. But guess he looks down and says to himself: 'Human bein's: hatin' and destroyin'. Well, if 'at's what they want, I can show'm. Drown'm out! (8)

These beliefs transform his world with images reminiscent of the Old Testament world dominated by a vengeful Jaweh. The fire that killed his first family was not a careless accident on Clough's part but a sign of God's displeasure with him, and Michael is not just a son but a sign of God's forgiveness and recognition of Clough's suffering (16), whose sacrifice will be a symbol of Clough's faith in God (24). The river is not a natural phenomenon but "the devil river" (3), God's instrument of justice which will flood and destroy the people of Baldock because they have sinned. Through his language, Clough is transformed from a mere whistle punk into a prophet crying in the wilderness. The resolution of the play not only denies this image but suggests that God either doesn't exist or doesn't care about man.

The bitter disillution which marks Peterson's second period finds its expression as much in the form of his plays as in the content. The clear sense of right and wrong of the first period dissolves into moral ambiguity in the 1950's so that there is no longer a clear choice of right

and wrong. This ambiguity can be seen in terms of Peterson's treatment of the hero, in his use of symbol, and in the resolution of the dramatic tension in the plot.

Whereas Peterson attempted, in his early period, to forge an intimate relationship between the listener and the hero by means of the narrator, this intimacy breaks down in the second period with the removal of the narrator. Furthermore, not only does the protagonist display few qualities characteristic of heroes, but he is divided within himself. This fragmentation is dramatized in two ways. In "Don Juan of Toronto", and "Cold Comfort and Candy Floss", the listener hears the various voices which make up the individual and is thereby drawn into the protagonist's mind where the drama takes place. In the second method, used in "Everybody Likes Me" and "Man with a Bucket of Ashes", a separate character acts as a kind of ironic counter-point to the protagonist. While this is possible in visual media, it is especially effective in a radio play like "Everybody", where one of the pair is the narrator and thus gives more prominence to the relationship. Even in a play like "Man with a Bucket of Ashes" for which there is no narrator, the less cluttered stage of radio allows the relationship between Clough and Balla to stand out.

Peterson also makes greater use of symbolism to convey his point of view. Having already experimented with the evocative aspects of language in the early fantasies, he goes on to exploit the rhythm of language, as a metaphor for the

dreamworld of the unconscious in "Cold Comfort", and to tie in with an archetype in "Don Juan". Furthermore, the one-to-one relationship between symbol and meaning becomes more complex in plays like "Cold Comfort", where both setting and action are part of the circus symbol, and in "Bucket", where a pattern of imagery evokes the world of myth.

Finally, Peterson continues in this period to explore alternatives to plots based on reality and chronological time in order to resolve his dramas. "Don Juan" begins realistically but towards the end, suddenly leaves the everyday world; in "Cold Comfort", the whole plot is based on a metaphor; in "Bucket", the plot and resolution are linked closely to the myths and imagery of the Old Testament. Freed from the restrictions of realism, Peterson has more scope in which to work out his meaning.

This second period of Peterson's work, then, brings radio drama clearly into its own as a dramatic form. By exploiting the potential of a medium that is not restricted by the visual image, Peterson is able to go beyond the concepts of character, time, and reality that dominated his first stage in order to express a more complex view of man's existence.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE LATE PLAYS--MYTHIC PATTERNS

The works of Peterson's last major period of radio drama, from the late 1950s to the early 1960s, are characterized by a more compassionate view of the hero and, at the same time, an even bleaker vision of man's existence.More than his earlier plays, these works convey a sense of despair for the heroes of these plays are not so much victims of their respective societies as victims of an arbitrary Fate, who have in no way deserved the trouble that befalls them. This vision of man's existence echoes Northrop Frye's description of human life in the sixth phase of satire as "largely unrelieved bondage...it differs from a pure inferno mainly in the fact that in human experience, suffering has an end in death."(238)Man's suffering is his birthright, but it serves no moral or social function since nothing comes from it but bitter knowledge, "the wisdom that comes from suffering", in the words of Malachi the Scholar in "Lilith" (48).

While Peterson deals with the social implications of an imperfect universe on the literal level, it is his use of mythic structures that conveys the full despair of his vision. Almost all of the plays we will deal with in this section draw heavily on the Old Testament and myth. "The Cry of a Loon Over Water" (1954) (also entitled "Second Thoughts") evokes Adam and Eve's exile from the Garden, "The Frightened Giant" (1960), the battle with the Devil

for man's soul, and "Passenger Pigeon Pie" (1960), the murder of the humble carpenter-king. "Lilith" (1959) and "Joe Katona" (1960) are more clearly related to specific legends. "Lilith" is based on the Creation myth in the apocryphal Hebraic texts; "Joe Katona" echoes the story of Jacob, who laboured to earn his two wives. In his treatment of all these myths and mythic figures, however, Peterson denies the benevolent view of an ordered universe and a caring God, projecting instead a view of man's existence in a morally ambiguous and chaotic universe.

While the heroes of these plays are ironic figures (unlike the protagonists of the second period), they are still heroic figures as well. Granted, they are the misfits and marginals of their societies, the drunks, the freaks, and the vagrants; they are rarely able to articulate clearly the reasons for their struggle during their lives and thus rarely, if ever, have the sympathy of their fellow men. Finally, because they die in vain, their efforts often go unnoticed. Nevertheless, there is dignity in the fact that they do attempt to fight back, against the injustice of their society as well as the injustice of their fate, and as a result, they engage the audience's sympathy.

The narrator plays a major role in conveying Peterson's point of view of these heroes. Although each hero is the focus of the plot of the play itself, this focus is offset by the strong dramatic presence of the narrator. The latter draws his strength from two factors. First, he is

very much a character in his own right, one who is personally involved in the fate of the hero. Secondly, he addresses the listener directly which, as we saw in the first period, is an effective technique in radio drama.

The narrator of these plays does more than bear witness to the hero's struggle. He also acts as a bridge between the hero and conventional society. An accepted member of society, he allows the listener to see the hero as society sees him, human, imperfect, and engaged in a struggle that may seem ludicrous. However, the narrator also feels some bond with the hero, and it is through this bond that Peterson conveys his own point of view.

Because it is such an important vehicle for the author's point of view in these plays, the narrative will receive special attention in the following discussion. I will also examine Peterson's treatment of time, his use of myth, plot structure, and symbolism, showing how they function together to communicate the meaning of each play and Peterson's particular vision.

The double vision in "The Cry of a Loon Over Water" affords Peterson the leeway to make a love story into a vision of man's existence. The narrators in the play are, in fact, the hero and the heroine of the story, but in recalling the events of their ill-fated love affair, they are distanced from them by a lapse of eight years, and in Suzanne's case, by a greater knowledge of life. They met

at a northern lake and despite the differences in age and experience, fell in love. Fearing Suzanne's reaction, Hugh put off explaining to her that he was married, albeit to a mentally-ill woman whom he had long since ceased to love. Suzanne found out however, and refusing to accept or understand his situation, broke off their relationship. Eight years later, with her own husband in a sanatorium, she remembers Hugh with more understanding and compassion.

Although this play may at first seem to be an indictment of the conventional social mores of the 1950's, its ultimate focus is not the social problem but a denial of the romantic dream of men and women's life together. For both Hugh and Suzanne, their romance is an idyllic interlude, a dream which crumbles in the face of the reality of Hugh's marital situation. The collapse of this dream not only destroys Suzanne's innocent vision of romantic love, but reconfirms Hugh's conviction that real happiness between men and women is not possible.

The characters of the narrators, Hugh and Suzanne, reflect two visions, experience and romantic innocence, as they separately describe a shared experience. Hugh's age and experience, particularly his unhappy marriage and his wife's illness, have left him with few expectations of life: "HUGH: I wondered if this might be the beginning of something--or more nothing."(4) He grasps at a relationship with Suzanne as a chance to be happy for once (16) but is nevertheless aware of how ephemeral his joy is:

HUGH: You make me very happy--unbearably happy.

SUZANNE: What's the long face for then?

HUGH: The loon's cry--and I'm afraid this'll end. (17)

Hugh's happiness is so intense as to be almost painful as the loon's cry reminds him of his wife. When Suzanne ends their relationship, the last of his dreams is destroyed. Rather than blaming her however, he blames himself for expecting too much: "Suzanne was very beautiful, and I was very foolish." (30)

Suzanne is a young high school graduate at the time with high hopes, anxious to start her own life and in search of adventure.

SUZANNE: ....but I needed to defy my family--they got on my nerves! I wanted things to happen to me, but nothing very important was happening. (2)

An idealist, she is attracted to Hugh because he is "blunt and straightforward" (18), and she wants the honesty she feels exists between them to continue(19). Faced with the news of Hugh's marriage, she applies the same idealism and rejects him as a cad. Eight years later and in a similar situation herself, however, she is more critical of her idealism: "SUZANNE: My, how innocent and cruel I was" (31). Her condemnation of her former naiveté affirms Hugh's

bleak vision of life and resolves the ambiguity of the double narrative.

Underlying the plot is the myth of Adam and Eve's eviction from the Garden. Suzanne, in seeking adventure and danger in a relationship with an older man, is biting the apple of the knowledge of Good and Evil. Whether she accepts or rejects Hugh in the end, she must confront the reality of his situation and with it, the impossibility of perfect happiness in life. Hugh, in attempting to return to the Garden and the dream of his youth, is trying to deny the knowledge that haunts him in the loon's call but is forced to realize that a return to innocence is impossible. The ideal Garden, along with the innocence possible there, is long gone.

The plot is linked to the myth through the natural imagery which suggests the Garden and a world of innocence. Much of this is associated with Suzanne, whom Hugh describes as a "young nymph"(4). He finds her sunning herself on a rock on an isolated shore of the lake. Young and beautiful, she reminds him of a "slim, lithe animal" (4). For Hugh, Suzanne is part of the simple beauty of nature he sought when he went to the lake the first weekend. Their romance takes place in the idyllic setting of a northern lake, where the only shadow on their happiness is the cry of the loon.

The haunting song of the loon evokes another aspect of nature, the loneliness and primitive sorrow of the post-

lapsarian world. It is heard in the first scene of the play where it acts as a counterpoint to the peaceful scene Hugh describes.

SOUND: THE CRY OF A LOON --VARYING CRIES

HUGH: (NARRATION MIKE--BUT NO FILTER EFFECT)
Kawagama Lake was still wild enough to have loons on it.

SOUND: AGAIN, THE LOON

HUGH: Will I ever hear a loon over the water and not think of Kawagama Lake? Though there was no cry of a loon the afternoon I bought some fruit and a couple of sandwiches at a roadside stand, rented a canoe, stripped to the waist and paddled down the Lake. I wanted things simple and quiet. I wanted some sun and the trees and a swim somewhere along the way. I wanted a change from what I'd just been through. My visits to Nancy didn't seem to be doing much good...(1)

Through this speech, the loon's call is associated with Hugh's wife's illness and all it implies in terms of the chance for happiness. In subsequent scenes, it functions as a "sound-symbol," punctuating the love scenes and reminding Hugh that the dream he is living with Suzanne is only that. Heard after the final speech of the play in

which Suzanne realizes the cruelty of her naiveté, the loon's haunting cry echoes her recognition of the impossibility of innocence.

In "Loon", the dramatic elements are pared down to the barest effects, involving only the music, the sound effects, and the words of the two narrator-hero figures. Because there are no other characters, it is the narrative that ties the play together and provides the main vehicle for Peterson's point of view. Through this double narrative, as I mentioned above, the same events are seen from two different points of view, one of which changes in the course of the play, and through the imagery, these two points of view are linked to the Garden myth. Finally, the narrative conveys a sense of the hero's alienation. As we saw in the earlier plays, the narrator-hero's direct appeal to the listener creates an intimate relationship between them. In "Loon", each of the narrators has an intimate relationship with the listener, but each is cut off from the other although they share the same knowledge. The resulting sense of loneliness and alienation, echoed in the cry of the loon, is the twentieth century reality of the myth.

In "Lilith", the sense of the heroine's alienation and isolation is intensified by the narrative and by the particular myth on which the story is based. The heroine, Lillian or Old Lil as she is called, has died in an igno-

minious way, huddled in a doorstep on Toronto's Queen Street, without ever revealing what she has learned from Malachi, the Jewish scholar. She has, however, left a paper shopping bag full of old wallpaper on which she has scrawled her story, the "Queen Street Scrolls". By chance, it falls into the hands of a reporter who manages to make sense of it, thereby giving some dignity to a woman better known as a vagrant and a drunk. Nevertheless, Lil herself remains a lonely figure, deserted by her friends during her lifetime and only recognized after her death.

Setting Lil's story in the context of the mythic backdrop aggrandizes Lil and makes her an even more tragic figure. The myth concerns the legend from the Midrash about Adam's first wife, Lilith, a woman who "...stood the same height as Adam."("Lilith",46).When Lilith refuses to obey Adam, she is banned from the Garden, and God then creates Eve, a more submissive woman, for Adam. In this primal love triangle, Lilith still loves Adam but is rejected by him for a long-term relationship. Yet neither Adam, who still desires Lilith, nor Eve, who fears her, is completely happy either. Lilith thus fulfils God's purpose because she reminds "...Adam and his smug little Eve that they are mortal and imperfect "("Lilith",50).Seen in terms of the Lilith myth, Lil's unhappy fate, as well as that of Adam and Eve, seems preordained and inescapable.

The plot of the play centres on Lillian who, as a girl in a northern Ontario town, falls in love with Tom

Hauser, a young prospector. Although they are lovers, he marries another woman because he feels sorry for her. Heartbroken, Lil moves to Toronto to pursue the life of a single woman. Tom, now owner of his own mining company, runs into her in Toronto and continues their relationship. At one point, when his mother and two sons have been killed in a car accident and his marriage is in ruins, Lil could even have had him back, but she refuses. After this, she begins to drink heavily and loses jobs until she ends up a habituée of Magistrate's Court on charges of drunkenness and vagrancy. Finally she is rescued from a snowbank by Malachi the Scholar who tells her the story of Lilith and makes her see her life in terms of the myth. While this changes the way in which she views her relationship with Tom, it doesn't change the way she lives, and she is eventually found dead in a doorway with her shopping bag full of "scrolls".

Lil's story itself exposes the hypocrisy of society's attitude towards the single, independent woman. She is both an object of desire and of suspicion. Because of her self-reliance and her strong spirit, men seek her company but marry women like Nellie, Tom's wife, who dependent and appear to need protection and guidance. Furthermore, marriage is seen as proof of respectability and because Lil remains unmarried, she is suspected by wives like Nellie of having affairs with their husbands (35). Their fear is justified in terms of men's attraction to the Liliths of the world.

Shunned as a threat by women and regarded as a plaything by men, the independent woman often ends up a lonely outcast like Lil because she refuses to accept the traditional female role.

While man's hypocritical attitude towards strong-willed, independent women is an important aspect of the play, its greatest power derives from Peterson's explicit use of the Lilith myth. His play not only brings to light a significant myth which has been largely repressed in Western culture but, unlike most interpretations of the myth which dwell on Lilith's demonic side and portray her as a stealer of husbands and a murderer of small children, here Peterson shows the positive aspect of the Lilith archetype. In this dramatization of the myth, he goes beyond the conventional social attitudes towards the independent woman to attack the basic male-oriented concepts of sexuality that prevail in Western culture.

The "Lilith" myth has powerful implications for man's existence, depicting as it does a universe designed by an imperfect God in which man--and woman--are condemned to atone for His wrath forever. Although God himself, as Malachi points out, was not very good at making women (46), these women end up paying for His failure through a love triangle which makes all three members unhappy. Lilith's purpose, according to Malachi, is "to save us from the greatest sin, arrogance" (51). The play's conclusion brings home man's destiny:

LIL: ...Am I Lilith? Have I sisters? Do we save Adam and his family from arrogance? Is this God's wisdom? Do we have to go on living the old myth forever? Can't I stop being Lilith now that I'm old?

MUSIC: L'S THEME OBOE, FLUTE AND CLARINET----X

REPORTER: Lilith is dead. Long live Lilith. (52)

The reporter's affirmation of Lil's existence provides the answer to her questions.

The natural imagery reinforces the mythic content of the play by casting Lil and Tom as original man and woman, Adam and Eve, created at the same time as the rest of the earth.

OLD LIL: ...I don't remember my folks. They got caught in a forest fire. Some people say I just grew out of the trees. And that's how I feel. Tommy looked like he'd grown out of the rocks. Granite, with traces of copper and gold.(6)

Lil is associated with the vital, living aspect of nature and Tom with the minerals and rock that form the earth's core. Their relationship is based on a primitive and instinctual attraction to each other:

OLD LIL: Heh! First love! forget the animal, sweep him under the rug, bury him under a rock, sink him in the lake, burn him in the fire, feed him to the dogs, stir him in filth--he will still pop up like the first time, radiant, and your knees and back will go weak! And God will have his way! (5)

In Lil's mind, their relationship is associated with snow and the smell of pine sap in the northern woods where they first met. Despite the fact that they both leave this virgin land, symbolic of the newly created world, to form new relationships (Tom's on a permanent basis), they can neither deny nor resist their original mutual attraction to each other.

On a symbolic level, the relationship between the three characters can be seen in terms of man's ambivalent attitude towards nature. Although he seems driven to explore the world of experience beyond the Garden and make his mark by creating or contributing to civilization, man is almost ineluctably drawn back to the natural world of his origins. Lil and Tom seemed destined for each other, yet Tom leaves Lil and the North to go off and exploit the earth's core in order to be part of civilization. He also marries a woman he can dominate, one who hates the North and prefers the conveniences of the city. Despite these

choices, he is continually drawn back to Lil. Caught between his ambition to dominate and control his environment and his natural yearning for his original innocence, man is destined to be unhappy.

The mythic level of the story is also brought to the fore through techniques of plot structuring and narrative. Although the climax of the play is the revelation of the Lilith myth, it is preceded by a turning point in Lil's life which allows her to see her life in mythic terms. In refusing to take Tom back when he comes to her after his mother and his sons are killed, she accepts that they are not meant to be together and cuts her wrists. When she recovers, young Lil has become Old Lil, a woman who is as much an archetype as she is a real person. She thus crosses the line which separates reality and myth. Malachi the Tailor may or may not be a real person, but in radio this is irrelevant since it is the archetype of the wise old man and his myth that are important.[1]

As in "The Cry of a Loon Over Water", the use of a double narrator in "Lilith" conveys a sense of the hero's isolation, accentuated here by the fact that Lil, being dead, can speak only through her Scrolls and is dependent on the reporter, a total stranger, to pass on her truth to the world and make it understandable. However, the double

1 Malachi's reality is irrelevant since we only hear the voice and radio is flexible enough for both levels at once.

narrator also allows Peterson some flexibility to deal with the problem of making the myth comprehensible in human terms.

Old Lil speaks both as Lillian Williston, the twentieth-century woman, and Lilith, the mythic figure. As Lil, she is a passionate, strong-willed woman who treasures memories of her first embrace with Tommy on one hand (11) and on the other, scorns men's "slinking infidelities" (29). Malachi's story of Lilith is reflected in lyrical passages that set the tone for the play. In one such passage, quoted above (p.6 of the script), she describes herself and Tommy as the two original lovers in a natural setting in the northern woods. Her subsequent references to the smell of pine (25,44) recall not only the beginning of her relationship with him but the whole natural world and the image of these two lovers. Lil herself, then, provides a double perspective which links the realistic world with the mythic vision.

The second narrator, the reporter, is somewhat of a problem in the play because he is not connected with or implicated in the story in any way and his interest in the story is based only on curiosity. Judging from the January 22, 1967 production of the play (Sound version, Concordia Centre for Broadcasting Studies), one suspects he might also have been a problem for the producer, Esse Ljungh. When the play was edited, probably to fit it into the one hour allotted for CBC STAGE, it was the Reporter's

speeches dealing with his own life and experience that were cut. Peterson himself, interestingly enough, expanded the Reporter's character and presence in the stage version of the play, "Women in the Attic."

Basically, the Reporter attests to the reality of Lil's experiences in terms both of fact and of human nature. He supplies details about Lil and Tom's lives, such as Lil's reputation at the police station and the statistics on Tom's mining exploits, which reinforce their reality in the twentieth century. In other instances, he fills in the gaps in the Scrolls, supplying details through his imagination about Lil, such as her gradual decline into alcoholism:

> REPORTER: ...Lil, the secret drinker, was still proud, still careful about her clothes and make-up. But she didn't thrust a pencil through her hair with the same efficient air. Invoices piled up on her desk. She was slow making decisions, and some of the ones she made cost the company money. She was given less responsibility. (40-41)

Such details allow the reader to "see" Lil from outside her head, objectively, as her contemporaries saw her.

Finally, the Reporter makes "Adam" statements, personal reactions to statements of Lil's such as her indictment of unfaithful husbands:

REPORTER: I wish Old Lil hadn't penned-to-paper some of this. I get the feeling she's writing about me! Too close to the mark. When I think of the--(SMILING) But this isn't my confessional...(29)

While these are no doubt intended to bear witness to the truth of what Lil says, they actually intrude in the story and by distracting the listener, break the dramatic tension that builds up around Lil. As we saw in "Paper in the Wind", this is a danger in the detached narrative perspective, one which can weaken a play. Luckily, "Lilith" is such a strong play that the effect is limited.

Closely allied with the narrative is the temporal structuring. In Chapter 2, when discussing "Burlap Bags", I mentioned that radio's transparency allowed the scene to shift fluidly from one time frame to another. If the time settings are not chronologically sequential, this creates a "layering" effect in which the perspective of one scene colours another. It is through this "layering" process in "Lilith" that Peterson manages to make the play as understandable on the realistic level as on the mythic level and in the end, to equate the two experiences. Because of the narrative structure, the play functions in at least five different time frames. Old Lil narrates her life in the past but from a point much later in time than most of the events, after she has learned about her myth from Malachi.

Many of her comments and her descriptions show the influence of the mythic perspective, even though she is describing events that took place years before. The Reporter too moves back and forth, from Lil's past, to his own experiences, to the narrative present. Finally, there is the mythic time frame, which is technically in the far past but which, because of the implications of the myth, has an echo effect which summons up a sense of all ages. The cumulative effect of this layering technique, the double narrator, the plot structuring, and the imagery is a fitting of a particular human experience of the twentieth century into a universal context, thus emphasizing the bleak prospects of the post-lapsarian world.

In both "The Cry of a Loon Over Water" and "Lilith", the innocence and freshness of the Garden was still at least a memory. With "Joe Katona",we move into a desolate, arid world in which the natural environment is an outward manifestation of man's spiritual sterility. The plot, based on a real event which Peterson saw in a Regina newspaper (personal conversation with Peterson, unrecorded, 1982), echoes the Old Testament story of Jacob earning his wives by labouring for his father-in-law. In the Old Testament myth, however, God ensures that Jacob gets the reward he deserves; in "Joe Katona", divine justice is a farce and Joe Katona, like the narrator, is the innocent scapegoat of an arbitrary Fate and a hostile community.

Joe Katona is a migrant farm worker whose family was killed in a fire set by his younger sister out of rage at her parents. Though Joe was at first suspect, he was guiltless, as he remains throughout the play. When he arrives at Cleggs' farm seeking work, he is first turned away and then hired because of a recurrence of Clegg's chronic back problems. Despite Joe's reminders, Clegg never pays him, but when Clegg's oldest daughter, Alice, is caught in Joe's room on Christmas night, Clegg offers her to Joe in lieu of three years' work. While Joe is content with this plan, Alice is not and after mistreating Joe, she runs off with a travelling salesman. Clegg then offers Joe Vicky, the younger daughter. Joe and Vicky are happy together, but when Alice returns, she brings the story of Joe's family, and the Clegg parents immediately suspect Joe of starting all the fires that subsequently break out. When she sees Alice coming out of Joe's room, Vicky turns against him too, refusing to believe his explanation. Joe leaves the farm, but Clegg has him arrested and charged with raping Vicky. Joe is sentenced to one year but is given time off for good behaviour during the harvest season, during which time he returns to Cleggs' to do what he's been accused of. Clegg is killed in the ensuing struggle but after Joe has raped Vicky, they are reconciled. Joe, however, is convicted of murdering Clegg and dies of pneumonia in jail while waiting to hang. Vicky is quickly married off to a neighbour and has two sons, the first of whom is most likely Joe's. Be-

cause the second son, who is the narrator, bears a large scarlet birthmark on his face, he is assumed to be Joe's son while the older boy, who believes in nothing, least of all justice, goes on to be a successful lawyer.

The play is concerned with justice, or rather the lack of it, in a community more concerned with appearances than with the truth that lies beneath the surface. Throughout his life, Joe is punished for sins he hasn't committed because he "appears" guilty. Being the only person to survive the fire that destroyed the rest of his family, he is suspected of having set it. When he and Alice are found together in his room on Christmas night, the Cleggs refuse to believe that they were only talking. His willingness to work hard on the farm and to be patient and loving with Alice are interpreted as stupidity and in each case, he is abused. Vicky alone recognizes his goodness, but even she falls victim to appearances in assuming Joe is being unfaithful to her. The "justice" Joe claims when he's released from prison, committing the crime he's been charged with, is as perverted as the "justice" that has been perpetrated on him. Nor does Joe's death end the injustice, which is carried on into the next generation where the community confuses the identities of the narrator and Joe's son. Justice, both legal and social, is meaningless because it deals only with appearances and not with the underlying reality.

The characters' existence in this repressive society

is conveyed through the imagery. The three predominant patterns of imagery concern barrenness, animality, and fire: all suggest a kind of living death. Each pattern is associated, for the most part, with one of the three main characters, Joe, Alice, and Charlie Clegg, thus bringing them to the forefront.

Clegg is a harsh man, as crippled in spirit as he is physically. He is ~~closely~~ linked with the oppressive natural setting of the play which, in the first scene, evokes the spiritual climate of the community of which he is part:

> THE FACE: ...It was one of them days when the sun seems close 'nough you could pop it with a stone. Not a breath of air. Even the weeds start curling up. And the gophers stay underground. Only cussed farmers out in the fields. But on the prairies, lots a them, With red necks and dry spit and bloodshot eyes. The women and kids stick pretty much to home, In next-to-nothing, with the blinds drawn. (1)

Clegg himself has little success as a farmer until Joe arrives. Instead, he boasts of his rock-lined fences (20) which are apt symbols of his relationships with others, for he is not only mistrustful of his neighbours, and Joe, but feels alienated from his wife and daughters. As he says to

his wife:

> CLEGG: Sometimes sittin' with you...at this table...I look at you...or in bed... I touch you...and I don't know you at all! A corpse! (36)

Because Clegg is unable to feel compassion for another human, he is spiritually and emotionally dead.

The animal imagery throughout the play suggests another form of living death, for animals do not feel or think as men do but react instinctively. The animal imagery is largely associated with Joe, and along with the narrator's description of his "leaky, flat whistle" and "nobody-home smile", suggests his zombie-like existence, devoid of any emotion or ability to respond in an intelligent way. In the opening scene, he reacts to the Clegg girls' antics by staring "like a steer at some queer human goin's on" (5). In Charlie Clegg's eyes, Joe's behaviour indicates a lack of intelligence:

> CLEGG: Sssssstupid!--Yeah, I sized him up pretty quick for doin' what I tell him. —Pass me the dills, Molly!--He don't take long eatin'. But I gotta tell him giddup and whoa all a...Giddup and whoa! Like a ox! (19)

Animality is not only associated with passivity how-

ever, but is also used to describe the violent struggle between Clegg and Joe at the end:

> THE FACE: Animals! Alla them! They was all animals! Angry animals! Frightened animals! Joe and Charlie Clegg locked together smearin' each other with their rabid slaver, and sweat and blood, till Joe got Charlie in a grip and off-balance and rammed him back against the brick chimney and knocked him out. (63)

Both "animal" responses, violent reaction and passive acceptance, are inadequate ways of dealing with injustice, so that even when he does strike out, Joe still remains a victim.

The fire imagery provides the link between the specific situation in the Clegg household and the community and describes the attitude towards passion. In this isolated and unloving prairie farm community, fire is both attractive and frightening. The burning of the straw stacks after harvest is associated with festivity and provides an opportunity for the farm families to get together and relax. Even the normally unresponsive Joe feels happy (13). However, fire is also seen as dangerous and associated with unbridled passion. In the case of the harvest fires, the danger is sexual:

THE FACE: ...And after...there was some keepin' an eye on the girls' aprons for awhile. For...for more harvest than anybody'd figured on. (11)

In a society where appearances are so important, an illegitimate child is evidence of a lack of control.

For Joe, fire is associated with suffering and it breaks out in situations where there is no love. In the case of his own family, his sister Trudi's suffering, in an emotional climate as sterile as harsh as that of the Clegg household, erupted in a desire to destroy. He recognizes that Alice's suffering is similar to his sister's and tries to warn her:"JOE: You don't gotta be hellish... to...to climb outa hell"(40). Through the reference to hell, which implies fire, Alice is directly linked with Trudi and thus to Joe's past. Alice's madness, too, erupts in destructive actions, directed, for the most part, at the one person who tries to save her from her hell. She throws a pitchfork, the Devil's tool, at Joe, sets fires to make her parents suspicious of him, and turns Vicky against him. While the community is right to fear this kind of passion, they must also recognize that its source is the repressed, arid emotional climate in which these girls grow up.

Through his use of myth, Peterson shows that it is not only society that is unjust but man's whole existence. The Old Testament myth of Jacob and his two wives forms an

ironic backdrop for the twentieth century story because while the two stories are similar, the outcomes are very different. Like Jacob, Joe is a hard-working and enterprising young man who must work for his dishonest father-in-law in order to have his bride. In both cases, there are two daughters in the family, the younger of whom is more desirable in looks and personality. Implicit in the Old Testament story, however, is the idea of Divine intervention in the affairs of men to uphold justice. God not only helps Jacob in his dealings with his father-in-law, but enables him to return to his homeland in triumph with his wives, sons, servants, and flocks. His son, Joseph, becomes a great leader and man of God. Joe, on the other hand, dies before he has time to enjoy his wife, see his son, or inherit the land he has laboured. Furthermore, his conviction of murder and his death in prison are ignominious, while his bitter legacy to his son, a belief in the complete lack of any kind of justice, is a denial of the religious and cultural idealism on which our society is founded.

There are other mythic elements as well which convey the inevitability of Joe's fate. As discussed above, Joe is often described as an animal, specifically as an ox (19) and a steer (5), both of which were traditionally used for sacrifices. The description of Clegg in his first encounter with Joe evokes the image of an executioner:

THE FACE: Charlie Clegg, for a wonder, wasn't
out staring at the back end of his
horses, workin' the land to death. He
sat hunched over the grindstone on the
shady side a the barn. Pedalling away.
Sharpening the cutting blade a the
binder. Gettin' ready for the harvest,
what there might be. When a man with
the [sic] gunnysack climbed the fence
and came up to him. (2)

Like an executioner, Clegg has no emotional ties with his victims, Alice, Vicky, and Joe, but manipulates their lives and eventually destroys all of them. The inevitability of the final outcome is suggested by the narrator in phrases such as "...Things went on, the romance and all the other ...grindin'" (38). Nor can any of the individuals involved prevent what happens for they are "Like sleep-walkers, That's what they all was" (47). In the hands of a greater force, they can only play their roles.

The narrator of "Joe Katona", although not directly involved in the events of the drama, plays a key role in that he functions as the focal point for the ironic tension. Through his narrative role, his relationship to Joe, his position in his own society, and his position in time, he is the fulcrum, the balancing point between the specific events of the twentieth-century society and the myths that

define our cultural heritage. Throughout the play, the narrator's identity remains an ambiguous point. While we do not know his exact relationship with the people and events until the end of the play, it is evident from the first speech that he is personally involved:

> THE FACE: ...And then somebody comes up with somethin' I ain't heard before. Maybe by now they're making things up. And I wanna say: "That's a lie, Mike Dover ...er Sarah McCaw!" When they see me coming, they don't talk about it, or they shut up. But mostly they don't see me. When you--this kinda Face--stick out so much, you learn to get around without bein' seen. You stick on the fringe. And Listen! [sic] (1)

His intensity, his concern with whether the new details are true or not, the fact that his presence silences people and finally, the allusion to his physical appearance--all indicate that The Face belongs to the story and is not merely a detached outsider. In subsequent narrative passages, the kind of detail he supplies, such as Mrs. Clegg's reaction to her husband's feelings of estrangement (38) and Alice's constant playing of the player piano during the time she was running around on Joe (43), show how deeply involved he is in the story.

The narrator's relationship to Joe, revealed in the final speech of the play, is ironic. The two are father and son, not through blood but symbolically, for each is an innocent victim of the community. Joe is unfairly treated by all of the Cleggs for no apparent reason; the community tolerates this abuse, even giving it tacit approval by sentencing him to jail for an assault he didn't commit. The narrator's "legacy" from his symbolic father, the large, scarlet birthmark which earns him the epithet "The Face", and which is regarded as a "mark of sin" (61), sets him apart from the rest of the community. Their willingness to assume he is Joe's son merely because he bears a birthmark is an extension of their willingness to assume Joe was guilty of arson, rape, and murder because he seemed to be.

"Passenger Pigeon Pie" deals with the difficulty of being heroic in a society which doesn't permit men to be men, much less heroes. The ironic treatment of Julien, the hero of the play, by means of the plot structure and the characterization, shows him as his society sees him, a failure, a man whose life and death were insignificant. It is only through the narrative structure and the mythic overtones of the play that Julien is seen finally in Peterson's terms as a hero, albeit an unsung hero.

The story is narrated by Sarah, wife of André, mother of Julien, and grandmother of Paul; all of these men are carpenters. Conflict erupts between André and Julien after

Julien's wife runs off with a salesman, leaving him with their son. Julien begins to question traditional values, in particular the ethic of hard work and passive obedience to one's supervisor. Those who accept this role are like the now extinct passenger pigeon which was domesticated and obediently served man only to be destroyed by him. When Julien refuses to stop asking questions about his current job, a strange building for which the masterplan and eventual use are a secret, the other workers, fearing for their own jobs, push him to his death from the scaffolding. His father, now crippled by arthritis, finally sees his son's point but dies before he can convince others of it. Julien's son, Paul, goes off to seek his fortune, leaving Sarah alone with her memories. When he returns as a salesman, she finally understands her son Julien's point and refuses to accept her grandson Paul because he stands for everything against which his father rebelled and which killed him.

Thematically, the play develops on two levels. On one level, an unquestioning acceptance of the conventional work ethic leads to a society in which money alone is important and the individual is simply a pawn to be exploited. Conflict arises between Julien and his father because while André recognizes a builder's responsibility for the quality of his work, he doesn't feel it is his place as a simple worker to judge the ends to which his efforts are applied. When he finally does understand that he has been a pawn and allowed others to use him for their own ends, it is too

late. Paul never does understand and, in becoming a salesman, symbolically abandons his right to make any judgement about the world he lives in by making money his sole criterion of success.

The patterns of imagery in the play reflect the values of the three different generations. Much of the imagery associated with Sarah and André focusses on man's innate creative abilities at a basic level and follows traditional values and role division. André, the head of the house, is a carpenter whose honesty and simple values are reflected in his work. He builds his family's home as he builds for others, carefully and accurately, working with "the straight grain" (7). Never an artisan like Julien, his work was nevertheless solid and Sarah says of him: "SARAH:...But there was something to them, his plain ways and talk; you trusted them "(6).

While André's creative abilities are applied to building his family's house and earning money to feed them, Sarah's go into woman's traditional work as home-maker, cooking and caring for her men. As wife, mother, and grandmother, she sees her role as procreator and nurturer, and feels useless now that she is alone, Her memories are filled with references to the physical love she shared with André, and her relationship with her son is defined in very physical terms:

SARAH: I bore him in my belly, and carried him

> on these hips, and fed him my own milk for a year, and taught him his walking and talking and ABC's. André was away so much. So he's mine, mine! And I'll take the blame, and it's a bushel of blame. I wanted a half a dozen kids, but Julien was the only one to land in my nest. Julien, a boy, a heartbreak. (3)

Because she feels the same responsibility for the product of her hands as André, she is disappointed when Julien does not turn out to be a hard worker like his father.

The animal imagery in Julien's language reflects his preoccupation with man's role in the working world. His ambition in life, to be a man, involves more than just working hard as his father has done: "JULIEN: I want more on my brow than sweat" (22). He despises the monotonous work and servile attitude required in most jobs:

> JULIEN: Huh, doing the same lousy thing over and over again...
>
> SARAH: Son, that's how most of the work in this world gets done.
>
> JULIEN: By servants and coolies. Bowing. Like chickens. 'Yes. Yes, sir. Cluck Cluck.' (26)

The idea of the mindless labourer is summed up for him in the passenger pigeon. Any person who does not try to have some control over or responsibility for the work he produces, who merely does a job and does not actually create anything, is a passenger pigeon. His father and all those who believe in the value of hard work without questioning its purpose contribute to the commercialism that dominates society, destroying all those who oppose it and swallowing up the rest, like Paul, who become salesmen, traders in others' goods, passenger pigeons.

Julien's lullaby acts as an indicator of Sarah's own journey through the past towards accepting this point of view:

> JULIEN: Go softly, go gently, my mother, to bed,
> Don't think of the boys on the battlefield bled,
> Your son may have killed them, your son may be dead,
> But don't think of that, mother, go softly to bed.

It is heard only three times but the words have a haunting effect which strips away the traditional image of the mother by linking her with her sons who make war and kill. The first time Julien sings it to her, he is chiding her refusal to recognize that her son is, as André has just said, a bum who only works to buy a bottle or a woman(18).Sarah would prefer not to see her son's part in this world.

It is heard the second time when Julien has just learned that even the construction boss doesn't know the

the puspose of the sinister building they're working on. Sarah cannot deny that the secrecy is suspicious but she wants Julien to ignore what he has just learned.

> SARAH: Oh, yes, why can't Julien just be happy? How many times I asked that of him and me and André and God! Why does he have to fret? Why does he have to argue?(36)

When the lullaby is heard at the end of the play, just after Sarah has disowned Paul for turning away from all that his father and grandfather died for, Julien is no longer chiding her but lamenting the loss of past innocence.

The central theme of the play, the dignity of a man, is mirrored in the narrative technique: Sarah"s narrative, both in the plot structure and in her commentary, creates an ironic perspective by denying Julien's heroism. This irony is not resolved until Sarah herself comes to see him as a hero. Throughout most of the play, Sarah supports the conventional values of her society and therefore views Julien as his society views him. To her, he is neither rebel nor hero, but "a boy, a heartbreak" (3), an unsuccessful husband and a poor father, a man who has the abilities but lacks the will to put in a good day's work like his father, who harps on passenger pigeons. This lack of recognition of the value of Julien as a man places in question all he stands for.

Julien's role as hero is also concealed through the

plot. In the family, he holds an inconspicuous position, sandwiched as he is between André, an experienced carpenter respected by his superiors and peers, and Paul, his bright young son, who quickly earns himself a good reputation once he takes up a trade. Julien's rebellion against the conventional work ethic takes the form of drinking and womanizing and his death is not the climax of the play but merely the final, meaningless event in his unhappy life. Although the meaning of his death is finally understood, first by André and then by Sarah, they are too old to act and Paul, who could validate his father's struggle by taking up his cause, turns away from all that his father fought for, thus destroying any hope of change.

The narrative structure then, shifts the focus of the play from the hero, Julien, to the recognition of his heroism by Sarah. The climax of the story occurs when she finally understands what Julien died for and turns Paul away because, though he may be blood of her blood physically, the fact that he turns his back on his father's and grandfather's values shows that he is not akin spiritually. Rejecting Paul is painful for Sarah; with André and Julien dead, she is now completely alone and alienated from the society she once felt a part of. Her only consolation is the knowledge that she has at least known heroes.

> SARAH: ...Oh, my heart hurts,where I've torn
> him out. After two brave men, a sales-

> man. To provide part of the crust of
> the pie. How can I dream any more after
> this? Backwards or forwards. I've never
> felt so alone. As alone as a star. As
> alone as the night. As alone as a stone.
> ...(TRYING TO SMILE) But, I have felt the
> breath of heroes... (52)

The use of the Old Testament material emphasizes, through contrast, the bleakness of man's future. Sarah's name and her lusty personality recall Sarah, wife of Abraham, whom God promised would be the "mother of all nations" (Genesis 17:16). Although she sees herself primarily as a nurturer, "Sarah of Three Ages" (2) and André's "Old Woman" (5), all her efforts seem fruitless by the end of the play. Her wish for six children was not granted and the men in her life--the real men, André and Julien--are dead. Her grandson having refused to take up his father's struggle to be a man, she considers him dead as well and is thus left childless. Because of her association with Sarah of the Old Testament, Sarah's isolation becomes a symbol of the loneliness and hopelessness of man's existence.

Radio's transparency is exploited to create a sense of timelessness which brings the mythic promise of the Old Testament more into focus. Although the language is colloquial, the references to specific time and place are very few so that the twentieth century recedes from dramatic

reality and the listener is witnessing a drama that could have taken place at any time in man's history. Indeed, the mythic imagery that surrounds Sarah, references to Julien's wife as a "Jezebel" and the identification of Julien as a Christ figure through the carpentry image tend to lead the listener back to the Bible. Furthermore, in going back and forth from present to past as she relives her life, Sarah not only creates the emotional staining effect discussed earlier in Chapter 1, but detaches events from a specific time frame so that they seem to float in time and are therefore more susceptible to being drawn into the Biblical time frame. Paul's arrival in a flashy car with his jaunty air and 1950's lingo bring us abruptly back to the twentieth century where men are pigeons and have no future and where Sarah is no longer filled with the promise of mothering nations, a fertility symbol, but an old lady who must subsist on the memory of heroes and can only look forward to a cold and lonely existence before death delivers her.

In the last play of this period that we will examine, "The Frightened Giant", Peterson takes his bleak vision to its extreme and beyond, to finally offer a ray of hope. The narrator and triumphant villain, Robert Tyrrel, is a nineteenth-century anatomist interested in "the mysterious clock that regulates growth" in the human body. When he meets Harry Cork, a young giant, at McSwan's peep show, he befriends him in the hope that Harry will allow him to have

his body to dissect when he dies. Harry is initially taken in by Tyrrel's friendliness, but when he realizes Tyrrel's true motive, he is outraged that his body is considered of more importance than his soul and refuses the request. He flees both McSwan with his peep show and Tyrrel with his anatomist's knife to die alone, having made arrangements with the gravediggers to protect his body from Tyrrel. The latter, determined that science will not lose such a specimen, pursues Harry and, through various dealings, eventually gets the body. However, although his papers based on the dissection of Harry's body win him recognition, he never finds the mysterious growth clock and the hollow eyes of the stuffed Harry mounted in his museum mock his failure.

Much of the dramatic power of the play derives from Peterson's ironic treatment of the hero figure in both the narrative and the characterization. Tyrrel's manner at first leads the listener to believe that he is the hero; his speech style confirms the listener's expectations of a conventionally sympathetic narrator. Both his well-developed vocabulary and his tendency to qualify his statements with phrases such as "I fear" and "I'm afraid" suggest a well-educated, thoughtful man. This image is reinforced by his kind treatment of Harry. Harry's rough, surly manager, McSwan, serves as a foil to Tyrrel who urges the former to treat the giant better, buys Harry food and clothing, and generally appears to take a personal interest in the young man. In short, Tyrrel gives the impression that he has

Harry's best interests at heart.

The confusion over the identities of the hero and the villain is resolved through the imagery, for Tyrrel's language reveals his real attitude to Harry. His description of him as "a precious carcass" (1), "a magnificent specimen" (1) whom he "brought in" himself (1) evokes the image of wild game whose importance is the glory its capture brings to its hunter. Tyrrel also unconsciously reveals his true nature in self-inditing statements such as: "TYRREL: I'm a scientist, not a gentleman. . ."(7). This admission is confirmed by his relentless and obsessive pursuit of the terrified Harry after the latter has refused to allow his body to be dissected for science. Far from being the hero, Tyrrel is the villain.

It is not until the end of the play that Harry emerges as the real hero, partly because of the audience's confusion over Tyrrel's role and partly because of Harry's character, for he is a gross distortion of the traditional hero figure. Although physically larger than other men, he is only a child inside who can no better articulate the evil he is struggling against than he can defend himself against it. Yet it is this innocence and goodness, all that remains of the eroded hero figure, that prevents Tyrrel's victory from being complete, for Harry does not yield up the secret growth clock Tyrrel seeks; that is, Harry's ultimate privacy is retained. Slight though this victory may seem, it is a confirmation of the power of innocence and goodness in an

otherwise bleak world and therefore offers some measure of hope.

On the mythic level, the play evokes the struggle between the forces of Good and Evil, the Devil's age-long attempt to secure man's soul, which began in the Garden of Eden. Tyrrel is identified with Satan from the first speech, when he explains that Harry saw him "not as this great scientist, this benefactor of mankind--but as the Devil himself!"(1) Harry later refers to Tyrrel as "the Devil's parson" (19) and speaks of his "ghoulish smile"(19). Even the physical description of Tyrrel, a short man with red hair, is one frequently associated with the devil.

The manner in which Tyrrel speaks of science transforms it into a god or a religion:"TYRREL:...Science will be served"(19); and "TYRREL:...Science must not suffer fools"(20). As a scientist, Tyrrel is wholly concerned with the material world and has no regard for something as intangible as a soul:

> TYRREL: ...Trample a man's soul under to get
> at a scientific fact! What is a soul?
> What is the human spirit? Who knows?
> But a scientific fact: that's something! Plaudits for the discoverer:
> that's something! Glory! Glory! Forget
> souls and spirits! Onward and upward
> with knowledge, with science! (23)

Nevertheless, the very innocence and integrity Tyrrel cannot understand win out in the end. He may have succeeded in getting Harry's body but he is no more able to find his growth clock than he is able to appreciate a soul. Moreover, the fact that he is tempted to have Harry's corpse stored in the basement to be free of his mocking eyes (23) suggests that he may suspect that there is more to life than scientific facts. The narrative proves to be doubly ironic in this play, for not only does it undercut the hero, but it also undercuts the villain's victory.

In his third period, Peterson returns to realistic plots but deals with a realism that, through archetypal imagery, reflects the collective, universal patterns of man's existence. This vision of man's existence is even bleaker than that of the second period, for it is not so much a question of man himself being evil but of a greater force shaping his destiny. Contrary to the concept of this force in the Judao-Christian tradition that is the basis of our culture,however, this is not a benevolent force. In fact, in plays such as "Joe Katona", "Passenger Pigeon Pie", and even "The Frightened Giant", Peterson denies the view of a benevolent God, in favour of an uncaring or absent God. "The Cry of a Loon Over Water" and "Lilith" reinforce the post-lapsarian vision of man's existence in which he must suffer through his life. Yet there is some relief in

this dark picture: Peterson's recognition, largely through the narrative technique, of the dignity of the man--even the least of all men, like Harry--who makes an effort to fight back against an unjust fate.

CONCLUSION

Unlike some of his contemporaries in radio work, Len Peterson was less interested in the technical resources of the radio medium than in the exploitation of language in order to convey his themes and his vision of man's existence. While he makes use of music and sound effects, his plays derive their greatest dramatic strength from his use of the spoken word.

In this overview of Peterson's radio plays, we have seen how he developed various dramatic techniques for radio. Although he started with naturalistic dramas, he quickly moved away from these into the more fluid and expressive world of the subconscious, dreams, and the imagination. The mythic archetypes suggested in the first period plays are used more explicitly in the second period and in the third period, they provide basic structures for the plays. Dream figures, such as Death, and disembodied voices are used to express and explore psychological realities. Imagery is used to mark the patterns of the plays, and the musical qualities of language help to express the emotional landscape. The non-chronological juxta-

position of experiences and the super-imposing of one scene on another help to free the plays from the limitations of ordinary reality. Lyrical narrative passages set the subjective tone and mood while an involved narrator, in describing his perception of events, influences the way in which they are interpreted subjectively. These techniques, combined with the themes of Peterson's work, which reflect an acute sensitivity to the problems of man's existence in the twentieth century, make Peterson a major contributor to drama in Canada. Indeed, Peterson's use of techniques which free the writer and the listener from the world of material reality in a play such as "Burlap Bags" prefigures the use of similar techniques in "Waiting for Godot".

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