

been over" and the child who sits alone "at this morning table" has vanished too. The poem describes a physical reality which is nowhere except in memory and imagination, as the speaking subject strives for a centring of her self in the face of a threatened dispersal. Constructing an illusion of self-presence which is then shown to be an illusion, this poem highlights its artifice of reconstruction as it offers a moment of revelation ("I can almost see"). What the narrator sees however is not the absent presence of her father, but her own absent presence as she reinhabits her lost childhood body through the double perspective of the remembering adult. The projects of life writing and elegy are shown to be mutually reinforcing here as both are equally dependent on discursive figurations of memory and language.

Perhaps the most haunting feature of this poem is the vivid soundless precision of its representations of the wilderness as "home" with "every detail clear," for just as the light of morning at the beginning of the poem emerges from the mourning process, so the ending focusses not on the ashes of a fire's aftermath but on "incandescence." The word derives from the Latin "incandescere," which means to become white, luminous, glowing with heat, and the quality of luminosity which pervades this revisioning of the past makes a similar promise to the one we find at the end of Atwood's prose poem, "The Third Eye":

One day you will wake up and everything, the stones  
by the driveway, the brick houses, each brick, each  
leaf of each tree, your own body, will be glowing  
from within, lit up, so bright you can hardly look.  
You will reach out in any direction and you will  
touch the light itself.

It is towards such a moment of transcendence that the final poem gestures ("I can almost see") where loss is transformed through the construction of an imaginative space of memory in which the narrating subject can find shelter, "alone and happy":

holding my cindery, non-existent,  
radiant flesh. Incandescent. ("Morning in the Burned House," p. 127)

<sup>17</sup> Margaret Atwood, "The Third Eye," in *Murder in the Dark* (London: Virago, 1994), pp. 109-10.

# Conventions of the Marvellous in Hodgins's (Re)Inventions of Love

## Christine Pagnouille

The man climbed back  
Out of the marvellous as he had known it.

Seamus Heaney, *Seeing Things*

Though you cannot ask to change certain facts about the world, you can perhaps open up new ways of seeing it. Or just challenge old ways. Present modes of admirable behaviour. Suggest alternatives.

Jack Hodgins

The combination, in Hodgins's novels, of realistic narrative with techniques often as old as fiction-writing (though now labelled post-modern) has been fairly fully documented.<sup>1</sup> Indeed he uses intellectually stimulating features such as the inclusion of writer figures or complex polyphonic structures which can be compared to some jigsaw puzzles in *The Invention of the World* (1977) and to one of those crowded drawings in which one is supposed to find the rabbit and the hunter, or maybe the filigree shape of a Peruvian seabird, in *The Resurrection of Joseph Bourne* (1979).<sup>2</sup>

What I feel more interested in is the ethical dimension in his novels: the way in which his heroes, by finding out and yielding to their call in

<sup>1</sup> See, among others, Linda Hutcheon, *The Canadian Postmodern: A Study of Contemporary English-Canadian Fiction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988); and W. Zacharasiewicz, "Voices from the Pacific Rim: Recording, Reconstruction and Parody in Modern British-Canadian Fiction" (paper read at the ESSE Conference in Bordeaux, September 1993); see also Jeanne Delbaere, "Magic Realism: The Energy of the Margins," *Resistant*, 22.3 (1992), 75-104; and, for an assessment of magic realism in the context of Canadian writing, Geoff Hancock, "Magic Realism: The Marvellous in Canadian Fiction," in *Magic Realism and Canadian Literature*, ed. by Peter Hitchcliff and Ed Jewinski (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University, 1985), pp. 30-48.

<sup>2</sup> I shall focus exclusively on Hodgins's first two published novels, *The Invention of the World* (Toronto: MacMillan, 1977) and *The Resurrection of Joseph Bourne, or A Word or Two on Those Port Annie Miracles* (Winnipeg: Signet, 1980); further references to these editions are given in the text with the mention *IV* and *RB*, respectively.

life, open themselves to the transforming power of love. The gospel precept, "love thy neighbour as thyself," with its assumption that we should first accept and love ourselves, is hardly original. But I find the emphasis deeply rejoicing in the context of the fashionable denial of personal accountability and social solidarity, or indeed if contrasted with the one-sided emphasis on self-love which often results from badly digested New Age theories—two attitudes which fit the spirit of ruthless competition often prevailing today, and which is fed by the official disqualification of teleological ideologies.

The aim of this article is to explore the ways in which Hodgins revives and redefines a number of conventions characteristic of openly antirealist genres, in tales which read like accurate recordings of real events. I shall give examples of his emblematic use of setting, comment on the different ways he uses legends and folk tales and on his inclusion of burlesque scenes, and I shall show how some characters and situations in his novels fit the fairy tale tradition—relating these heterogeneous and sometimes apparently irrelevant devices to the novels' informing ideological background.

Hodgins's stories are minutely anchored in the landscapes of Vancouver Island. *The Invention of the World* is set in different places on the east coast of the island, at various removes from civilization; *The Resurrection of Joseph Bourne* is located on the west coast, in the tiny harbour of Port Annie, precariously squeezed between the ocean and the collapsing mountains. Keith's statement that Hodgins "transforms his local backyard into an image of the whole creative universe"<sup>3</sup> concurs with Hodgins himself in his interview with Hancock: just like Faulkner or García Márquez he presents people he grew up among, the community he knows best.<sup>4</sup> It is in keeping that his locations should be both uncommencing and redolent with symbolic undertones. Some instances are fairly obvious. The contrast between, on the one hand, the "bleak, treeless colony" willed by the sham prophet Donal Keneally (*IW*, pp. 253; 246) and, on the other, the life-affirming trees connecting earth and sky, is self-evident; similarly the "Second Growth" (the title to the last section of *The Invention of the World*) points to more than the resilience of vegetation—i.e. to another point of departure or a further development in humankind. Also, the deserted village of Hed up a narrow winding gravel road and on the other side of a precarious bridge (see *IW*, pp. 34; 326), is the ultimate retreat, the place to which Maggie can fly and from which she can face her call in life with renewed confidence.

<sup>3</sup>W. J. Keith, *Canadian Literature in English* (London: Longman, 1985), p. 177.

<sup>4</sup>Geoff Hancock, "Interview with Jack Hodgins," *Canadian Fiction Magazine*, 32/63 (1979), 47.

The significance of the Irish hill top with its megalithic stones will appear in the discussion of Maggie Kyle in relation to Keneally.

The main location of *The Resurrection of Joseph Bourne* has an allegorical dimension too. Likely as it is with its mixture of pulp stench and beer stink, and the contrast between the respectable houses "Down Front" and the squalor of "Squatters' Flats," the town of Port Annie is also a metaphor for "people clinging to earth, people clinging to material things."<sup>5</sup> As one can read in the third, Popean epigraph to the novel (quoted from an epic poem written by one of the characters): "But oh, what fuss these earthbound mortals make / when asked to pull up roots, or new life take." For few are able to face the new beginning which is forced upon them when, towards the end of the novel, the mountain wipes the place off the map in a giant slide of mud; two actually die, victims of their attachment to possessions, of their (literal and metaphorical) inability to move, their inability to grasp that, in Bourne's words, "our real roots grow upward" (*RB*, p. 138). Before it is proven by the final landslide, the fallacy of material roots (which is blatant in a town where practically everyone is a displaced person, and is further obvious in the history of the place) is announced by the unexplained tidal wave with which the story begins. This sudden and unaccountable disruption by the sea inseminates the town with signs of change, just as it inseminates the belly of Angela Turner through the agency of a Peruvian sailor. The most disturbing of these signs is Raimey, the beautiful girl with a spell-binding gait whom the inhabitants call the Peruvian seabird. The hull of a derelict fishboat left stranded on top of a tree is another, far less obtrusive one; only the children who climb up the tree find out that it is still full of water and sea life caught and trapped out of its element—until the collapsing mountain releases it into the inlet (see *RB*, pp. 6; 207; 251).

Legends and folk tales are used in rather different ways in the two novels. In *The Invention of the World* the figure of Donal Brendan Keneally, the founder of the Revelation Colony of Truth, might come out of some old legend. His story is reported almost chronologically through different channels in sections 2, 4 and 6. The first of these, called "The Eden Swindle,"<sup>6</sup> records the legend as collected by Strabo Becker, the

<sup>5</sup>Russell McDougall, "Interview with Jack Hodgins," *Kunapipi*, 12.1 (1990), 104.

<sup>6</sup>The title refers to Keneally's deceit and so to one reading of the novel's title. Keneally is a malignant trickster, and using fear as his lever he deceives his desperate followers into a form of slavery. But another "Eden swindle" had been performed long before him, as recorded in the second biblical myth about the beginning of mankind: "A strange story [...] It has two beginnings. The first, a single chapter, would have us all made in the image of God, perfect spirit-

shreds and fragments together from the half-aware conversations of people around me, from the tales and funs and gossip and whispered threats and elaborate curses that float in the air like dust. (*JW*, p. 69)

"Scrapbook" is close to the genre of the detective novel, using allegedly authentic material, while "The Wolves of Lycaeon" incorporates the stream-of-consciousness technique. Similarly, the images associated with the evil embodied in Keneally range from the bull-god present in myths developed over two thousand years before Christ to one of the most recent scientific discoveries about our universe, "black holes."

In the far less sinister stories he tells about Fat Annie Fartenburg and the origin of Port Annie, the Indian Christie draws on his people's folk tales, with motifs such as the transmogrification of an animal into a human, and the animation of a doll. Like Becker in *The Invention of the World*, he first claims that all he says is part of a long-standing oral tradition: "[W]hat he had heard himself from his grandparents, members of the band of natives whose longhouses and sweat baths had once stood by the edge of the inlet" (p. 63). It all started with another tidal wave which left a "gigantic blue whale" stranded on the beach, "bigger by far than any of [the European] ships had been." On the following morning the whale had turned into "a great fat lady with pale blue skin, miraculously tiny ears and a mouth that could swallow you whole," who set about gathering a bundle of sticks and cajoling a "little doll man"—Dieter Fartenburg—into life (p. 64). She somehow summoned up business expertise and a number of successful relatives, and the couple founded a logging company, while the members of the crew felt involved in an amorous passion just as disproportionate as her size and made more complicated for involving two men. When the two men disappeared on the same day, her despair shook the place as though it was another natural disaster.

Legendary reports often partake of the tall tale tradition, with its expected accumulation of exaggerations and incredible claims. This tendency towards the burlesque, reminiscent of Rabelais and Mark Twain as well as Pope or Punch-and-Judy shows, is further helped by Hodgins's own delight in words. As Christie comments about the whale story: "Expect you to believe anything. Dieter Fartenburg and Fat Annie, a whale and a pile of sticks, that's nothing to some of the stories they told me [. . .]" (*RB*, p. 64). Christie's later account of the next stage in the passionate lady's eventful life (*RB*, pp. 109–13) clearly belongs to this burlesque tradition. After the bones of her man had been found and she had crushed them to powder and swallowed them (see p. 68), she staged a double funeral for the two of them—one not even a heap of bone dust any more, and the other a very much alive, overflowing lady. She used dump trucks for lack of proper hearses, and ended up floating down

"bushy raccoon of a man" (*JW*, p. viii) who is established as the novel's narrator. It covers the period running from before his birth, indeed before his siring by a "monstrous black bull" (p. 71), to shortly before 1909, the year in which he killed his beautiful and gentle wife Nell and her lover Christopher Wall. The whole section has the strong oral rhythm of an Irish tale and contains such wondrous elements as the earth gaping open to swallow the hapless mother. In the other two sections, Keneally becomes more of a man though no less evil: there is a shift in monstrosity from the awesomeness of myth, however awful, to mere vicious wickedness—though several people in the "Scrapbook" section testify to signs of the bull in the man. The 1909 murder serves as a starting point for Becker's inquiry in this fourth section—the second of the three on Keneally—, which consists of his transcripts of witnesses' interviews. In the third one (section 6, called "The Wolves of Lycaeon"), the pitiful end of Keneally's story is presented through his third wife's painful and disconnected recollections. On Becker's insistent prompting, Lily Hayworth relives the time when she was known as the "Iron Bitch": the years she spent in the House of Revelations as the wife of the Irish tyrant, until his subjects rebelled and he dug his way back into the earth. The title presumably refers to one of the legends involving the Greek king Lycaeon; one version says that he was turned into a wolf for having served human flesh to a visiting god. There is a lot of presumptuous pride in Keneally, and utter disrespect for life; besides, as in the tale of Lycaeon, he is punished through his sin. The fear he so cunningly exploited in others coils back on him (*JW*, pp. 259–60), as the people he had reduced to a form of slavery finally rebel and he flees into the bowels of the earth. The metaphor suggested by Lily Hayworth is perhaps more terrible than anything said about him yet: she perceives him as a black hole absorbing to share his fate. His body is still somewhere under the house. Exorcizing his evil absence is part of Maggie Kyle's redemptive task.

It might not be too far-fetched to trace a parallel between these stages in the telling of Keneally's story and successive literary forms. "The Eden Swindle" echoes the epic tradition. As epic poets will, Becker claims that he starts from scattered hearsay to go back to some preexisting story. Where the anonymous narrator of "Das Hildebrandslied" begins "Ik gihórta dat seggen. . .," we read at the beginning of the section:

Trust me or not, believe what you want, by now the story exists without us in air. I am not its creator, nor is any one man; I did not invent it, only gathered its

tual creatures. Then someone else came along, started it all over again, and had us all made out of clay" (*JW*, p. 244).

river after the truck drivers, who had started a race up the mountain roads, had both missed a hairpin bend. Significantly, the story can only exist away from the presence of its main figure. Folk heroes stay alive in mysterious ways and transforming confrontations may be fatal: "Fat Annie" cannot be the dried up old woman found by Mayor Weins and Damon West in a smelly curtained room.

Hyperbolic style is characteristic of Hodgins's writing throughout, whether he is describing the tribulations of Mayor Weins trying to keep his imported Arizona cactus alive in spite of the standing rain, or the battle of cars between Maggie and Danny Holland, shortly before the end of the "Maggie" part, which is an amplification of the clashes between two cars at the beginning. Hodgins's exuberance also finds an outlet in the account of the wedding reception at the end of *The Invention of the World*, when he heaps up hilarious exaggerations such as the roll call of guests, the consumption of food, the staggering list of presents, or the gigantic brawl during "the second hour of the wedding."<sup>7</sup> The scene contains an impossibly exaggerated, therefore comic, therefore cathartic, enactment of violence. Among its wonders is the magic transformation of one minor character, Cora Manson. In the first section of the novel Cora is a frustrated spinster, obsessed with her figure and obsessively critical, who derives pleasure from suffering and from enforcing her complaints on others (see *IW*, p. 28). In the last section, by contrast, her pleasure comes from contributing to other people's enjoyment (*IW*, p. 343). When she unwraps the presents she fully shares in the couple's happiness and she no longer cares what she looks like: all bitterness has left her. Becker's concluding words, after the bride and bridegroom have been driven to their home, are "borrowed" from a traditional jocular ending to fairy tales: "*If they are not dead and gone they're alive there still!*" (*IW*, p. 354). This is only one among many echoes of the conventions of the fairy-tale marvellous to be found in the two novels. Transmigrations of animals into humans, as are found in the legends woven around Keneally and Fat Annie, are also a frequent motif in fairy tales. Even realistic accuracy is sometimes found in their elaboration (as in the account of what everybody was doing when the king's daughter pricked her finger in "Sleeping Beauty"). Threefold meetings or trials such as the encounters between the Ibrarian Larry Bowman and the girl he is hopelessly in love with, the beautiful Raimsey, seem to come straight

<sup>7</sup> The shape and tone of the scene are inspired by Pope's mock epic, "The Rape of the Lock." See McDougall, "Interview with Jack Hodgins," 103; and compare Canto V with the description on pp. 347-49, in which Maggie attempts to bring people back to their senses by throwing the top layer of the wedding cake at Danny Holland.

from fairy tales, and indeed are utterly "wonder-ful." The first time, he watches her fishing a miraculous amount of live fish out of a virtually dead inlet:

She didn't know a thing about fishing. Yet astonishingly she brought them up, raised them one after the other up through that muck to take her lure, brought fish after fish up from the dark bottom of that inlet to snap at her bait and go flying up into air with it, a thrilling silver curve in the daylight. She cast that line like a spell out over the sea and stood motionless as a dark goddess on the edge to wait for the spell to take. (*RB*, p. 122)

On the following day she walks down to the open sea, emerges naked from her raincoat and enters the waves; he then strips off his flash new clothes and joins her "out into free-flowing sea" (p. 122). Although he is at first aware only of his frustration, after their third meeting, on which they merely walk up into the mountains together, she has released him of his compulsive attachment as well as of his shyness and fixation on sex; and he is free to notice at last Angela Turner's new interest in him as a man.

Raimsey is one of several characters in Hodgins's novels who play the part of good witches. She is in fact a kind of substitute fairy godmother, standing in for Bourne's long neglected wife back in Jamaica. Raimsey works all sorts of miracles throughout the town, the most remarkable being the resurrection of Bourne, the old grumpy poet, whom she had to kill first in order to bring out the "new man" in him. Before being forced to this fatal encounter, he had been fleeing life, retreating into anger and cynicism; like Paul's Colossians he has to "put off [...] anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication" (Col. 3:8). Her sheer beauty works miracles; for instance, a glance at her enables the imposing Sikh Mr Manku to trust water enough to let himself float, which he had vainly tried for weeks. Joseph Bourne is an ugly old man; but after his resurrection his care and concern enable him to work even more dramatic miracles such as curing Crippled Crabbe, who can soon walk without crutches, and Rosa Magnani, the bedridden wife of the recreation centre's Italian keeper, who is seen dancing with her husband. Less dramatically, but no less effectively, he takes it upon himself to teach self-help and passive resistance to the squatters he lives among (also instituting self-respect in a woman so far called Dirty Della), and he contributes to the integration of the small East Indian community by teaching English to Mr Manku's grandchildren and using the grandfather as a much-needed assistant (an interface person, sociologists would say). Bourne is half-way between the marvellous of the floating vessel and the marvellous of the praying monks in Heaney's poem on Clonmacnoise: i.e. between magic and human wonders. He is a kind of old shaman using the inexhaustible medicine of love. His first name can be associ-

ated with the Old Testament figure who was left for dead in the desert and who, once he had entered a new life in Egypt, set out to help those around him. The biography Bowman puts together shows that time and again he is dramatically defeated and has to be brought back to life through the agency of women. His name echoes "born," as in "born again"; but it also evokes the "bourne," i.e. the small stream or boundary—as in the description of death in *Harriet* III, 1 which he repeatedly proves wrong: "[T]he undiscovered country from whose bourne / No traveller returns."

In *The Invention of the World* two characters can be seen as benevolent angels or good fairies: Madmother Thomas and Wade's disturbing twin, Horseman. Madmother Thomas is given a fairly full background. She is the daughter of one of the Irish migrants who tried to escape from the colony established by Keneally and has been out on the roads on a manure spreader for as long as people can remember. Her strength and good health are legendary. She has been helping Maggie to find her way ever since she found her under her parents' shack. With her usual acumen she had responded to the girl's request, "I want to see more," with the words: "You will child, you will soon enough [. . .]. But the where of a life don't matter at all, it's the how of your life that'll count" (*JW*, p. 19). Later, when Maggie is so beset by doubts about her own power that she wants to retreat to her former cottage at Hed, she finds the place squatted in by a young couple and Madmother Thomas lying sick in bed with them, waiting for her to take her back to the former House of Revelations and to look after her—thus giving the final push needed for Maggie to acknowledge the healer in herself.

By contrast, we are given very little background information about the figure of Horseman, the stranger-twin who haunts and hunts Wade into a recognition of himself. In this he is rather like Raimey: an angel, the manifestation of higher powers. When trying to escape the life of hard labour which most people around him thought the only decent way of living, Wade had already displayed a considerable amount of individuality, but he had channelled himself into negative lines: he had not committed himself. Before he unexpectedly and most disturbingly encounters himself, he was adrift, complacent about his ploy for making money by merely waiting for tourists from the States to visit his fake fort, and enjoying what he could of the beautiful red-haired art teacher-painter Virginia Kerr. The stranger who walks down the beach towards him is "an exact duplicate of himself" (*JW*, p. 152): "Even his eyes had the same flecks of pale green" (p. 154). The stranger is mildly critical, working by implications: "[S]ome are more tied. [. . .] To earth. To things. To themselves. To their own bodies" (*JW*, p. 157). He says that he comes

"from nowhere," and calls himself "a man of God," immediately setting the record straight: "Oh, I don't mean preacher, not a minister. It was a silly thing to say I suppose, but you see that's the way I think of myself, of us all" (*JW*, p. 157). Maggie traces the identity of this doppelgänger. The name "Horseman" (*JW*, p. 168) recalls the horsemen of the Apocalypse, while the silver trailer in which he lives may be related to Wordsworth's "clouds of glory." When the couple track him down, he tells Wade:

"Mr Powers [. . .] you're just as phoney as that museum of yours. You're your own twin, Powers, but you've hidden the true one. Buried him. Locked him up, maybe, the way you tried to lock me up." (*JW*, p. 305)

It is partly thanks to his visits that Wade acknowledges that "the sight of tourists disgusted him" (*JW*, p. 155). It is because of him that he dismantles his fort and goes on a hitch-hiking tour looking for himself (*JW*, p. 339) and eventually returns to Maggie.

In the two novels no female figure is associated with real evil. Hodgins has no wicked witches, only a few stupid women such as Eva McCarthy, Mabel Weins or her daughter Linda. Significantly in this context, both Maggie Kyle and Jenny Chambers have all it takes to comply with standard "bad mother" figures. In her determination to escape her parents' way of life Maggie used to be promiscuous and had men forcing unwanted children upon her. Later, as the old cynic Julius Champney remembers, she launches into "an abortive attempt to undo the past" and tries to mother the younger one, "poor surly Carla [. . .] dragged up from whatever foster home she had been stashed away in"; but this he says was "a ghastly two-week farce" (*JW*, p. 231). When she moves in with Slim Pott, Jenny becomes the stepmother of eight unruly children on whom she has no hold whatsoever. Yet readers are never encouraged to think of the two women as bad mothers.

On the other hand, Hodgins does have male ogres or Bogey Men. Donal Keneally is one; Damon West, helped by Jeremy Fells, is another. Again in very different ways in the two novels such characters stand for powers that are more pervasive, though eventually less effective, than the power of love through which miracles occur: the power of fear, and the power of greed, and the power of resentment, the many-faceted power of bondage and exclusion which works mainly through delusion. These correspond to another reading of "the old man." Where Keneally works directly on people's fear and sets himself up as some sort of vengeful father-god, Damon West (whose name combines hell and death), a "Hollywood hunk" with a flashy motor car, merely stands for the multinational money power of land developers out to get rid of what may be left of nature and to evict those who trespass; thus, even in the

absence of personal responsibility, he is a perfect representative of the selfish and short-sighted greed prevalent in our society. Although he starts haunting the town of Port Annie as soon as Raimy has vanished, his crafty politician's double talk does not take in the inhabitants and his only booty when he leaves is the besotted Linda Weins. His coming had been prepared by another sinister figure in the community, Jeremy Fell. Supposedly running a clothes' shop, Fell acts as a secret agent, collecting information on all and everyone. He is gnawed at by resentment against life and by a terminal illness. He is twice saved from his own destructiveness, once by Bourne and once by Bowman; but whether he can actually save himself is doubtful. As would happen in a morality play, though not necessarily, one fears, in real life, these evil characters are eventually defeated. One of the accomplishments of the novels is that the triumph of life and love does not seem contrived or forced. Another accomplishment is that the contrasts I have brought out in a rather heavy-handed way hardly ever appear in such stark terms.

There is nothing wicked about Mayor Jacob Weins; but he is stupid. His obsession is to draw tourists and journalists to Port Annie so that he and the town may become famous throughout the province, if not throughout the world. His dreams are ironically fulfilled when the town he so desperately wanted to put on the map is finally wiped out, since journalists then flock from all over the place. Weins is blind to the irony, as he is blind to the possible connection, pointed out by Christie before, between the landslide and his earlier attempt at creating a sensation by forcing the old lady out of her retreat. Before this he had imagined launching a campaign around their rediscovered poet, yet this had never taken off; he had not only imported a cactus from Arizona but attempted to keep it alive at great costs—and to no avail. He finally determines to get the old legendary founder of the city down from the upstairs room in which she has been looked after by Vincent, the hotel-keeper, for the past twenty years, while everybody has gathered in the pub downstairs on the occasion of her Festival. When Weins and West brush aside an anxious Vincent, what they find in the dark room is a ghostly stick of a woman on a rocking chair. They want to carry her downstairs, but Weins trips, twists his ankle, the chair flies through the air and the old lady lands upon the floor (RB, pp. 236-39). Annie Fartenburg, who meant "something you could get your hands on, flesh and earth and good old solid matter" (RB, p. 194), has become some ill-defined object: "A bundle of rags? A gnarled roof? A wind-up toy spinning towards [Bowman's] leg?" (RB, p. 238). Now surely this is another instance of his foolish actions resulting in some evil consequence: you do not go about killing old ladies. But she had survived as a mere stick among long-dried water

tanks, and her death, if there is indeed a link with the erasing of the town under a hill of mud, releases the inhabitants from a wrong sense of roofs.

Presumably countering the expectation that males should define their identity in terms of aggression, Hodgins's male heroes are self-effacing figures, though their surnames point to the true force hidden in them. Larry Bowman is a shy librarian and Wade Powers something of a lazy conman. His major developing figures are women (Maggie in *The Invention of the World*, Angela Turner and Jenny Chambers in *The Resurrection of Joseph Bourne*). They are bursting with energy and are far from perfect; but they overcome their shortcomings and, in view of these, they offer an exemplary illustration of the importance of trust, in oneself and in others.

Keneally's evil acts as a foil against which Maggie finds her call or mission in life—what Campbell calls one's bliss. On a surface reading the two stories come together because Maggie buys Keneally's former colony and settles in the House of Revelations, and because old Lily Hayworth, Keneally's third wife, becomes one of Maggie's demanding tenants. On a less obvious level they neatly counteract each other. Where Keneally deceived and enslaved people, Maggie eventually tries to remedy the damage he did:

Well, she could handle it, she couldn't heal them all by herself or cancel that monster's damage alone, but she would do what she could. (IW, p. 335)

Maggie's grandmother knew about her granddaughter's mission in life when she told Becker:

I don't think you have to be a relative to see what kind of stuff that Maggie's made of. Like her grandfather. It'll be up to people like her, made of that kind of stuff, to look after the cripples I guess, and heal them if she can. (IW, p. 195)

Their contrasted complementarity can also be visualized in space. Keneally's life, quite literally, goes downhill, from the stone circle on the mountain top on which he was born around 1860 to the tunnel he dug back into the bowels of the earth, some sixty-eight years later; whereas Maggie, brought up in a shack on the west coast, was born with an "extra instinct," blessing or curse, which she long tried to ignore and repress: the instinct to "keep climbing higher" to a point where she could "pick out the right kind of life for herself" (IW, p. 291). She finally achieves that sweeping view of the world on the hill top from which Keneally came, in the part called "Pilgrimage," when she obeys the widow's demand that she take the body out of the well and scatter the ashes.

She does not deliberately set out to help people; yet somehow they flock to her doorstep. However, her help will not be fully effective as long as she has not shed her misgivings and self-distrust and started to



acknowledge the shaping power of love. This happens in stages, some of which look like setbacks—like her failed attempt to play mother to Carla. By the end of the first section, Maggie recognizes the love in the people she has taken in, and can dismiss Danny Holland: "It doesn't matter," she repeats, and she means it: she no longer cares (*JW*, p. 65). As seen above, the final stage in her acknowledging her call is forced upon her by wise Mother Thomas. By the end of the novel, when she and her one true husband are taken away from the wedding in a silver trailer which is the modern version of the pumpkin turned coach, they are "the New Man and the New Woman."

Counterpointing the opening paragraph with its account of a fulfilling death, the last pages of the novel present Jenny Chambers' "infinite rehearsal." Jenny Chambers is a former stripper—Flaming Jenny, Jenny Flambée—who felt so desolate on finding herself stranded in that far-away place that she responded to Slim Potts' tenderness and settled in with him. Large parts of the novel focus on her and her desperate need to be acknowledged by the gossiping women of the town. This even leads her to the grand, and false, move of announcing her wedding. By the end of the novel, however, she is ready to give in to her true self and become a "new woman." Bereaved of her beloved Slim and surrounded by his desolate children, she first allows herself to weep, then slowly recovers her gift for dancing, for letting music enter her body and translate it into a queenly presence for all around her. She is the one in charge; she no longer depends on others, and she can give as well as receive.

Commenting on the title of the first novel, Hutcheon as well as others (including Hodgins himself) insist on the contrast between the invented and the created: Becker can only invent, out of given material, whereas *genesis ex nihilo* is a divine prerogative. But beyond Becker's invention of Keneally's and Maggie's stories, the title refers to Hodgins's invention of Becker, of the Colony of Truth, or of Port Annie and its miracles. Fiction writing is invention—a form of creation which does not take itself seriously. More inclusively still, if we think of the book's triumphant ending on Maggie and Wade's love and its widening ripples of loving care, the title of this first novel can be read as a reference to the way we all should reinvent the world, just by developing the urge towards encompassing love instead of yielding to the easy passion of aggression.

Hodgins's novels (and some of his short stories) are tales of resurrection, of healing and regeneration through the power of love, through people accepting to "follow their bliss" (in Campbell's words) and so finding their non-egoistic selves. This re-birth is explicitly related to the "new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness" (Eph. 4:24) repeatedly mentioned in Paul's and Peter's Epistles. But the

myth, of course, is no longer the same. Myths do no stay put, they are not "writ in stone."<sup>8</sup> For one thing, Paul or Peter would never have mentioned the "New Woman," let alone focus on her. Nor is there any need for reference to some external God any more. God can be within us. I expect that something of the basic message in the Epistles is retained: fear and greed can be shaken off; through love and care we can erase the Fall, that other "Eden Swindle." To borrow words used by Becker, we can go back "before the mist and the clay," when we are, all of us, "perfect spiritual creatures" (*JW*, p. 244).

<sup>8</sup> Marina Warner, *Managing Monsters: Six Myths of Our Time* (London: Vintage, 1994), p. 13.