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Article abstract

From the 1920s to the 1960s, anglophone Canadian magazines such as *Chatelaine*, *Maclean's*, and *Canadian Home Journal* printed a wealth of middlebrow fiction attuned to contemporary problems. Largely overlooked in Canadian studies, these texts reflect the ways in which class tensions and cultural hierarchies defined and shaped a literary field that would, in turn, construct a normative Canadian identity that was implicitly urban, white, heterosexual, and middle-class. Against a backdrop of interwar Montreal, Leslie Gordon Barnard's "The Winter Road," serialized in *Canadian Home Journal* from 1938-39, represents the anxieties and aspirations of middle-class urban professionals during the late 1930s. Barnard engages with such troubling problems as the social and economic tension produced by the competing ideologies of capitalism and socialism. In the end, his story reflects a fictional world in which the desire for personal fulfilment can be balanced with the demands of the public good, thereby generating an arguably middlebrow stance to a volatile modern society.

Mainstream Magazines, Middlebrow Fiction, and Leslie Gordon Barnard's "The Winter Road"

MICHELLE SMITH

Introduction

FROM THE 1920S TO THE 1960S, anglophone Canadian magazines such as *Chatelaine*, *Maclean's*, and *Canadian Home Journal* printed a diverse wealth of fiction, much of which can be categorized as middlebrow.¹ The subject matter of this fiction was closely attuned to contemporary problems within Canadian society. The effects of the Great Depression and the Second World War, questions relating to gender, family life, and community, and changes in culture and media (including developments in cinema and radio) were all imagined through the fiction published in magazines. Indeed, fiction's engagement with such issues dovetailed with the feature articles, regular columns, and advertisements in which it was encased. The diversity of contents and modes of writing might have made magazines incoherent assemblages of words and images, yet issues tended to be organized around a unifying theme that was extrapolated from current events and leavened with seasonal preoccupations, such as Christmas or the summer holidays. As a result, individual issues possessed a coherence that was grounded in topical relevance. Periodicals sought to present newsworthy events attuned to the mood of the moment, with fiction writers reflecting these events and moods in their adoption of realistic social contexts as the backdrop for the stories they told. Notably, these stories nearly always resolved themselves into a conclusion that was both romantic and inspiring. These were the two adjectives favoured by *Chatelaine's* editor, Byrne Hope Sanders, in her many editorials on the importance of arts and letters in Canada. As she wrote in February 1930, *Chatelaine's* purpose was the provision of "entertainment and instruction, romantic fiction and inspiring articles" (Feb. 1930: 16). If

readers did not feel uplifted by reading *Chatelaine*, then, in her view, the magazine was failing to achieve its aims.

“The Winter Road,” a work of serial fiction written by the once-prominent author Leslie Gordon Barnard and published in *Canadian Home Journal* from 1938-39, exemplifies the role of fiction in achieving this aim. An intriguing instance of Canadian middlebrow literature, the story is underwritten by a concern for moderation and compromise. Extreme ideas, especially the ideologies of unfettered capitalism and socialist revolution, are portrayed as essentially destructive. In their place, Barnard constructs a fictional world in which the desire for personal fulfillment can be in balance with the demands of the public good, thereby generating an arguably middlebrow stance to a volatile modern society. The expectation that stories provide inspiration defined the nature of the fiction that was published in Canada’s mainstream periodicals during this era. There was no one single style or aesthetic; rather, the similarity lay in structure, as each story was expected to offer a reassurance that all troubles could be overcome, and a sense of security and happiness realized. This structure is in keeping with the romance genre, which was the favoured genre for magazine fiction.² As Alison Light points out, “romance imagines peace, security, and ease precisely because there is dissension, insecurity, and difficulty” (24), and the peace, security, and ease envisioned by mainstream magazine fiction communicates much about the construction of middlebrow values and aspirations in literature. The attainment of a comfortable home, a professional career (something that, interestingly, was not limited exclusively to male protagonists), financial security, a sense of local community, a pleasantly predictable daily routine, and, above all, a sense of optimism about the future were all presumed to be the foundation for happiness. Alternately, the problems that interfered with happiness throw into relief the anxieties that underwrote middlebrow preoccupations — anxieties over poverty or the symptoms of it (such as lack of education and opportunity), anxieties over social unrest and instability, and anxieties over the correct use of one’s leisure time and the tasteful display of goods that attested to one’s level of material wealth.

In terms of literary style, magazine fiction was neither the experimental and often esoteric prose associated with high modernism, nor was it the fast-paced and often cynical prose associated with pulp fiction. These two poles — high modernism versus pulp fiction — have

generated a clearly defined field for literary scholarship in which the study of elitist texts and their apparent foils, mass-produced texts, has taken place. This easy binary prompted Nicola Humble's observation in 2001 that "while the lowbrow has undergone a process of critical reclamation in recent decades, with the development of popular culture studies as a legitimate area of academic interest, the middlebrow has remained firmly out in the cold" (3). The last decade has seen the reclamation of many works of literature that might be categorized as middlebrow, with the attendant theorizing of what, precisely, the term *middlebrow* means, not only to contemporary scholars who are engaged with studying texts that fall between the critical designations of lowbrow and highbrow, but also to the editors and authors who have had to contend with the effects of cultural hierarchy on their work.

While the study of middlebrow culture has gained ground in recent years, to date, the majority of studies focus on either British or American examples. Taking up middlebrow texts within the context of Canadian literature, on one hand, and the international context of middlebrow studies, on the other, contributes greatly to both our broad understanding of the literary field and our knowledge of individual authors and their works in highly particular ways. A survey of Canada's middlebrow magazines reveals a network of writers who were regularly published and who were well connected to editors, publishers, and one another through groups such as the Canadian Authors Association (CAA). Leslie Gordon Barnard, for instance, published short stories and serials in the *Journal* nearly every year between 1925 and 1959. He also contributed fiction to *Maclean's*, *Chatelaine*, *Canadian Magazine*, the *National Home Monthly*, and *Family Herald*. He co-wrote some of these works with his wife, Margaret, who was also a well-published short story author. In addition to magazine contributions, Leslie Gordon Barnard published four novels — *One Generation Away* (1931), *Jancia* (1935), *The Immortal Child* (1941), and *So Near is Grandeur* (1945) — as well as a book about Canada's role in the First World War (*La Guerre des nations: le meilleur souvenir illustré de la Grande Guerre; décrivant spécialement le rôle du Canada, et des Canadiens*, published in English as *The War Pictorial: the Leading Practical Souvenir of the Great War; Depicting Especially the Part Played by Canadians*). Between 1940 and 1961, he had plays for radio and television produced, and he served as the president of the Canadian Authors Association from 1937 to 1938. Without a sound

knowledge of Barnard's work, not to mention that of the many other authors who have suffered similar sentences of literary obscurity, we will suffer from having, at best, a partial grasp of Canada's literary history and, at worst, a field of literary studies that is biased toward particular texts at the expense of others, thus unquestioningly reproducing the social and cultural politics that led to the exclusion of these authors in the first instance.³

Canadian mainstream magazines also provide an important means of illuminating the interrelationships among authors, editors, readers, and advertisers in the production of literatures, tastes, and concepts of the Canadian nation. Indeed, Canadian magazines were keen to tie their identities to nationalist themes as a means of marketing themselves to their target audience: Canadians. The result was the construction of a normative Canadian identity that was grounded in being urban, white, heterosexual, and middle class. It was an identity that fed neatly into the growing consumer culture that magazines helped to naturalize (Smith 22, 107-10), and it persists as the identity against which ongoing investigations into what it means to be Canadian are defined. A detailed review of authors published in magazines not only reveals the prevalence of writers who have been made invisible (and thus raises the question of how and why they have been made so), but also tempers our understanding of more canonical authors, such as Mazo de la Roche and Martha Ostenso, who both published in these "middlebrow" publications.⁴

The values assigned to middlebrow texts are a part of a complex interplay of social politics. Pierre Bourdieu's extensive sociological work on culture, taste, and hierarchy in French society illuminates the nuances of how socio-economic differences and literature are entwined in the assignment of cultural worth and the generation of meanings. As he points out, our process of both losing and recovering works such as Barnard's is a part of a larger process of "incessant revisions, reinterpretations and rediscoveries which the learned of all religions of the book perform on their canonical texts: since the levels of 'reading' designate hierarchies of readers, it is necessary and sufficient to change the hierarchy of readings in order to overturn the hierarchy of readers" (229). Understanding this process and the negotiations of literary value in which it culminates helps us to understand the framework in which authors, publishers, and readers interpreted their social world through

imaginative works; unravelling this complexity in the present moment tells us, equally, about the role of contemporary literary criticism and, at times, our own anxieties and biases as teachers and critics. As Erica Brown and Mary Grover put it,

the resurgence of the term ‘middlebrow’ as a dismissive term may owe something to our sense that in a digital age, those with a passion for reading can feel . . . that we are now part of a beleaguered minority culture who need to distance ourselves from a dominant majority who threaten the value we set on our tastes. (3)

Critical distance is necessary, with particular attention paid to understanding our own reading practices, as we try to understand the significance of reading within a broader societal context.

By recuperating middlebrow works and their readers into literary criticism, we not only alter our understanding of literary history in important ways, but we also create the opportunity to pursue nuanced analyses of individual texts. As Faye Hammill points out, “much middlebrow writing has been ignored by the academy because of a misconception that it is so straightforward as to require no analysis, while, in fact, its witty, polished surfaces conceal unexpected depths and subtleties” (*Women* 6). Canada’s middlebrow magazine fictions lend themselves to an exploration of these depths and subtleties, with the work of interpreting them rendering an interpretation of the key concerns of the era. The magazines themselves help us to understand not only how editors and authors were related, but also how editors and authors constructed readers and, in turn, how readers shaped magazines and literary works according to their presumed — or, at times, explicitly expressed — interests, needs, and desires.

Meanings of the Middlebrow

The term middlebrow first appeared in print in *Punch* in 1925, as a tongue-in-cheek observation that “the BBC claim to have discovered a new type: the ‘middlebrow.’ It consists of people who are hoping that some day they will get used to the stuff they ought to like” (“Middlebrow”). The tone and implications of the joke resonate with a remark made in the *Toronto Star* ten years later, in which an anonymous writer quipped, “middle class: those who are too proud to read pulp magazines for pleasure, but are not important enough to read them for

mental relaxation” (“Middle Class”). The glib attitude of dismissing the middle-ground of culture as laughable and unimportant is telling, as it foregrounds not only the critical tendency to dismiss middlebrow texts as unworthy of study, but also the acute sense of aspiration (and its flip side, anxiety) that surfaces in efforts to define the middlebrow. Bourdieu’s treatment of the middlebrow lights on this tension between aspiration and anxiety, a tension that is at the heart of how we delineate middlebrow tastes and texts. As he argues,

middle-brow culture owes something of its charm, in the eyes of the middle classes who are its main consumers, to the references to legitimate culture it contains and which encourage and justify confusion of the two — accessible versions of avant-garde experiments . . . which are entirely organized to give the impression of bringing legitimate culture within the reach of all, by combining two normally exclusive characteristics, immediate accessibility and the outward signs of cultural legitimacy. (323)

What is at stake in Bourdieu’s conception of the middlebrow is a middle-class concern to comprehend high or legitimate culture that ultimately fails because the avant-garde is accessed in a form that is not entirely legitimate, such as watching film adaptations of literary novels or listening to popular arrangements of a classical music (323).

This is a restrictive definition of the middlebrow, to be sure, and one that critics working in the area of middlebrow culture have cause to question. As Hammill, citing Raymond Williams, observes, “There are in fact no middlebrows; there are only ways of seeing people and books as middlebrow” (*Afterword* 231). The quotation reminds us that we cannot define middlebrow culture in a narrow fashion, nor can we view either middlebrow texts or their readers as homogenous lumps. Indeed, recent investigations into middlebrow culture reveal a complex congregation of middle-class women reading domestic novels, urban sophisticates writing for *Vanity Fair* and *Vogue*, professionals from aspirant middle-class backgrounds who secretly subscribe to The Book of the Month Club, and prairie farm women seeking inspiration and respite from cares.⁵ The differences in the ways in which middlebrow cultures evolved in different locations and through different media (novels, magazines, radio, and television all come to mind) add still further diversity to the field.

In her book *The Feminine Middlebrow Novel 1920s to 1950s: Class,*

Domesticity, and Bohemianism, Humble observes that, historically, the British middlebrow novel has been positioned as a type of text “that straddles the divide between the trashy romance or thriller on the one hand, and the philosophically or formally challenging novel on the other: offering narrative excitement without guilt, and intellectual stimulation without undue effort” (11-12). This assessment, she argues, undermines the power of such novels, which “had a significant role in the negotiation of new class and gender identities in the period from the 1920s to the 1950s.”⁶ Further to this, Faye Hammill argues in her comparative study of literary celebrity among Canadian, British, and American women authors that “the term ‘middlebrow,’ in order to be an effective critical category for the consideration of interwar literature, needs to be detached from such limiting definitions as these and reconstituted as a productive, affirmative standpoint for writers who were not wholly aligned with either high modernism or popular culture” (*Women* 7). Much work has been done in the last decade that addresses precisely this need, though the majority of it concentrates on either British or American interpretations of the middlebrow in literature.⁷ This is not to say that Canadian texts that might be considered middlebrow are going unstudied; rather, the question of how middlebrow culture developed in Canada is under-examined. As Mary Grover points out in her work on novelist Warwick Deeping, the term middlebrow possessed different meanings in the United States and Britain, with those meanings bound to the specific historical and cultural circumstances in which middlebrow texts circulated in each nation (31). The same is true of its evolution in Canada, with mainstream magazines providing an important point of entry into understanding middlebrow literature during this period.

Magazines and the Middlebrow

In Canada, in the late 1920s, several new magazines were created, while existing ones were revamped in ways that provoked a rapid rise in circulation. Of the new magazines, *Mayfair* (1927) and *Chatelaine* (1928) were most closely aligned with middlebrow concerns, while the already existing magazines *Maclean's* and *Canadian Home Journal* appointed new editors and increased their respective subscription bases. In his survey of Canadian magazines, Fraser Sutherland describes these changes as a “class-to-mass” phenomenon, citing increased urbanization, a grow-

ing population of middle-class professionals, and the interests of advertisers in marketing their goods through magazines to this new urban, middle-class audience, as the forces driving the rise of such magazines (113).⁸ I do not dispute this argument, but would like to refocus the analysis of certain titles that were clearly directed at an emergent middle class in terms of middlebrow culture, rather than assessing them according to theories of mass culture.

Mayfair, *Chatelaine*, *Maclean's*, and *Canadian Home Journal* were instrumental in the circulation of ideas, images, and literature that defined the notion of the middlebrow, with each magazine bringing its own slant. This notion was a multi-faceted one, resulting from the fact that magazines are multi-authored, multi-genre collages shaped by the sometimes competing, sometimes complementary, interests of advertorial, journalistic, and literary concerns. At the same time, the magazines often self-consciously positioned themselves within social and economic hierarchies, tapping into the reader's own aspirations, fears, and tastes. With their mixture of news, interviews with prominent Canadians, fiction and poetry, fashion pages, and advice columns, magazines were key sources of information and entertainment until the late 1950s, when *Mayfair* and *Canadian Home Journal* were merged with *Chatelaine*, and *Maclean's* went through a rapid succession of editors in an effort to carve out a new identity for itself (eventually adopting a news-journalism format). Not surprisingly, the contribution of magazines to the development of middlebrow culture, in general, influenced the emergence of middlebrow authorship, in particular.

In an interview (published posthumously in the *Evening Times-Globe*), the prolific magazine author and novelist Louis Arthur Cunningham remarked that he “could not have survived” as a writer without the “steadiness, reliability, and consistency of the English magazine market. Not once did that market turn down a good story; not once did it fail to pay; not once did it make a bad grimace or cry havoc” (Davies xiii). The combination of novel and magazine writing proved to be lucrative enough for Cunningham to do what few authors then or now are able to do: earn a living exclusively from his writing. Cunningham did not write exclusively for the Canadian magazine market, but he was a consistent contributor to anglophone Canadian magazines, most notably the *Journal*. In a typical year, he would publish a serialised novel, several short stories, and one or two feature articles.⁹

His praise of the magazine market highlights the need to understand the role of the mainstream magazine in literary production during this era. *Chatelaine*, *Maclean's*, and *Canadian Home Journal* were essential venues for publication for Cunningham, as well as for the primary subject of this essay, Leslie Gordon Barnard. In terms of output, Barnard's was on par with Cunningham's and, like Cunningham, he had established himself as a successful novelist — though most often, his novels were reprints of ones that had been serially published in the *Journal*. The attractiveness of magazines for authors began to diminish in the late 1950s, as the emergence of cheap paperback novels during these years created fierce competition for the dollars of readers.

To turn to the question of the middlebrow, authors such as Barnard and Cunningham demonstrated a degree of adaptability in their writing style. They were responsive to the marketplace — which, in practice, entailed an awareness of what editors would accept — and, importantly, this marketplace was highly attuned to topical issues. Where magazines could report on news and current events, they could also provide ways to imagine the ever-changing contemporary world through the fiction they published. The difference between reporting news and imagining the world lay in this question of inspiration and uplift: the fiction was expected to instill feelings of hope and aspiration, however serious the conflicts at the heart of a given story were. At the same time, editors did more than simply accept a work of fiction and put it into print — they also exerted control over the way in which the author was presented to the magazine's readership, thus constructing a persona that was in keeping with the magazine's own aims and style.

For middlebrow authors, a constant negotiation was necessary, as they balanced the demands of genre conventions and editorial expectations against their own talents and interests as professional writers. In her work on the author Madge Macbeth, Jody Mason traces the ways in which an author could become "compromised" by writing across genres and choosing to be published in venues that occupied disparate points on the cultural hierarchy. A contemporary of Barnard and Cunningham's, Macbeth contributed short stories to *Chatelaine* and the *Journal*, published several novels, and was the first female president of the CAA. The fashionable magazine *Mayfair* launched its first issue with a feature article by her called "The Only Paris." It is the first of several instalments in a travel series that Macbeth wrote about her journey

through Europe. The series is lighthearted and focuses on travelling in style, with a hint of luxury — one would never guess that Macbeth was anything other than a well-dressed, pithy socialite whose attention was devoted entirely to questions of where to dine, what to wear, and with whom to hobnob. As the introduction to her instalment on Rome notes, “Madge Macbeth is so widely known as a Canadian writer, she really needs scant introduction to *Mayfair* readers. She says she has written everything but hymns and to my mind no single statement fully epitomizes her inimitable self” (“In and About Mayfair”). The editorial does not acknowledge that Macbeth was a widow who had turned to writing as a means of supporting herself and her two sons. Macbeth’s situation ran counter to the ethos of smartness and upper crust leisure that *Mayfair* cultivated, but her celebrity and versatility as a writer worked in her favour, and she appears to have been skilled at playing up whatever role suited a given instance of publication. For critics, this versatility makes her placement in any particular literary category an uneasy one.¹⁰ In analyzing Macbeth’s relationship to modernism, Jody Mason argues that her novel *Shackles* “exploits some of the formal conventions of what Colin Hill calls ‘the modern-realist’ movement in Canadian writing . . . yet the novel’s tentative exploration of the themes of modernity — the rise of the New Woman in particular — pulls its realist world view back the formulaic romance” (109). As a result, “Macbeth’s work straddles both popular/conventional (i.e., anti-modernist) and modernist literary aesthetics” (109), a problem that contributes to her relative invisibility in literary studies.

Candida Rifkind further explores the problem of anti-modernism in Canadian literature in her work on the poet Edna Jacques, whose work appeared regularly in *Chatelaine*. Jacques, Rifkind argues, was an anti-modern: she was a prolific poet, and a sentimental one, whose poems were in touch with the lived experiences of a wide audience that included ordinary women living on the Canadian prairies, rather than being esoteric works written for an elite group of readers (97-98). In this way, Jacques became “the literary left’s bourgeois enemy as well as high modernism’s old-fashioned foil. Her poetry has continued to be parodied and marginalized within English-Canadian literary aesthetics, and she has been shelved as a particularly feminine, and backward-looking embarrassment” (93). This tendency to shelve works that might be seen as backward or embarrassing naturally creates intriguing gaps in our

knowledge of Canada's literary history. Equally intriguing, however, is the gap between our embarrassment and critical assessments of backwardness and the pride and pleasure with which magazine editors proclaimed the originality, talent, and keen perceptiveness of their chosen writers.

From an editorial perspective, fiction was central to each magazine's claim to artistic prestige, with the publication of certain authors, such as Barnard, celebrated as a literary coup. The publication of "The Winter Road," for instance, was proclaimed with great pride. As the editorial that accompanied the publication of the serial's first instalment explains,

One of our Canadian writers, Leslie Gordon Barnard, has been for two years writing a novel. We had a look at its first chapter two years ago, and ever since we have been sitting on the Barnard doorstep waiting for the delivery. We never in those two years took our editorial eyes off Leslie Gordon Barnard, for we are rather given, as you will have noticed from time to time, to making prophecies. The *Winter Road* [*sic*] we literally tore out of the arms of its creator for our winter serial. It is, we believe, one of the greatest pieces of Canadian writing that has ever come from Canada. It is profoundly sincere and a story of people battered by emotion and pushed around by economic storms, just as you are, and we are. (Editorial, *Canadian Home Journal*)

The description of the two-year wait for the story marks not only the magazine's devotion to supporting and promoting its authors, but also the time and effort that authors like Barnard invested in their fiction. Barnard's lengthy writing process spoke to craftsmanship and a detailed engagement with his subject. Moreover, the editorial highlights the qualities that editors assumed readers wanted the fiction to have: sincerity, humanity, and, above all, the ability to render such things as "economic storms" intelligible. The passage also indicates the editor's self-appointed role as the intermediary between author and reader. The editorial introduces Barnard as a friend and colleague, one whose labours are ultimately in the service of the reader. Indeed, his labours are somewhat romanticized, calling up the image of the solitary author caught up in his imaginative efforts, in a way that intersects with the overall favouring of the romance genre for magazine fiction.

Having generated this sense of intimacy, the editor then asks that the

reader take pride in the *Journal's* contribution to a national literature. As Allan Weiss observes,

the popular short story in Canada reached its height during the period from about 1920 to the mid-1950s, quite naturally following the changing fortunes of the magazines themselves. What is truly remarkable about this period is the extent to which editors had a nationalist purpose or consciousness. We think of small presses and little magazines as the nationalist voices, and the 1960s as the period when book and magazine editors, caught up in the nationalist fervour that attended the Centennial celebrations, provided the outlets for an unprecedented burst of Canadian literary activity. Yet the editors of some general-interest magazines between the wars also sought to promote Canadian writing. (88)

The act of reading a story, when understood within the editorial framework of a magazine, thus becomes a process of connecting on two levels — first, with other readers who, while anonymous, are also reading the same story at the same time¹¹ and, second, with the fictitious characters who represent facets of the real world from which the story draws its inspiration. This calling up of national community speaks to David Carter's work on the middlebrow in an Australian context. He posits the term "middlebrow nationalism," which hinged on the generation of a body of literature that was unique from European imports, and that drew together themes aspiration, citizenship, and modernity (184).

As the *Journal* editorial suggests, Barnard was one of their most valued authors, and Barnard's speech, in 1941, for the Montreal Branch of the CAA reveals his own attitude toward authorship. According to Lyn Harrington's history of the Association, *Syllables of Recorded Time*, Barnard "was always popular as a speaker, whether in serious dissertation on fiction techniques or on more general topics" (81). In giving his speech, he remarked that "through the years, we have taken — and survived — much criticism. We have been the butt of many jokes, some good, some unpleasant. We have been accused of many things, for instance of being merely a social group, which is a complete falsity. What is more nearly the truth is that we are reasonably social and gregarious — but no more so than those who gathered at the Mermaid Inn, or in Bloomsbury, or indeed in our Press and Faculty Clubs" (81). His remarks indicate a wry awareness of the dismissive attitude sometimes taken toward the association and its authors — an attitude most fre-

quently expressed by authors and critics who aligned themselves explicitly with high modernism. He gently rebukes these criticisms by making reference to famous groups of writers — most notably, the Bloomsbury group, with its high modernist associations, thus situating the CAA's members within an international context, on one hand, and an elevated point on the literary hierarchy on the other. These two connections — modernism and internationalism — lift his work and that of his fellow Canadian authors to a level of cultural prestige that it might not always have been seen to possess, then or now. His fiction, as is evident in “The Winter Road,” aimed to take up serious topics, and create a nuanced imagining of the modern world in which human emotions and motivations were laid bare.

“The Winter Road”: An Interpretation

“The Winter Road” appeared in monthly instalments (November 1938 through June 1939) in *Canadian Home Journal*. The backdrop of the story was Montreal, where Barnard lived and worked, and its central themes engaged with some of the most troubling economic and social problems of the late 1930s. The following analysis focuses on Barnard's representation of social conflict and the competing ideologies of capitalism and socialism that marked the interwar period. This article is necessarily restricted to my selected themes, but the serial certainly merits further study, particularly its treatment of gender, its religious imagery, and its portrayal of urbanity, leisure time, and consumption as hallmarks of modernity. The narrative style crosses the boundaries between realism and romance, playing with the expectations of each genre. On the realism side, Barnard took up the fraught issues of labour exploitation, class divisions, and women's equality in matter-of-fact, non-experimental prose, only to shy away from gritty urban realities, presenting instead pastoral idylls in the Laurentians and the relatively calm interiors of middle-class homes. On the romance side, love defines the outcome of the plot, and the hero and heroine are ultimately united because of their decency and human compassion — qualities Barnard makes instrumental to the resolution of the broader forms of conflict he explores.

“The Winter Road” features six characters: Gilberta Vincent, a young socialite who has just broken off her engagement to Tony Haddon; Tony Haddon, a successful businessman; John Stannard, a vet-

eran of WWI and freelance journalist, who falls in love with Gilberta; Hatty Thring, a matronly socialite who does a lot of charity work and advises Gilberta; Anna Dyson, a young woman who has had a love affair with Tony; Joe Rosinsky, a young man who works in Tony's factory and who befriends Anna. The plot is set in motion on a train platform just before the train departs for the Laurentian Mountains. John rescues Gilberta from Tony's clutches while Anna witnesses the scene, as does Hatty Thring.

As the serial progresses, Barnard traces Gilberta's anxiety-ridden choices: between marriage, involvement in left-wing politics, and a solitude that disentangles her from society completely. Her experiences are shaped by the competing ideologies of capitalism and socialism, as the effects of these forces filter into her day-to-day life, and her quest to find personal fulfillment. Around her character, Barnard organizes a complex set of interrelationships between individuals, with the important points about each character's background clearly detailed as they are introduced into the story. These interrelationships become a means of considering the place of hierarchy in generating conflict; intriguingly, it is the nuances of hierarchy within the middle classes, rather than wide class divisions, that Barnard takes up. Indeed, each character in "The Winter Road" is from a different point within a middle-class spectrum, constituting a highly suggestive idea of Canada as a profoundly middle-class nation: if one was not securely a member of this class, it was possible to become one, and certainly the actions of Barnard's heroes — John Stannard, as well as the deceased Henry Shroder — speak to an inclusivity and compassion that is sustained at the level of the individual, and that could resist and even overcome the structural divisions brought about by economic stratifications. The background of each character is presented as the foundation of his or her opportunities in life, yet, as the story progresses, Barnard explores the question of how personal actions inform, and are informed by, broader social conflicts and pressures and can result in changing one's position and connections.

Anna Dyson, in contrast to Gilberta, is on the margins of Montreal's middle class. She has been left a small inheritance by her mother, and it is rapidly running out. She realizes, upon seeing Tony pursue Gilberta at the train station, that Tony never had any intention of marrying her, as he had promised, and that both her economic and social position have grown precarious, for she now has few prospects for either work

or marriage. Her chief desire is markedly traditional: she wants, more than anything, to be a wife and mother, and to feel the security and love commonly associated with this role. She knows that her involvement with Tony has sent her into a downward spiral, and her lack of choices is a stern reminder of the restrictions imposed on women's actions, especially in relation to sexual mores, during the interwar period. She is, in that sense, a cautionary figure, though she also turns out to be the lynchpin of the story as it reaches its climax.

Barnard provides less information on Tony's background. He hints that Tony is a self-made man, and while his treatment of Gilberta and Anna makes his self-centredness and lack of integrity evident, this judgement is leavened by the possibility that a certain degree of ruthlessness was inevitable as he worked his way through an aggressively competitive capitalist system. The situation raises the question of which characteristics are favoured by the system, and makes clear that these characteristics are not qualities that benefit the whole. As Barnard's fiction would have it, however, the system also allows for individuals like Tony to be removed, rather brutally, in an instance of poetic justice. Tony's downfall is set in motion as a result of an altercation with Joe Rosinsky, Sr., the accountant who had worked with the previous owner of the factory, Henry Shroder. Joe Rosinsky, Jr. watches Tony treat his once well-respected father with scorn. He impulsively quits his job and swears to exact justice in the name of his father and Shroder, thus enacting a working-class resistance to authority and its injustices.

In setting out these six characters and their relationships with one another, Barnard locates private relationships — failed romances among them — within the overarching economic structures that define Canadian society. Eventually, this structure fractures into a full-fledged expression of class conflict — a labour riot — as the serial nears its conclusion. Long before this, however, Barnard makes it clear that Tony, a proponent of unmitigated capitalism, is the story's villain. Indeed, Barnard's characterization borders on the Satanic, portraying the factory over which Tony presides as a kind of hell: "to leave the offices was to enter inferno. Black snakes, ceaselessly revolving, seemed all insecure on their metal pivots. In the wider, cemented alleys, trucks rumbled. At a distance men's figures showed against the lurid leap of furnaces" (Nov. 1938: 27). An opportunist, Tony has amassed a large fortune by buying up small, independently owned business that were struggling

to survive the effects of the Great Depression and “revitalizing” them through a mixture of labour exploitation, corporate mergers, and not-altogether-legal accounting practices. Barnard neatly sums up Tony’s business philosophy early in the serial:

An overly playful associate had once exercised crude humor at his expense. “Tony Haddon,” he said, “is a specialist in sick businesses. He anaesthetizes them, operates, declares the patients dead, buys up the remains for a song, and resuscitates them at a profit.” Tony was not amused. Efficiency, that could, that must be spelt in terms of dollars and cents, of stock and bond issues successfully floated — for how else can anyone estimate success? — this was the object of Tony’s worship. And to secure efficiency that can be estimated by profits, one must be as ruthless as a dictator in a slipshod world. (Nov. 1938: 27)

Tony’s personal drive for success makes him the beneficiary of an unequal system (“a slipshod world”) that he is free to manipulate to his advantage. The problem is that Tony has not done anything obviously wrong. He is simply the inevitable result of a system that favours the aggressive and cynical.

Set in sharp contrast to Tony’s existence is the life of the recently deceased Henry Shroder. Shroder’s family, friends, and former employees all blame Tony for the car accident that took Shroder’s life. As Shroder’s widow confides over coffee to her long-time friend Hatty Thring, Henry was “‘worried about Mr. Rosinsky That preyed on him as much as anything. He’d been over to see Mr. Rosinsky, and was coming home. He must have stepped out from the curb not looking. Henry had got so he didn’t much look where he was going’” (Feb. 1939: 78). Hatty Thring reflects on the beliefs and actions of Henry Shroder later that evening, as she walks by the factory that Tony now owns. Looking up at the sign above the front door that is about to be replaced, she thinks:

“The Shroder Manufacturing Company.” Hatty felt suddenly as if the ghost of Henry Shroder must be hanging about here, as he himself had often had in the flesh, a wandering soul come to look at a place that was his own creation. Henry Shroder was known as a man who kept his word, who dealt justly, who thought generously. She herself had heard him expand on theories he had of gradually

putting control into his workpeople's hands. They had sounded Utopian then, though she read enough to know they were successful where tried honestly. But he had trusted others as he himself could be trusted; and men had laughed up their sleeves at him, and manipulated him, and brought him to lie in a mortuary chapel. Presently his end would be six feet of earth, and the dream he had dreamed would become a nightmare only of whirling machinery and time-clocks, and grinding efficiency, and extra profits. (Mar. 1939: 11)

Rather than condemning free enterprise in and of itself, Barnard makes a distinction between two types of capitalism. Henry Shroder's "Utopian" theories are idealized, his factory described as a "creation" rather than the hell implied in the description of the factory as run by Tony.¹² Moreover, Shroder is depicted as having been honest and just; ultimately, his intent was to give his "workpeople" a fair share of the company. His approach to capitalism balances free enterprise with elements of socialism. "The Winter Road" speaks, in this way, to a need to navigate between the unfettered capitalism represented by Tony and the violent socialism that, as the story progresses, ensnares Joe and Anna. In 1938-39, this model for business is a prescient one, for Canada, in the post-Second World War era, adopted a Keynesian approach to economics in order to mitigate the effects of the uncontrolled market. Keynesian economics is not quite the approach advocated here, in that government, rather than business owners, intervened in the marketplace to protect workers through unemployment insurance, worker's compensation, and attempts to control inflation by managing interest rates through the Bank of Canada; however, the story resonates with the overarching need to find some solution to the destructive aspects of capitalism. Barnard's solution was a decidedly middle-of-the-road response to the boom-and-bust cycle and an expression of what is colloquially called a "classic Canadian compromise," marked by moderation and the careful balancing of conflicting interests.

Desperate for work, Joe Rosinsky is forced to return to his job at Tony's factory a few months after his stormy departure. He subsequently meets Anna, who has recently moved to the same down-at-the-heels neighbourhood to which Joe and his mother have also been forced to relocate. After they get to know one another, Joe helps Anna get a much-needed job in the factory. Tony, caught up in his own world of power and social climbing, does not even notice that the two of them are there.

The grievances they share against him fester, and they notice that the workers at the factory are still loyal to Shroder and that they, too, are frustrated with Tony's relentless demand for efficiency. Taking advantage of the mood of the workers, Joe and Anna begin instigating dissent. As Anna later acknowledges, "Nobody talked against him [Tony] or worked against him more than I did" (June 1939: 40). The dissent culminates in a labour protest that takes place outside of the factory.

Hearing this news, Gilberta (who, after her holiday, has forgiven Tony for his affair and been persuaded to reconsider marrying him) and Hatty (who happens to be visiting Gilberta at the time of the protest) arrive at the factory in Hatty's car. John Stannard is already there with Anna, with whom he has become friends, and they all begin to search for Joe, who is lost in the crowd. Anna, however, gets caught up in the mob, and as Tony tells the workers to leave or risk police action, she shouts, "Our blood will be upon your head!" Her words set a riot in motion, with one of the rioters throwing a brick at Tony. It hits him on the head, and as he falls, the crowd rushes at him, throwing stones and kicking him. Realizing that Tony is going to be killed, Anna is filled with remorse and she fights her way to him. As a result, the mob turns on her. Joe rescues her, taking her back to her apartment. Anna begs Joe to get John to come and see her. John does so after helping Gilberta and Hatty transport Tony to the hospital, where Tony dies from his injuries.

Notably, the riot that Anna and Joe instigate indicates the agency of seemingly powerless individuals to orchestrate if not widespread and immediate social change, then at least volatile attacks on the existing social hierarchy (de Certeau 34-38). Barnard illustrates the possibilities for such an opportunistic resistance to the structures of capitalism. He resists, however, presenting such attacks as an ethical and successful means of achieving greater equality. Given that Joe and Anna spark the protest against Tony out of personal anger, the motives behind the protest are far from idealistic. At the same time, Tony's death is brutal and cruel, and Anna repents her actions when she realizes that she has indirectly caused her former lover's murder. In the end, "The Winter Road" suggests that social change in Canada is necessary, but that violence and its overtures of revolution are not the answer. The extremes of both unfettered capitalism and socialist revolution are, then, seen to be equally destructive and demoralizing. The result returns us to the middle ground suggested by the figure of Henry Shroder.

When John arrives to see Anna after the riot, she admits to him that she and Joe engineered the riot at the factory, and that she feels responsible for Tony's death. John tells her to forgive herself and gets a physician for her. She recovers and, repentant, determines to help Joe improve his circumstances. The story thus resolves with Anna adopting the motherly role that she has wanted for herself throughout the story. Anna, then, makes her way from the stereotype of the fallen woman to a dangerous figure awash in overtones of revolution, only to be recuperated into a traditional feminine role. Despite her actions, society is fundamentally unchanged, and Anna herself is seen to be healed, both in terms of her broken heart and her damaged reputation — though not enough that she can marry. Some punishment, it seems, must be meted out to her.

John leaves Joe and Anna, and seeks out Gilberta, with whom he has been deeply in love since the Christmas they spent together in the Laurentians. He has never expressed his feelings, believing himself to be a poor match for her, but after seeing her at the hospital, he thinks he may have been wrong. Gilberta, for her part, has been through a series of personal tragedies that have given her an unusual degree of emotional depth, and upon seeing John, she finds the courage to tell him that she loves him, and always has, though she has been too blind until now to realize it. She is, in this way, a foil to Anna — at the end of the story, she is untainted by sexual liaisons and revolutionary tendencies; moreover, she shifts into the figure of a compassionate, loyal, and potentially self-sacrificing woman. Like Anna, she is assigned to the role of wife, with the implication that this is her natural destiny, a role that will be the source of fulfillment and peace that she has been seeking throughout the narrative. John, too, finds peace in his relationship with Gilberta. Notably, Barnard's focus on the personal lives of these individual characters avoids focusing too much attention on the issue of whether or not the labour riot has brought about change. Tony is gone, to be sure, but the question of how things may be different is left open. There is a lingering sense of unease, then, at the end of the story. Romance and purpose are awarded to Anna, Joe, Gilberta, and John, yet their happiness exists within a social context that remains contentious and even dangerous. Hatty, the middle-class widow, neither seeks out nor receives anything in particular, and remains cast firmly in the role of listener and helpmate. "The Winter Road" resolves itself happily, insisting that

individual fulfillment is only possible if it occurs in conjunction with the pursuit of a peaceful and just society — even if that pursuit does not, or cannot, result in such a society.

The conflicts around which Barnard builds his story hinge on the issue of social stratification, with the conflict between the wealthy and the poor defining much of the action. Yet, the central characters themselves are all from different spectrums of the middle class, with the truly working-class and upper crust characters being, at best, shadowy figures. Their influence over society is clear; however, their concerns and way of life remains uncharted. Instead, the experiences of each character maps out the possibilities for living a middling sort of life — a life that can encompass, at one end of the scale, successful entrepreneurship that may well bleed over into greed and exploitation (embodied by Tony Haddon), and, at the other end, the comfortable life of an aging socialite with a modest private income and a commitment to charity work and women's clubs (embodied by Hatty Thring). The positions between these two poles are filled by the other four characters that Barnard portrays in detail. As the story unfolds, Barnard tracks the ways the decisions of each of these characters contribute to the nature of Canadian society. His vision of a more perfect world is one of balance: moderate material security is combined with emotional fulfillment, with the important proviso that the attainment of these things is accompanied by a sense of social responsibility. While each character has to find his or her way through his or her respective problems, the final instalment of the serial can best be described as wish-fulfillment: a reassuring resolution that is not only tinged with sentiment and tranquillity, but also consolidates the middle-class position of each character and maintains that this position is an essentially good one.

According to Janice Radway, such sentiment and wish-fulfillment are the fundamental qualities of the middlebrow text. As she puts it,

middlebrow culture may have prepared its subjects to take up a particular social position and to enact a specific social role, yet it may also have attempted to endow them with capacities to withstand the emotional costs of doing just that. Potentially, then, it might have encouraged habits of response and forms of desire that would place them at odds with some of the habits and expectations of their social role and location. (285)

Rather than remaining at odds with expectations, she adds, “the experi-

ence of sentiment in middlebrow culture functioned like a dream. It provided the occasion for the enactment of fundamental desires and wishes” (285). In this way, sentiment undercut any impulse to change the social world that may have been prompted by the text. In “The Winter Road,” sentiment is only part of the realization of desire, and wishes are not fulfilled by luck, social networking, or even sheer hard work. Instead, characters fulfill wishes by choosing to take action that benefits themselves and others in equal measure. Compassion and social responsibility are the essential features of the utopian vision hinted at by Barnard, and are the foundation for a mode of living that could create a more equitable and peaceful society.

“The Winter Road” was part of a whole body of fiction that aimed to provide instruction, entertainment, and inspiration. Indeed, such fiction was a defining feature of anglophone Canadian magazines from the 1920s to the 1960s. The serial represented the anxieties and aspirations of its target audience — middle-class urban professionals — and rendered the modern world in which that audience was presumed to live an intelligible one. In publishing such fiction, Barnard, his editors, and his fellow magazine authors were working on the edges of high literature; rather than generating texts that have since been deemed canonical, they penned works that can best be described as middlebrow — that is, texts that help us to understand the ways in which class tensions and cultural hierarchies define the literary field in which they were produced and, subsequently, the themes and ideas that shaped the individual works of literature intended for an audience of middle-class, aspirational, Canadian readers.

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I would like to thank Faye Hammill for reading a draft of this article and making many insightful suggestions. Thanks also to the two reviewers, whose comments on this article were most interesting and helpful.

NOTES

¹ I have chosen to limit my discussion in this article to periodicals that were published monthly, and that highlighted urban life and consumerism as essential facets of modern life in Canada. There is much to be gained, however, from further study of weekly publications, such as *Saturday Night*, as well as from publications that had their roots in agrarian life, such as the *Western Home Monthly* (later the *National Home Monthly*).

² While magazines did publish other types of genre fiction, including mystery and adventure, romance was central. Byrne Hope Sanders's comments on her process of selecting stories for publication is telling: "When I was planning the number, I labelled them this way: "After Dark" — romantic love. "That Little Man" — adventurous love story. And "The Stowaway" — homely, realistic sentiment. There is a story to please every reader. Which one do you vote for?" (*Chatelaine* Jan. 1931: 16).

³ A comprehensive review of the contents for the magazines *Chatelaine*, *Maclean's*, *Mayfair*, and *Canadian Home Journal* from 1925 to 1960, completed as part of the project *Magazines, Travel, and Middlebrow Culture in Canada, 1925-60* (Hammill and Smith), suggests that several authors merit further research, most notably Madge Macbeth, Ellen Evelyn Mackie, Beryl Gray, Martha Banning Thomas, Matt Armstrong, and Louis Arthur Cunningham.

⁴ A similarly detailed survey of poetry published in the magazines is also called for. Dorothy Livesay, for instance, had a poem published on the editorial page of *Chatelaine's* inaugural issue (Mar. 1928). L.M. Montgomery also published poetry in magazines, as did many other, less well-known, writers.

⁵ See, respectively, Humble; Hammill (*Women*), Keyser; Radway; and Rifkind.

⁶ The years 1920-60, if we take them as the epoch of the mainstream magazine in Canada, also resonate with wider cultural changes across not only Canada, but Britain and the United States as well. As Humble usefully argues, "in defining my period as running from the end of the First World War to the mid-1950s, I challenge the prevailing convention that would see the Second World War as effecting a decisive ideological and cultural break, and offer a revision of the way we currently map the changing politics of femininity and the domestic in the twentieth century" (4).

⁷ See Ardis, Latham, Botshon and Goldsmith, Scholes, Bluemel, Hammill (*Sophistication*), Macdonald, and Brown and Grover.

⁸ See Ohmann for a detailed discussion of this phenomenon in an American context, and Marchand for a related analysis of advertising in magazines in the United States.

⁹ Cunningham's novels included *Yvon Tremblay, an Acadian Idyll* (1927), *This Thing Called Love* (1929), *The King's Fool* (1931), *Tides of Tantrammar* (1935), *Fog Over Fundy* (1936), and *Marionette* (1941).

¹⁰ See Kelly for a detailed exploration of Macbeth's position in the cultural hierarchy.

¹¹ Benedict Anderson argues that a sense of "steady, anonymous, simultaneous activity," such as reading newspapers, assured readers that their experiences and anxieties were not only represented in print, but also read about by the other citizens who make up the nation (25-26).

¹² The imagery of hell is even more significant in light of Barnard's alignment of Stannard with Christ. I have not pursued an analysis of Christian imagery here, as it deserves detailed investigation, but it is worth pointing out that John Stannard has a spiritual epiphany while camping in the Laurentians. Subsequently, his treatment of Anna after her injuries in the riot conjures up a decidedly Christ-like image of healing.

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