

## Truth and Fiction

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## REVIEW ARTICLE

# Truth and Fiction

GORDON INGLIS

THIS STARTED OUT about six years ago as an article commenting on E. Annie Proulx's *The Shipping News*.<sup>1</sup> I say an article rather than a review because I intended to concentrate on what seemed to me to be an odd phenomenon: everybody I talked to about the book either loved it or hated it. Nobody was neutral.

On the one hand there was Rex Murphy, who gave us an extended television treatment which if it had been done by anyone else would have been called gushing with admiration, and on the other, the woman who told me that she could not read the book at all: every time she tried she began to cry, not because of the poignancy of the story, but because of the unfairness of what she regarded as a gross misrepresentation of her country.

I was among the detractors, of course. I did not understand why *The Shipping News* won all those awards, but then I rarely understand why literary juries pick the books they do. Mostly, I suppose, I wanted to demonstrate that reaction to the book was not as unanimously positive as the reviewers and the prize-givers made it seem. Then Stuart Pierson's review<sup>2</sup> appeared making some of the criticisms I intended to mention, and the project lost some of its urgency. In the end it was Stuart's example that inspired me to write this piece and submit it to *Newfoundland Studies*, and it was his approval I hoped to gain. He will be sorely missed.

For the most part, people who did not like *The Shipping News* thought that the author had misrepresented Newfoundland: made it, as one of my informants said, into a "sort of hobbit-land" of her own devising. But Ms. Proulx gives us fair

warning. As Pierson points out, she tells us right up front that what we are about to encounter is “an island of invention” that is only “salted with grains of truth.”<sup>3</sup> Doesn’t that free her from any carping about accuracy?

Well, no. Why not? Partly because the statement is, as Pierson also points out, more an incantation than a disclaimer. In any case, it is overshadowed by a long list of reference books and eminent people that Proulx has consulted, the effect of which is to suggest that anybody daring enough to disagree with her interpretations of Newfoundland is arguing with *them*. Partly because most readers do not seem to notice the disclaimer anyway, or else they pay no attention to it: ask any bed-and-breakfast proprietor about all the people who arrive on their doorsteps from Germany or British Columbia or Utah with their copies of *The Shipping News* clutched under their arms like guide-books, looking for Killick-Claw.

Mostly, though because most of the reviewers who praised the book accepted it as a faithful depiction of a real place: the very thing that many of my local (and unpublished) informants condemned it for *not* being. *The Guardian*’s James Wood told his readers that it is “... certainly a great novel of place.”<sup>4</sup> Walter Kendrick wrote enthusiastically in the *Yale Review* that it is “... a marvellous composite portrait of North America’s last margin” and then, as if to demonstrate his own familiarity with Newfoundland, added, “— which, given death-dealing winters and the madness they induce, it is likely to remain.”<sup>5</sup>

Many reviewers were especially admiring of the way she captured the *sounds* of the place. Tony Gibbs solemnly declared that “[h]er rendering of the [*sic*] Newfoundland accent has a sure, delicate touch ...,”<sup>6</sup> and Val Ross, in the *Globe and Mail*, gave her what for a Torontonion must be the ultimate accolade: “Proulx succeeds in re-establishing Maritime Anglo-Irish [*sic*] as an ethnic spice every bit as potent as Yiddish or ghetto talk.”<sup>7</sup> Ms. Proulx herself seems willing to go along: “I think the game is to get the speech rhythm ...,” she is quoted as saying. “Once you get the rhythm then you can play your little tricks with the words....”<sup>8</sup>

Bob Benson obviously knows better, but remains cautious, saying only that her place names “have a vaguely familiar Newfoundland ring”, and that some of her characters “speak in a sort of Newfoundland dialect....”<sup>9</sup> The people I talked with showed no such restraint, and were outspokenly scornful of her not-very-convincing invention of place-names and surnames and her use of words from the *Dictionary of Newfoundland English*<sup>10</sup> without regard for their provenance in place or time. Among the reviewers, only Pierson, I think, was bold enough to state the truth that there is “something a bit stannous about Proulx’s ear,” and to point out that the family and place names she invents “are just that little bit athwart of the real thing, and sound slightly off.”<sup>11</sup>

But most of the reviewers and most of the readers were far away, and would know nothing of this sort of criticism. If they did know, would they care? Presumably, some would and some wouldn’t. After all, many people who liked the book know as much about Newfoundland as the people who didn’t, and Proulx’s

freehand depiction didn't seem to bother them. The most we can say is that if a piece of fiction is set in a real, named place, in an identifiable time, a lot of people — including some reviewers — will want it to be, or will expect it to be, an accurate reflection of that place and time. (I will leave the definition of accuracy for later, but note here, as an interesting sidelight, that a book which appeared at about the same time as *The Shipping News*, Norman Howard's *The Bird Artist*,<sup>12</sup> was almost universally derided, often by the same people who loved the Proulx novel, not because it is a dumb book, which it is, but because of its wildly inaccurate portrayal of the Southern Shore at the turn of the twentieth century.)

On deeper reflection, then, the disagreements I noted about *The Shipping News* are revealed to be merely a particular example of a larger question: "How much accuracy (that word again) can we — or *should* we — expect from writers of fiction?" Until fairly recently the question was usually posed about historical fiction, but it is more general than that. Every piece of fiction is concerned with events and characters that belong to particular times and places. The author is free to invent, but — for most of us, at least — only within limits. Even if the time and the place are completely imaginary, as in science fiction and fantasy, we expect the writer to establish the limits and operate within them; we quickly tire of one who is too obviously "making it up as he/she goes along." If the setting is a real time and a real place that we know, we expect the author to get it right. If it is a real time and a real place that we do not know, either through experience or study, we expect the author to have done the homework, and to set the action within an environment and a society that someone who *does* know them would recognize and, if not approve, at least acknowledge to be realistic.

Obviously, I am speaking here for people who hold rather conservative views on the subject. Other people would set other limits, and some would set no limits at all. Still, the revival of this old argument is justified by a number of publications in and about Newfoundland during the past decade, of which *The Shipping News* is only one. Perhaps the most notable are Wayne Johnston's *The Colony of Unrequited Dreams*<sup>13</sup> and Stuart Pierson's relentless review of it.<sup>14</sup>

But the notion of accuracy remains troublesome. Pierson notes that "it is a commonplace ... that the line between story and fact has become muddy from so much traffic tramping over it,"<sup>15</sup> but what do we conservative-minded readers actually want? In fact, our expectations are a set of conventions, and they are probably less strict than even we are inclined to think. To begin with, we want a piece of fiction to ring true; it is hard to suspend disbelief if you keep tripping over anachronisms and inaccuracies in the text. Pierson provides an impressive list of such infelicities in Johnston's novel, but here is one he didn't mention: in the second line of the book, the fictional Sheilagh Fielding muses in her journal that "the past is literally another country now."<sup>16</sup> She is quoting, of course, although she doesn't say so, but since the text makes clear that her journal entry takes place in November of 1949, she is quoting a phrase four years before the novel<sup>17</sup> in which it appeared

was published and at least five or six years before it became part of our collective vocabulary. Many readers will carry on without a blink: after all, who cares — apart, as Pierson says,<sup>18</sup> from a few miserable pedants?

But it is not a question of what an author can get away with; it is more a matter of the reader's confidence. In a prefatory note to the tenth novel in the Aubrey/Maturin series<sup>19</sup> Patrick O'Brian, whose twenty novels set in the British Navy of the early nineteenth century have earned widespread admiration, tells us that when he wrote the first of them, set in 1801, he had no idea how popular the books would be, and how long the series would become. The preceding novels have been meticulously based on real events, O'Brian says, but he expresses the fear that he may soon "have originality thrust upon him" because he is "running short of history," and may find himself reduced to inventing "hypothetical years," rather like the "hypothetical moons used in the calculation of Easter." Be that as it may, he also assures us that he "will continue to respect historical accuracy and speak of the Royal Navy as it was."<sup>20</sup>

In these novels, O'Brian has created an array of fictional characters and ships and placed them in a historical setting that is documented in any number of sources. Jack Aubrey may be a little too humane as a Royal Navy captain, and Stephen Maturin a little too enlightened as a physician, but on the whole we accept them as men of their places and their times, and we have confidence that O'Brian will reflect those times and places correctly. Most of us do not know enough to verify every detail, but we believe that the author will have done his best, and we have confidence that other, more knowledgeable, readers and critics will let us know if he is cheating. In promising to "respect historical accuracy" O'Brian is not saying anything new: he is merely making explicit a pact between reader and author that some of us take for granted. We don't necessarily expect authors to spell it out this way, but we do expect them to observe it.

At the same time, we conservative-minded readers tend to be pretty lenient. We allow our authors the odd lapse — provided it is a genuine error, and not inattention or an attempt to put something over on us. The two sins we find very difficult to forgive are deliberate deception and carelessness. In a novel that appeared earlier than the one cited above,<sup>21</sup> O'Brian was forced to deal with this point, too. "Great men can afford anachronism," he wrote, "... but perhaps the ordinary writer should not take too many liberties with the past. If he does, he sacrifices both authenticity and the willing suspension of disbelief ..." Then he mischievously added: "... and he is sure to receive letters from those with a greater love of precision than himself." He went on to say that he had received such a letter from a "learned Dutchman," reproaching him for writing of eau de Cologne being used some eighteen years before what the Oxford Dictionary says is its first mention in English. O'Brian makes light of it, but, at the same time, says that the letter made him "uneasy in [his] mind."<sup>22</sup>

A few pages later in the same book he commits a more egregious error by placing Nova Scotia in the Canadian confederation fifty-odd years too soon.<sup>23</sup> I once intended to write to him about it, not to scold him or win some obscure moral ascendancy, but because I believed that he would be interested, and would *care*.<sup>24</sup> I had no trouble forgiving him for the error. Indeed, I was even willing to let Sheilagh Fielding's surprising prescience pass when I started on the *Colony of Unrequited Dreams*: it was only after I found out who Fielding was and ran into several more jarring notes that I began to balk. And I regret to say that I have no reason to think that even Pierson's exhaustive listing of solecisms and anachronisms causes any uneasiness whatever in Wayne Johnston's mind.

So we want authenticity. We are tolerant of occasional errors, but we become restive when authors begin to fiddle with known, documented fact. Jonathan Dee devotes eight pages in *Harper's Magazine*<sup>25</sup> to what he believes to be a particularly blameworthy form of this: "the appropriation of genuine historical figures — people who actually lived — as characters in fiction."<sup>26</sup> And yet it is not quite that, exactly, that we object to — or not *just* that. Authors have been using real people in fiction for a long time, and many have done it in ways that even the most narrow-minded of us do not find objectionable.

So little is known about some historical figures that fiction is the only possible way to deal with them. Although both authors deal with real people in real times and places, Joan Clark's characters in *Eriksdottir*<sup>27</sup> are known only from names and a sketchy account of events, and Lillian Bouzane's main character in *In the Hands of the Living God*<sup>28</sup> only by inference. Bouzane and Clark had to create their people pretty well from scratch. This allowed — or perhaps required — them to invent a lot of things, including the way the characters speak. No one knows very much about how they would have spoken, and there could be a lot of argument about what it would be like when rendered into English. A good case can be made for the proposition that they actually spoke to one another — at least among friends and equals — in an informal and colloquial way, but if you are going to depict them speaking in English, which kind of informality are you going to choose? We would probably be annoyed and distracted if they spoke too much like our next-door neighbour, or like someone we might hear on radio or television. In the end, both Bouzane and Clark opt for a kind of formalized English that is not readily identified with any particular place and time, with the odd contraction to suggest informality. This is a convention that has been used by many authors before, and it works very well. It could be argued that the result is not strictly "authentic," but both authors work to create an authentic-seeming setting, and our confidence remains intact.

In *Random Passage*<sup>29</sup> and *Waiting for Time*,<sup>30</sup> Bernice Morgan has fictionalized some of her own ancestors so that they may stand as representative of many others of Newfoundland's pioneers. The fact that some of the people in the novels may be — or be based upon — real people is irrelevant to most readers: what counts

is Morgan's re-creation of a situation and a set of circumstances while telling a powerful story.

Coming closer to our own time, *Great Heart*, subtitled *The History of a Labrador Adventure*,<sup>31</sup> is called a novel and categorized that way in libraries, but it is clearly what its subtitle says: a history. The characters are real people — Leonidas and Mina Hubbard, George Ellison, Dillon Wallace and others — whose activities are well known to anyone who has read their published accounts. The book cleaves as closely as the most meticulous of historians could wish to the historical record; the middle pages are devoted to real photographs of the real protagonists in the Labrador wilderness. The authors called their book a novel, one assumes, because they chose to embellish the account with some invented conversations and the inner thoughts of the characters, yet they did so with great restraint, and did not stray very far from what is recorded in the journals. Perhaps another reason was that the story involves several characters, and could not be handled as a conventional biography. In any case, the result is a piece of history-as-fiction or fiction-as-history that even the most scrupulous among us can approve.

Another inoffensive way of recruiting real historical figures into fiction is found in the Flashman<sup>32</sup> series by George MacDonald Fraser. For younger readers I should explain that Harry Flashman appears first in Thomas Hughes's *Tom Brown's Schooldays*,<sup>33</sup> a book that was once required reading for boys in all the wide reaches of the British Empire, no matter how far they might be from the novel's English public school setting.<sup>34</sup> Flashman is the prototype of the cad, bully and bounder, the moralistic Tom's nemesis, sent down from Rugby School for drunkenness and clearly fated for a bad end. Fraser picks up Flashman's career from his ignominious departure from school and in the publication of the Flashman Papers, found after General Sir Harry Flashman dies much-honoured and at a ripe old age, Fraser documents his career through the great moments of both the British and American empires. In the process, Fraser makes use of historical figures from Queen Victoria to John Brown (not the Highland ghillie, but the American anti-slavery campaigner whose soul goes marching on), who are portrayed speaking and acting behind the scenes of history. What makes this tolerable — and even delightful — to a reader like me is the simple fact that all the novels are, by necessity, narrated by Sir Harry himself. We are presented, not with the historical figures as the inventions of a novelist, but as depicted by a fictional personage — doubly fictional, if that is possible — whom we have come to know quite well. Reading Harry Flashman reminiscing about Prince Albert is a bit like listening to Uncle Jack, after a jar or two, talking about Field Marshal Montgomery: we don't know how much to believe, if anything, but it makes a damn good story all the same. And people who know a lot more about nineteenth-century history than I do say that Fraser's historical background cannot be faulted.

So I do not object — and I don't think Jonathan Dee does, either — to the simple inclusion of real people in fiction. What we do object to is authors treating

them like fictional characters. A distinguishing feature of the novel, according to Dee, is

the opportunity to know [the people in the novel] *completely*, through the fiction writer's full, uncompromised access to his or her characters' interior lives, as well as to the ways in which they define themselves through the observable phenomena of speech and action.<sup>35</sup>

And that, of course, is what makes fiction so compelling. The novelist's ability to know completely all aspects of the lives of his or her characters allows us to understand those characters in a way that we can never understand the real people around us.

A good biographer makes use of a lot of things to which most of us would never have access, such as letters and the testimony of friends and associates, to tell us things about his or her subject that we would otherwise never know. As readers we give due credit, but we do not hesitate to label a biographer who pretends to know *all* about the subject a charlatan. For me, at least, one of the high points of a good biography is the point at which the author has to admit to not knowing why the subject behaved the way he or she did in some particular; where the enigma that is another person baffles the most careful scholarship.

If a real-life story seems to demand that the author go beyond the boundaries of biography, there is always the *roman à clef* solution, which Dee describes as

... a few names and details changed in such a way as to inform the reader that the writer has released himself from the commitment not to conflate fact and invention, or to ameliorate what he knows to be true...<sup>36</sup>

This is what Gordon Rodgers has done in *A Settlement of Memory*.<sup>37</sup> There is no doubt in the mind of any reader with even a slight knowledge of Newfoundland history that William Coaker is the inspiration, but the book is actually *about* a person named Tom Francis, whose fictional career parallels Coaker's real-life story quite closely. Regrettably, Rodgers will probably suffer in sales and critical attention for not choosing to make his novel blatantly and dishonestly about William Coaker, but I commend him for the choice he made.

Dee acknowledges the use of historical figures in fiction from Shakespeare onward, but he traces the "relatively recent vogue for the appropriation of real-life characters" to the "New Journalism" of the 1960s and 70s, and he focuses on Norman Mailer's *The Executioner's Song*<sup>38</sup> as a turning point. He says that the book could have been remembered as a "beautifully written, staggeringly detailed work of reportage" that was "marred by a few journalistic lapses," but instead Mailer "insisted on releasing it into the world as a 'true life novel,' an exasperating designation that a great many critics swallowed whole."<sup>39</sup> I think Dee may be wrong



about the so-called New Journalism, which I remember as an attempt to bring some of the techniques of fiction-writing to reportage — coherent narrative rather than journalism's inverted triangle, naturalistic dialogue, and vivid description with an admitted point of view — but journalism nonetheless, which stuck to a first principle that Dee himself quotes: "... you can't just make stuff up."<sup>40</sup>

It may be that some writers of fiction have taken too much to heart the insistence of some critics and literary scholars that novelists have a unique insight into "human nature," and this has misled them into believing that they should feel free to use their powers of invention on real human beings as well as on their own characters. This certainly seems to be what is going on with Joy Fielding (not to be confused with the fictional Sheilagh — at least not as far as I know —) who confides that she was once "asked to write a screenplay based on the life of the Olympic rower Silken Laumann." Ms Fielding quickly found the problem with the story: "there's too much rowing."

In the desperate-to-be-trendy "Arts" pages of the *Globe and Mail* this remark could be taken as "ironic" in the present-day mis-use of that term, but Ms Fielding demonstrates that she means it literally. She goes on to tell of confiding her difficulties to Ivan Fecan at CTV. Fecan's response, she says, is "wonderful"

... because here is a man who ... knows that to get at the truth of a situation, to capture the essence of another human being, one has to ignore the facts. Or make them up. [Or] maybe even lie.

Ms Laumann, perhaps not surprisingly, did not like the interpretation of her life, and Ms Fielding announces her intention of "sticking to fiction" because it has "... a beauty, a coherence, a purpose ... that is missing from everyday reality." She is quite right about that, of course. Fiction can have all of those things — but is that an excuse to graft fiction onto, or substitute it for, the realities of everyday life? As far as I know, Ms Fielding is still writing fiction and Ivan Fecan is still in charge of something called "information programming" at CTV.

There is a hint of insufferable arrogance — or something worse — in Fielding's ending of the *Globe and Mail* article:

Good fiction shows us the truth of our own existence by tapping into basic universal emotions.... While there is no doubt that truth is often stranger than fiction, I maintain that there's nothing quite like fiction to get all the truth.<sup>41</sup>

What I mean by "something worse" is that it may not be arrogance at all. It may be no more than a simple lack of understanding that fiction writers do not deal in truth, but in illusion. They may, if they are good at their job, illuminate<sup>42</sup> real life, may provoke thought and analysis about it, but they cannot create it. They should not take people from real life, make them into fictional characters and then

pretend to “understand” them for the benefit of their readers, and critics should not encourage them to do so.

But perhaps for literary scholars and critics whose main experience of life comes from novels and movies, the inclusion of real people as characters in fiction may not seem a violation of anything, but a reasonable extension of the novelist’s god-like insight. If this is so, then it is difficult to avoid advising them, in the presumptuous words of the very young, to “get a life” of their own.

The reference to movies in that last rather snarky paragraph is a reminder that the problem — or what I, at any rate, see as a problem — goes far beyond written fiction. To get into the realm of the cinema would take far too much time and space, but it may be useful to mention in passing a couple of illustrative cases. Actor Mel Gibson, who was already under attack from historians for his part in the spectacularly bad *Braveheart*, defended his film *The Patriot* by saying, “This is not historically accurate. ... it is sheer fantasy. It’s a movie.”<sup>43</sup> This is a point of view, to be sure, but if movie-makers are only producing fantasy, why then do they go to such lengths and such expense for films like *The Patriot* and *Michael Collins* to get the details of place and setting right — the technology and the clothing and the look of the buildings? Why, if not to make their inventions and distortions more believable?

A historian friend says that they borrow the authority of the discipline of history to practice deceit, but as with my remark about Joy Fielding, that may be attributing too much. Why does the Newfoundland Department of Tourism go to great lengths to assemble images from all over to create a poster that purports to show three humpback whales leaping like synchronized swimmers in front of an iceberg? Why do they put on the “Official Highway Map” a photograph of the Cape St. Mary’s bird sanctuary, surely one of the natural wonders of the world, and then superimpose on it the head of a puffin, a bird that is definitely not one of the eight species to be found there? Why did the planners of the tourist route around the Southern Shore and St. Mary’s Bay originally put up signposts carrying a four-leaf clover instead of a shamrock, and change it only when the local outcry threatened future elections?

One has the uneasy feeling that people do such things not because of an active desire to deceive, but because they don’t believe that deception matters — or because they subscribe to Joy Fielding’s Orwellian notion that by lying they can express some transcendental truth; not because they are simply ignorant of historical and cultural facts, but because they are indifferent to them except insofar as they may be used to sell something. These are all examples of what Jonathan Dee, following John Hersey, describes as “... the widespread acceptance of the whole phenomenon of lying as an ... element of public discourse, from politics to law to public relations to advertising.” Seen from this point of view, literature is only one domain contributing to the “... cultural sea change that slowly establishes a total equivalence between what’s real and what’s plausible.”<sup>44</sup>

So is all this just another old man's rant against times that have passed him by? Maybe. But we are always inclined to think of our own times as a kind of culmination, as though a whole array of inevitable forces have converged to produce what is happening now, and that what is happening now will set the pattern for the future. It was this sort of thinking, presumably, that led to the movement known as "post-modernism" — a belief that we could now see through it all, and had achieved an insight that would inform everything from now on.

It could be, though, that the present fashion for falsehood may turn out to be just that — another fad. Maybe at some time in the future, people will look back and wonder how we could have been so uncaring about the truth.

Maybe. I don't expect to live to see it, though.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>E. Annie Proulx, *The Shipping News*. (New York: Touchstone, 1993).

<sup>2</sup>Stuart Pierson, review, *Newfoundland Studies* 11 (1), 1995, pp. 151-153.

<sup>3</sup>Strangely, this disclaimer does not appear in the hardcover edition cited in Note 1 above. In its place there is the more conventional "Any resemblance to actual events or locales or persons..."

<sup>4</sup>James Wood, "Full Steam to Newfoundland." *The Guardian*, January 2, 1994, pp. 2-3. I am grateful to the Centre for Newfoundland Studies for its file of *Shipping News* reviews.

<sup>5</sup>Walter Kendrick, review. *The Yale Review*, Vol. 81, October 1993, no page numbers available.

<sup>6</sup>Tony Gibbs, review. *Islands*, Vol. 13, p.30.

<sup>7</sup>Val Ross. "Trying to Get a Line on an Author." *Globe and Mail*, p. A11.

<sup>8</sup>E. Annie Proulx, quoted in Bob Benson, "How the Pulitzer was Won." *Sunday Telegram*, June 8, 1997, p.15.

<sup>9</sup>Bob Benson, *op. cit.*

<sup>10</sup>G.M. Story, W. J. Kirwin, and J.D.A. Widdowson. *Dictionary of Newfoundland English*. (Toronto, Buffalo and London: University of Toronto Press, 1982).

<sup>11</sup>Stuart Pierson, *op. cit.*

<sup>12</sup>Norman Howard, *The Bird Artist*, (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1994).

<sup>13</sup>Wayne Johnston. *The Colony of Unrequited Dreams*. (Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf Canada, 1999).

<sup>14</sup>Stuart Pierson. "Johnston's Smallwood." *Newfoundland Studies* 14 (2), pp. 282-300.

<sup>15</sup>Stuart Pierson, *op. cit.*, p. 292.

<sup>16</sup>Wayne Johnston, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

<sup>17</sup>L.P. Hartley. *The Go-between*. (London: H. Hamilton, 1953).

<sup>18</sup>Stuart Pierson, *op. cit.* p. 285.

<sup>19</sup>Patrick O'Brian. *The Far Side of the World*. (Glasgow: Fontana/Collins, 1985).

<sup>20</sup>O'Brian, *op. cit.* "Author's Note."

<sup>21</sup>Patrick O'Brian. *The Surgeon's Mate*. (Glasgow: Fontana/Collins, 1981).

<sup>22</sup>Patrick O'Brian. *The Surgeon's Mate*. "Author's Note."

<sup>23</sup>Patrick O'Brian. *The Surgeon's Mate*. p. 30.

<sup>24</sup>I must confess that my faith in O'Brian was seriously shaken when, after his death, it was revealed that his authorial persona was a fabrication, and that in the 1940s he had abandoned a wife, son, and handicapped baby (cf. Jan Morris, "Oh, for a lie on the ocean wave", *Guardian Weekly*, September 28 — October 4, 2000, p. 16.) I still trust him on early nineteenth-century history, however.

<sup>25</sup>Jonathan Dee. "The Reanimators: On the art of literary graverobbing." *Harper's Magazine*, June 1999, pp. 76-84. I am grateful to Anne Hart for directing me to this article.

<sup>26</sup>Jonathan Dee, *op. cit.*, p. 77.

<sup>27</sup>Joan Clark. *Eriksdottir*. (Toronto: Macmillan, 1994).

<sup>28</sup>Lillian Bouzane. *In the Hands of the Living God*. (Winnipeg: Turnstone, 1999).

<sup>29</sup>Bernice Morgan. *Random Passage*. (St. John's: Breakwater, 1992).

<sup>30</sup>Bernice Morgan. *Waiting for Time*. (St. John's, Breakwater, 1994).

<sup>31</sup>James West Davidson and John Ruge. *Great Heart*. (New York, Tokyo and London: Kodansha International, 1997) (first published 1988).

<sup>32</sup>George MacDonald Fraser. *Flashman*. (London: Herbert Jenkins, 1969). This is the first of the series of novels in which Harry Flashman appears as an adult.

<sup>33</sup>Thomas Hughes. *Tom Brown's Schooldays*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989). (The novel was first published in 1857 under the pseudonym "An Old Boy.")

<sup>34</sup>Tom Brown was the prototype for a succession of public-schoolboy heroes whose exploits entertained generations of adolescent boys. They went to boarding schools where they formed fast friendships and powerful enmities, they were obsessed with foods unsuitable for growing boys, they lived in rooms with minimal interference from masters who were either noble or ineffectual but never went in for sexual abuse — at least not in a form that was recognizable to boys of my generation, they spoke like adults but used an arcane and fascinating slang, they played oddly-named games with unintelligible rules, and they were forever leaving their beds in the dead of night to creep about the school buildings having adventures. In short, they were the ancestors of Harry Potter.

<sup>35</sup>Jonathan Dee, *op. cit.* p. 77.

<sup>36</sup>Jonathan Dee, *op. cit.* pp. 79-80.

<sup>37</sup>Gordon Rodgers. *A Settlement of Memory*.

<sup>38</sup>Norman Mailer. *The Executioner's Song*. (Boston: Little, Brown, 1979).

<sup>39</sup>Jonathan Dee, *op. cit.* p. 78.

<sup>40</sup>Jonathan Dee, *op. cit.* p. 80. In this observation Dee is quoting John Hersey, a practitioner of the art of 'New Journalism' before Tom Wolfe gave it a name.

<sup>41</sup>Joy Fielding. "In the search for honesty, fiction beats fact." in *The Globe and Mail*, August 12, 2000, p. 13A.

<sup>42</sup>cf. Pierson, "Johnston's Smallwood", p. 292.

<sup>43</sup>Mel Gibson, quoted in Caroline Byrne, Associated Press. "Mayor wants apology from makers of *The Patriot*" in the St. John's *Telegram*, July 15, 2000, p. 13A.

<sup>44</sup>Jonathan Dee, *op. cit.* p. 80.