

Sound and Silence  
in Selected Poetry of Duncan Campbell Scott

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by  
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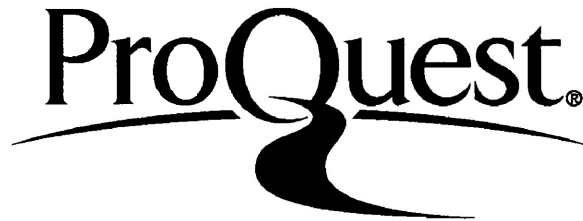
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## Abstract

The poetry of Duncan Campbell Scott has always been recognized by the Canadian literary establishment as being worthy of attention. His work usually appears in most of the textbooks and anthologies of Canadian Poetry, and there is little or no question that his poetry stands as a vital chapter in the history of Canadian literature. However, despite the fact that there have been many studies done on Scott's poetry, there remain aspects of his work that have not been given enough attention. This thesis examines, in particular, the role that sound plays in what is generally considered to be the best of his work. Chapter one discusses how Scott allows the reader to hear the conflict in *Nature*, the conflict found between Man and Nature, and the conflicts found within Man himself. These conflicts represent the major themes of his poetry. Chapter two deals with how Scott uses sound to appreciate and perhaps even understand these conflicts by achieving, and sharing with the reader, a heightened spiritual state. Finally, chapter three attempts to show thematic consistency in much of Scott's poetry resulting from the sharing of his poetic consciousness as described and determined by sound.

## INTRODUCTION

Duncan Campbell Scott did not publish his first collection of poetry, The Magic House and Other Poems, until 1893. In this year works by Bliss Carman, Charles G.D. Roberts, Wilfred Campbell, and Archibald Lampman were also published. Duncan Campbell Scott is therefore almost exclusively counted among the 'Confederation Poets' though his work extends beyond the normal time frame given for this era. It was Scott's friendship with Lampman that proved to be the inspiring force behind his decision to begin writing seriously. Their frequent journeys into the wilderness together provided much of the inspiration for Scott's early poetry. According to A.J.M Smith from his essay, "Duncan Campbell Scott," the poems of The Magic House and Other Poems, "took their place at once in the main stream of what was clearly a great new movement in Canadian Poetry."<sup>1</sup> Smith brushes off other criticisms of the work, suggesting that

the impression that the book lacks originality, that it shows promise only, or that it makes no positive contribution to Canadian poetry, would be a hasty and superficial one.<sup>2</sup>

Smith goes on to praise Magic House and Scott:

His is the poetry of a musician and of a man enraptured and enthralled by the song and the<sub>3</sub>sight of birds and by the flash of colours in nature.

Smith points out that of the forty-seven poems found in Magic House, more than one third of them occur in a setting of darkness. This is a significant fact. Scott developed an

ability to create imagery based on sound. His musical background was no doubt a major contributing factor for this ability. Music was an integral part of Scott's life. This is often a focal point for much of the criticism concerning his style. Much of his poetry is very musical in terms of rhythm and meter. In Carolyn Roberts' paper "Words after Music: A Musical reading of Scott's 'Night Hymns on Lake Nipigon'," the author discusses the undeniable emphasis Scott has placed on music for his poetic expression. She analyzes "Night Hymns on Lake Nipigon" from what she calls a "musico--literary point of view."<sup>4</sup> The critical approach employed by Roberts is quite different from Smith's. Where Roberts' approach is distinctly analytical, the critical approach of A.J.M. Smith is less analytical and somewhat more general in its overall scope.

It is possible to divide the existing critical response to Scott's poetry into different categories. The most simple division would consist of two separate bodies of criticism: that which exists as analytical responses to the texts of his work, and that which, as Gordon Johnston suggests,

consists of views of his life and work by friends of his, who wrote encomia, complaints about the indifference of the public to his work, and eventually eulogies and reminiscences.<sup>5</sup>

Where Roberts could belong to the former of these two categories, A.J.M. Smith, an important figure in Canadian writing in his own right, could easily fit into the latter category. Along with Smith, writers such as Arthur Bourinot, Pelham Edgar,



and E.K. Brown tend in general to be less analytical than Roberts, Desmond Pacey, Milton Wilson, and Gary Geddes. Despite the difference in critical approach, writers from both categories are given equal space in S.L. Dragland's Duncan Campbell Scott: A Book of Criticism, which remains, along with K.P. Stich's The Duncan Campbell Scott Symposium, as the most significant collection of Scott criticism.

Desmond Pacey has written in his Ten Canadian Poets that "Scott is, and always has been, the least known of the Canadian Group of the Sixties." <sup>6</sup>At the time Pacey's collection was published, thirty-seven years ago, this statement was undoubtedly accurate. Since this time, however, not only has the quantity of the critical response to Scott's work increased quite dramatically, but also the critical approach to Scott's work has also expanded. Much of the Scott criticism that existed around Pacey's time was confined to introductions to anthologies of Canadian poetry that included the Confederation period. More often than not, Scott was mentioned last, if at all. Should the Confederation period have to be represented by only one or two poets, Scott's work was greatly overshadowed by the work of Roberts and Lampman. In the Canadian literature section of the High School anthology titled Prose and Poetry for Enjoyment, which was published in 1947 but was still in circulation almost forty years later, Roberts, Lampman, and Carman represent the Confederation period with several poems each. Scott is not included. In the last twenty-five years

a number of studies have been published that have given Scott's work more serious consideration. Some full-length studies include K.P. Stich's, The Duncan Campbell Scott Symposium, and both Glenn Clever's, Selected Poetry of Duncan Campbell Scott, which serves as the source of poetry for this study, and Stan Dragland's, Duncan Campbell Scott: A Book of Criticism. Since the time of Pacey's comment, much more has been written about Scott, in the form of shorter pieces. Some of these are quite specialized; specific poems are dealt with and certain aspects of certain poems are discussed. Carolyn Roberts' paper "Words after Music: A Musical Reading of Scott's 'Night Hymns on Lake Nipigon,'" is the type of study that represents a progression from the limited overviews of Scott's poetry that had existed previously. Kathy Mezei's paper, "From Lifeless Pools to the Circle of Affection: The significance of Space in the Poetry of D.C. Scott," reveals Scott to be worthy of involved and complex critical analysis. Even in the newer anthologies, Scott's biography and poetry are often given greater emphasis than they had previously. Such is the case with Gordon Johnston's entry in Canadian Writers and Their Works. Johnston writes extensively about Scott's life, his poetry and his prose. Scott is still the last entry in the anthology, but in this case, this is purely the result of an alphabetical listing. Despite this, Scott is still sometimes overlooked. Scott has perhaps not yet attained the status of 'major' Canadian poet. Scott is only briefly mentioned

in a section of David Stouck's, Major Canadian Authors, titled, "Guide to Other Writers." According to Stouck, Archibald Lampman is the only poet of the Confederation period worthy of the the title "Major Canadian Author." But the bibliographies of authors such as Johnston reveal a body of criticism suggestive of a major contributor to Canadian poetry.

Gordon Johnston, who has presented a thorough examination of Scott and the critical response to his poetry and prose in Canadian Writers and Their Works, outlines an involved categorization of Scott criticism. Johnston suggests that four stages of Scott criticism exist. The first stage can be broken into two types: the previously mentioned views of contemporaries, and "incidental reviews and articles, or commentaries on Scott in the context of general discussions of Canadian literature."<sup>7</sup> The second stage consists of the views of only A.J.M. Smith and E.K. Brown, who, in Johnston's opinion, essentially laid the foundation for future Scott criticism. As a result of their "stronger critical insights and abilities,"<sup>8</sup> Smith and Brown are deemed to be "Scott's best critics"<sup>9</sup> and entitled to a stage of Scott criticism all their own. Johnston's third stage consists of "synoptic overviews of Canadian Literature."<sup>10</sup> Johnston includes Desmond Pacey, Roy Daniells, Tom Marshall, and D.M.R. Bentley and their respective efforts in what Johnston calls, "more traditional introductions to Canadian literature."<sup>11</sup> Johnston

also includes the collections of criticism by Stich and Dragland. In this third stage of Scott criticism, Johnston notes the analytical studies and individual treatments of certain poems. He cites allegorical readings of "The Piper of Arll" by Milton Wilson, Gary Geddes, and Fred Cogswell, as examples. The fourth stage, "is the more purely scholarly stage of recovering a sense of Scott's life from the documents and of examining texts, variants, and sources."<sup>12</sup> Here he includes the criticism of Leon Slonim in this still developing stage. In conclusion, Johnston admits that the critical response to Scott's writing "has been intelligent and fair."<sup>13</sup>

While the critical response to Scott's poetry has only really started to become more involved in the last two decades, and that which has existed before this time may not be of an abundance equal to that of other Canadian poets of the same era, it is for the most part generally consistent. Scott's greater themes are almost universally recognized and the maturing and changing of his style from one collection to the next is relatively well documented. There are still many aspects of Scott's poetry that have yet to be explored. The existence of sound in Scott's poetry has been only occasionally noted. Desmond Pacey and A.J.M. Smith have both mentioned Scott's use of sound but only in passing. No critic of Scott has yet fully examined this aspect of Scott's poetry.

In 1922 Scott delivered a Presidential address to the Royal Society of Canada titled "Poetry and Progress." It remains as Scott's only tangible discussion of his own views of poetry. He refers to music quite often, suggesting that "Music is the art of perfection, and, as Walter Pater declared, all other arts strive towards the condition of music."<sup>14</sup> Scott suggests that music can inspire listeners to "translate their emotions into sound,"<sup>15</sup> and that poetry is "apprehended by sensation."<sup>16</sup> The listener's ability to hear emotion in music is therefore not unlike the reader's ability to apprehend sound from poetry. While much of the criticism dealing with Scott's poetry only refers to the existence of sound in some form of musical context, little of it notes the presence of sound for any other purpose. This study will be greatly different from others in that it will discuss Scott's use of sound in a primarily non-musical context. Much of the poetry of Duncan Campbell Scott is full of sound. Scott uses sound to create sonic imagery which he employs to describe various settings. Scott also fills his settings with the naturally occurring sounds of the environment. Forest creatures and the natural elements create various noises which often lead to sonically created moods and landscapes. Not only does Scott use sound to describe certain settings and create moods, sound is also used by Scott as a catalyst by which he can reveal his poetic consciousness. Here, the sounds, and often the silences, of nature permit the poet to transcend

normal modes of conscious awareness and reach a spiritual domain of contemplation. From this position Scott often finds a way to rectify or resolve the conflict and turmoil that is thematically central to the majority of his poetry. Sound can therefore also serve as a unifying thematic factor. This is what this study is ultimately concerned with. This paper will discuss the significance of sound in the more successful of Duncan Campbell Scott's poetry.

The majority of the poetry that will be dealt with in this study are from the collections The Magic House and Other Poems, Labor and the Angel, New World Lyrics and Ballads, Via Borealis and Lundy's Lane and Other Poems. These collections of Scott's poetry were published between the years 1893 and 1916. The remaining collections, Beauty and Life, The Poems of Duncan Campbell Scott, The Green Cloister, and The Circle of Affection, were published between the years 1921 and 1947. Scott's later work will not be dealt with in this study as there is generally less emphasis placed on sound as a structural or thematic device. Also, Scott's earlier collections are generally regarded as containing his better poetry. The majority of anthologies that include D.C. Scott still focus their attention on his earlier work. Of the nine Scott poems in Bennett and Brown's An Anthology of Canadian Literature in English only one poem, "En Route," was published after 1916. This is not meant to suggest that Scott's later poetry is

by any means completely without thematic relevance or importance. Scott's main themes can be found in every collection of his poetry. His earlier collections, however, express these themes in a more economical fashion, and more often contain "the poems of mystery, fantasy, or dream"<sup>17</sup> that Desmond Pacey has referred to as Scott's "best."<sup>18</sup>

Scott uses sound in his poetry in essentially three ways. Each of these is discussed in a separate chapter. In chapter one, Scott's use of sound as a descriptive element is revealed. Scott uses sound as a descriptive element in two ways. First, in his primary use, sound is used to create imagery. Often the scene Scott wishes to describe is cloaked in darkness either by shadow or night. By describing how the setting sounds rather than by how it appears, Scott is able to create unusual moods by giving the immediate surroundings a voice with which to communicate. Many of Scott's poems contain an abundance of sound which he allows the reader to 'hear.' This is Scott's secondary use of sound as a descriptive element. In order to show the abundance of sound inherent in much of Scott's poetry, ten of Scott's poems will be discussed with regard to the sound they contain and the sonic imagery presented.

In chapter two, Scott's ability to reveal his poetic consciousness is discussed. Scott does this in certain poems by using stimuli contained within the landscape. In order to present to the reader Scott's more introspective thoughts

and feelings, Scott reacts to the environment in such a way that he enters a sort of hypnotic state. The necessary stimuli for this to occur include both the sounds and silences of nature that the poet either hears or senses in a specific setting. The poems "Rapids at Night" and "The Height of Land" are discussed in detail from this perspective.

Chapter three attempts to determine a sort of thematic consistency among the best of Scott's poetry with sound as a common and determining factor. Scott's main themes are discussed as are the critical deliberations with regard to them. Conflict, and Scott's desire to try to achieve some sort of reconciliation for the existence of opposing forces in both nature and humankind, are dealt with by using "The Forsaken," "The Height of Land," and primarily "The Piper of Arll" as examples. The existence of sound in each of these poems is shown to heighten the effect and presentation of Scott's greater themes. Scott uses sound to amplify the presence of opposing forces in his poetry. Scott also uses sound to attempt a resolution of these conflicting forces in both himself and in the environment. But the conflict he perceives in nature might only be a reflection of conflict that resides within the poet. By using sound to reveal these perceived conflicts in nature and its resolution, the poet can suggest the possibility of a similar resolution in man's conflicts.

It is possible for a reader of Scott's poetry to remain



unaware of the full implications of the presence of sound inherent in much of his work. Scott is often very subtle in his application of sonic imagery and often includes sound in his landscapes as part of an involved descriptive process that employs several of the human senses. As it is perhaps easier for the reader of poetry to visualize that which is being presented rather than attempt some kind of auditory recognition of things previously unheard, Scott's use of sound may not seem so apparent despite its prevalence. But in fact, in poems such as "Rapids at Night" sound is the only physical sense that the narrator can convey and that the reader can therefore apprehend. In cases such as this, sound is of primary importance for both the author's ability to convey the scene, and the reader's ability to "hear" what Scott is communicating. Indeed, sound is often Scott's primary descriptive device and means for the communication of his themes. Sound is therefore a significant element in the poetry of Duncan Campbell Scott that has not received the kind of examination that it rightly deserves. This present study is an attempt to rectify that oversight.

## Introduction

### Notes

<sup>1</sup>A.J.M. Smith, "The Poetry of Duncan Campbell Scott," Dalhousie Review 28 (April, 1948): 12

<sup>2</sup>Smith, 13.

<sup>3</sup>Smith, 13.

<sup>4</sup>Carolyn Roberts, "Words After Music: A Musical Reading of Scott's "Night Hymns on Lake Nipigon," Canadian Poetry 8 (Spring/Summer, 1981): 58.

<sup>5</sup>Gordon Johnston, "Duncan Campbell Scott," in Canadian Writers and Their Works eds. Robert Lecker, Jack David, Ellen Quigley. (Downsview: ECW Press, 1983): 245.

<sup>6</sup>Desmond Pacey, "Duncan Campbell Scott." Ten Canadian Poets (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1969): 141.

<sup>7</sup>Johnston, 245.

<sup>8</sup>Johnston, 245.

<sup>9</sup>Johnston, 246.

<sup>10</sup>Johnston, 246.

<sup>11</sup>Johnston, 246.

<sup>12</sup>Johnston, 247.

<sup>13</sup>Johnston, 248.

<sup>14</sup>Duncan Campbell Scott, "Poetry and Progress," in Duncan Campbell Scott: A Book of Criticism. Ed. S.L. Dragland (Ottawa: The Tecumseh Press, 1974): 20.

<sup>15</sup>Scott, 20.

<sup>16</sup>Scott, 14.

<sup>17</sup>Pacey, 141.

<sup>18</sup>Pacey, 141.

## Chapter One

In much of Duncan Campbell Scott's poetry sound is used in essentially two ways. His primary use of sound is for description. Scott uses sound to describe things in the majority of his poetry, but in several of the poems sound is used as the main descriptive element. He also uses sound as a medium with which he can induce a personal hypnotic state and contemplate philosophical matters. This chapter deals with Scott's use of sound as a descriptive device. The poems discussed here share a common trait in that they all serve as examples of Scott's use of sound as either the major descriptive element in each poem, or at least as a significant one. The number of poems discussed here is limited to those that provide sufficient evidence of Scott's use of sound in this primary way. There are many other poems, particularly from later in his career, that also contain examples of sound as a descriptive device, but they do not do so to the same degree as those discussed here. The poetry to be examined here has been selected mainly from his earlier collections. Lundy's Lane and Other Poems and particularly New World Lyrics and Ballads are especially full of sound. His later collections, such as The Circle of Affection, contain much less sound as a descriptive device and, as discussed in chapter three, are thematically different. Sound, and the human ability to sense

it, is a major part of Scott's poetry. Its significance as a descriptive device, and as a kind of natural music, becomes apparent once his poetry is examined.

The sounds produced by nature have a musicality all their own. Musicality, that which is produced by nature and reproduced by the poet, or that which the poet creates to represent nature, is an aspect of Duncan Campbell Scott's talent which reveals his imagination. Scott was certainly no stranger to music or its value to poetry. In his presidential address to the Royal Society of Canada entitled Poetry and Progress he writes: "Men will come to it (music) more and more as the art which can express the complex emotions of life in terms of purest beauty."<sup>1</sup> Scott recognizes music's universal appeal and its use as a vehicle to translate "emotions into sound."<sup>2</sup> Before noting that some of the greatest poets have been very sensitive to music, he writes: "Music is the great nourisher of the imagination, and the prevalence of great music means the production of great verse."<sup>3</sup> By allowing himself to become aware of the sounds and music available in nature, he is providing himself a base from which he might create such 'great verse.' Being an accomplished pianist himself, he was perhaps more in tune with, and essentially aware of, nature's sounds and the emotions they invoke than the average person. Nature does not produce music as such, but the sounds that emanate from the wilderness can produce similar emotive responses.

While music is made of such things as harmony, the sounds of nature are often the result of conflict. This conflict, or at least the resulting sounds, can, however, be reconciled once the poet reveals that harmony also exists in nature.

It is essential at this point to distinguish sound from music in Scott's poetry. Scott was very involved with music for most of his life. This interest no doubt reveals itself in his poetry in many ways. One way is that his love of music made him more aware of the human sense of sound. Scott uses sound as an effective descriptive device in much of his poetry. His auditory images can be as stimulating as his visual ones. Scott's use of sound as a descriptive element can be divided, though not without some degree of overlapping, into two categories. First, Scott may describe a specific setting by pointing out all that might be heard by human ears contained in the scene, such as the wind in the trees or the utterings of forest creatures. He does not describe how these things sound; he merely makes the reader aware that there is noise to be heard. Second, Scott may describe how various things sound and use this description to realize or establish either a mood or a specific image and, in many cases, describe the conflict arising from opposing forces. Both of these categories can be found in the same poem and may be equally abundant. They constantly overlap one another and equally serve to convey the auditory effect with which this study is concerned.

Scott has experimented with rhyme and metre and has, in at least one case, attempted to fuse the metre of a certain type of music with his poetry. In her paper "Words After Music: A Musical Reading of Scott's 'Night Hymns on Lake Nipigon'," Carolyn Roberts notes that "the fusion of poetry and music was a constant feature of his literary career."<sup>4</sup> Roberts breaks Scott's musical poetry into three categories: "those which pay tribute to a composer, musician or artist,"<sup>5</sup> thematic motifs, and "those in which he attempted to adapt musical techniques and structures to poetic form."<sup>6</sup> According to Roberts, "Night Hymns on Lake Nipigon" is a perfect example of this last category:

Writing a poem about the singing of Latin Hymns in the darkness of a northern midnight, Scott complemented subject with form in "Night Hymns" by finding poetic structural equivalents for the musical form of the hymn.<sup>7</sup>

Roberts goes on to show this by revealing Scott's use of the Horatian Sapphic stanza used by post-classical poets for writing odes and hymns. It is very likely that Roberts is correct; that "Night Hymns on Lake Nipigon" is structurally and musically similar to the hymns that are sung by the travellers in the poem. What is perhaps even more significant is the fact that the poem has an abundance of auditory imagery. The sound found in the poem, as in much of his other poetry, takes a more significant place than the musicality that may or may not be interpreted through an examination of the metre. The musicality of Scott's poetry has a lesser dramatic impact than the element of sound that Scott employs for description.

This may be an extension of theme. The musicality is man-made and is presented in contrast to that which has been created by nature. In this poem these two elements conflict but it is nature's sounds that drown out the human voices and their music.

The poem "Night Hymns on Lake Nipigon" is a poem that reveals the sound found in nature. Here nature's music takes many forms. All of the ten stanzas deal directly with sound. Dead waters whisper in the first, thunder travels in the second, and in the third stanza, the canoe, "Gathers her voice in the quiet and thrills and whispers" (8). The sound gradually builds from a state of near silence to a thunderous roar when a storm breaks. Scott compares the sounds of nature to certain musical instruments:

Back they falter as the deep storm overtakes them,  
Whelms them in splendid hollows of booming thunder  
Wraps them in rain, that, sweeping, breaks and onrushes  
    Ringing like cymbals. (37-40)

The simile is an effective one. As the travellers in the canoe sing the hymns of the churches, the musical accompaniment is provided by nature. Disrupting this apparent harmony is the possibility that this effect may well be one of conflict. The sounds of nature appear to overpower the human voices. As R.S. Kilpatrick points out in his paper, "Scott's 'Night Hymns on Lake Nipigon': 'Matins' in the Northern Midnight":

"Night Hymns" presents a vivid pattern of contrasts: lake and desert, stars and storm, lightning in the dark, silence, melody and thunder, Latin and Objibwa, antiquity and the present.

But for all of Scott's technical agility with regard to the hymn-like structure of this poem, it is nature's song that he describes. The musical sounds of the human voices are not described with much detail. What he does describe are the sounds emanating from the natural surroundings:

Soft with the silver drip of the regular paddles  
Falling in rhythm, timed with the liquid, plangent  
Sounds from the blades where the whirlpools break and  
are carried  
Down into darkness;

Each long cadence, flying like a dove from her shelter  
Deep in the shadow, wheels for a throbbing moment,  
Poises in utterance, returning in circles of silver  
To nest in silence. (25-32)

"Night Hymns on Lake Nipigon" presents a complex array of sound on various levels. Sound is produced by nature, sound is produced as a result of the travelers singing, and sound is also created from the natural surroundings by these travelers. All of this sound, when presented simultaneously, creates a cacophony despite the harmony of the individual production. This is perhaps the most important of the conflicts that exist in the poem. But what ultimately prevails here, is a sense of concluding silence which seems to resolve the conflict that exists. Not only does "Each long cadence" (25) eventually "nest in silence" (32), but also "All wild nature" (33) is "Bound in the lonely phrases that thrill and falter / Back into quiet" (35-36). Silence seems to reconcile the conflicts that are described in terms of sound.

"The Height of Land" begins with an acute description



of the scene. This description is presented after a direct statement is made in the very first line, "Here is the height of land" (1). This statement is followed by a colon after which the description begins. Scott employs sound in several ways throughout this rather lengthy poem, but as a descriptive device it is used mainly in the first half.

"The Height of Land" is an introspective poem that deals with the narrator's coming to grips with an unidentified spiritual presence. This spiritual presence and Scott's ability to locate it are discussed in much greater detail in chapter two of this study. This spiritual presence can only become noticeable when the proper physical conditions exist. At the height of land these conditions do indeed exist and the reader is permitted to enter Scott's poetic consciousness. The vehicle for this journey into the poet's consciousness is the sound, or the silence, emanating from the forest. There are many things about the height of land that add to the introspective aura created. Scott chooses to use sound as a descriptive device to relate to the reader that which makes the scene unique.

The mood is set in the opening stanza and is primarily underlined by the sounds the travelers hear: "The wind sounds in the wood, wearier / Than the long Ojibwa cadence" (6-7). The mood and the feelings of the travellers are reflected by the sounds that are emitted by this eerie place: "And the Chees-que-ne-ne makes a mournful sound / of acquiescence"

(10-11). Scott does use visual description to aid in setting the mood, primarily the dying fire, but it is dark otherwise and the narrator's sense of hearing is heightened as a sort of precursor to what is to follow. It is the sound of the wind and the forest creatures that sets the mood. The pathetic fallacy is a simple one, or so it seems at first.

What enables the author to become aware of the presence of "That something" (50) are the sounds of nature which he describes as "The ancient disturber of solitude" (63). In the fourth stanza the sounds of the forest swell and are described as "walking through the wood" (60). The forest in the darkness is now full of sound. Where in the second stanza there is, "no sound unless the soul can hear / The gathering of the waters in their sources" (23-24), in the fourth stanza, the "soul seems to hear / The gathering of the waters at their sources" (65-66). The soul has become receptive to sound and enables the poet to understand better, or "hear," the very essence of the height of land. This is the geographical point where water either flows one way or another. It is an area alive with contrast, as Scott points out, and seems to have an eerie life of its own. Scott has now tapped into this life and is aware of it. The sounds and silences have brought him to this state. Scott uses sound to describe his reaction to the quiet that follows: "The heart replies in exaltation / And echoes faintly like an island shell" (69). The second half of the poem deals mainly with

Scott's meditating upon life. The scene has been set and the poet, as a result, has become receptive to the sounds of the wilderness and is able to contemplate. Not only is sound the vehicle by which Scott enters this contemplating realm, sound, as a descriptive device, allows the reader to imagine how these physical conditions permit this realm to exist.

"The Forsaken" is a poem that tells two very distinct stories. The poem effectively and simply chronicles the plight of a Native woman, first, trying to survive a fierce storm with her child, and, second, her slow, yet peaceful death after having been abandoned by her family.

It is through her courage, determination and especially her sacrifice, "She took of her own flesh, / Baited the fish-hook, / Drew in a grey trout" (38-40), that the Native woman and her child manage to survive. In the second half of the poem it is this same Native woman, "old and withered" (55), who is abandoned by her child, "Because she was old and useless" (66). The apparent injustice of this is made plain but Scott appears to attempt a simple, disaffected narration. The way of the Native is a simple one and Scott has chosen to describe the scene simply.

The first half of "The Forsaken" lacks a great deal of descriptive visual imagery. Scott is telling the story plainly and does not use too many adjectives. When it becomes necessary

to describe the ferocity of the storm that this woman and her child must endure, Scott uses sound to describe the scene:

All the lake-surface  
Streamed with the hissing  
Of millions of iceflakes  
Hurled by the wind;  
Behind her the round  
Of a lonely island  
Roared like a fire  
With the voice of the storm (23-30)

Scott is effectively describing visuals in terms of sound. As a result of the blowing snow the view of the island becomes occasionally obscured, flashing in and out of sight like a fire. The simile is auditory: like a fire, the island roars, "With the voice of the storm" (30). The ferocity of this storm is described in terms of its sound and volume.

At the end of this first half of the poem the Native woman successfully reaches the safety of the fort. She first sees the fort itself and then sees smoke rising from it. It is the sound that is emitted from the fort that ultimately proves that she has reached safety. She has "Heard the keen yelp / Of the ravenous huskies / Fighting for whitefish" (50-53) and as a result, "Then she had rest" (54). Scott makes clear that hearing the fort is as important as seeing it.

In the second half of the poem once the woman is abandoned and her son and his children have "slunk away" (63), Scott presents an image of the woman as equally determined as she was in the first half. The situation is very similar: she is at odds with the elements, seeking rest. As she simply sits awaiting the inevitable, Scott lists what she sees in

three lines:

Saw two spangled nights arise out of the twilight,  
Saw two days go by filled with the tranquil sunshine,  
Saw, without pain, or dread, or even a moment of longing...  
(76-78)

Then she becomes buried in snow and can no longer see anything. The snow has "Covered her deep and silent" (82). It is this silence that suggests her death. She has not yet died, though. She continues to live another day, buried in the snow, until, "There was born a silence deeper than silence, / Then she had rest" (93-94). The silence is born the moment she dies. The determining factor in her life is once again described in terms of sound. Sound as a descriptive element is used in those parts of the story that are most significant in the life of this woman. Although there are many explicit visual images presented in "The Forsaken," the full impact of the poem can only be realized once the auditory imagery and the significance of sound are also taken into account.

In the poem "Night and the Pines" the night itself seems to represent a force that mirrors a certain condition of human emotion. The feeling one gets being in the forest at night, as Scott surely was on more than one occasion, is not unlike what is presented here. "This haunting mood" (30) is created almost exclusively by sound or the lack of it. Much of the imagery is meant to be frightening. The night is personified, "He lingers brooding" (5) and makes the stars tremble. The darkness, which blankets the forest helping to create the

sense of loneliness and haunting, is made all the more eerie by the sounds the night emits. The quiet of the night amplifies the few sounds that are heard. The soniferous quality of the forest can be found in both the physical aspects of the poem, such as the wind and the waterfall, as well as in the ululations of the creatures that inhabit the forest. The sounds the creatures make add to the overall haunting quality of the poem:

Afar the loons with eerie call  
Haunt all the bays, and breaking through the glooms  
Upfloats that cry of light despair,  
As if a demon laughed upon the air. (9-12)

Scott's sonic imagery is very effective and proves particularly useful and necessary when describing a scene cloaked in darkness. The waterfall, "Deep and half-heard its thunder lifts and booms" (8), is described using sound only. Despite the thunder of the fall, it is "Deep and half heard" (8). The constant booming rush of the water acts as a kind of deep hypnotic sibilance, or cacaphony, that renders its sheer volume half-heard. The very depth of the fall, not unlike the depths of the shadows of the forest, seems to resonate with sounds more likely to be felt than heard. As in "The Height of Land" the soul itself seems to become receptive to sounds that the ears cannot hear. Scott reveals sounds which might not otherwise be heard.

The forest and all of its inhabitants are essentially sleeping, with only the wind and darkness awake and moving. Again, both of these elements serve to amplify what few sounds

are heard: "the loons with eerie call" (9), the croaking of the raven, the sound of the falling cone, "the weird cry of the whip-poor-will" (18), and the cry of "A Sibyl with her ancient prophecy" (24). All of this helps to create an understanding that the forest at night is a very unique place. There is a sense in which one has become exceptionally sensitive to the sounds that exist. There is also a sense of being alive and aware despite the ominous foreboding of the unknown. It is a place of contradictions: of silence and sound, of things seen but not visible, of things "heard" from silence and things "seen" from darkness.

"Rapids at Night" is a poem almost entirely concerned with sound. On a very basic level the setting is at night so there is an obvious limit to the visual description that might have normally been included. Regardless of light and darkness, it is the sound of the rapids that is the vehicle for Scott's familiar journey into contemplation. The night does play a significant role, however. The poem is entitled "Rapids at Night" for a reason. The night-time setting perhaps heightens the effect of the sounds that are heard and even permits these sounds to become so hypnotic in their effect that the poet is no longer aware of them as physical sensations.

In the first stanza Scott describes the location of the rapids in simple terms:

Here at the roots of the mountains,  
Between the sombre legions of cedars and tamaracks,

The rapids charge the ravine (1-3)

Scott employs military terminology to describe the scene: the "sombre legions of cedars" (2), "The rapids charge the ravine" (3), and it is here that "the clangorous sounds of battle" (6) can be heard. These sounds produced by the battle are "immense and mournful" (7). The battle is waged between the contrasting and conflicting elements of land and water. It is this conflict that produces the noise. The description of this sound as "immense and mournful" (7) proves to be a reflection of the poet's state of mind. He views himself as alone by these rapids, beneath "the great dome of darkness" (8). There is a sound produced by all of this noise, one which only the soul can actually hear. It is "Deeper than all the voices that cry at the surface" (11) and is described as "fathomless" (12). It lies "under the hiss and cry, the stroke and the plangent clamour" (13). It is this initially unreachable sound that the poet will eventually be able to hear once he essentially becomes in tune with the sound of the rapids, and attuned to that which exists beyond the physical sounds produced.

While the location of the scene is described quickly and simply, Scott describes the sounds and sight of the rushing water as a complex battle between sound and silence. The rapids are described almost entirely in terms of how they sound:

The abysmal roar drops into almost silence,  
While over its sleep play in various cadence  
Innumerable voices crashing in laughter;



Then rising calm, overwhelming,  
Slow in power,  
Rising supreme in utterance,  
It sways, and reconquers and floods all the spaces of  
silence,  
One voice, deep with the sadness,  
That dwells at the core of all things. (16-24)

The sound of the rapids is exceptionally loud and violent. The roar is abysmal and is so loud that it "drops into almost silence" (16). The sheer volume of the rushing water creates an overpowering combination of many sounds which overwhelms the senses. The "Innumerable voices crashing in laughter" (18) contrast the previous description that involves an "almost silence" (16). The sound of the rapids is as fluid as the water itself: "It sways, and reconquers and floods all the spaces of silence" (22). What is ultimately occurring is that the cacophany of sound essentially resolves itself into a state in which physical sensation and awareness temporarily leave the poet and he becomes receptive in a spiritual sense. "Rapids at Night" is almost universally recognized as one of Scott's finer descriptive pieces. The primary descriptive element is almost completely auditory.

It is the roar of the rapids that enables the poet to contemplate that which is likely disturbing him. His heart is "deep with sadness" (15). He has come to these rapids to ponder his mysterious troubles and finds that the scene matches his frame of mind. Having found an environment that reflects his state of thought, the poet is able to contemplate his troubles undisturbed. Scott is not only describing a

scene from nature, he is also therefore using sound, specifically the sound produced by these rapids, to describe a troubled emotional state. What ultimately occurs is union of mind and environment that transcends typical pathetic fallacy. This is discussed in greater detail with regard to "Rapids at Night" in chapter two of this study.

"Indian Place Names" is a poem that can be categorized as one of what have become known as Scott's Indian poems. It is very much unlike Scott's other Indian poems in that he presents the concept of a race now removed. It is likely that their fate was full assimilation into modern white society. The poem begins: "The race has waned and left but tales of ghosts, / That hover in the world like fading smoke" (1-2). All that is left of the Indian race, at least as it was once known, are the "wild names that haunt the lovely glens" (12). Scott cared for the natives of Canada a great deal but felt that assimilation was perhaps their only realistic future.

Scott uses sound to describe and give life to the Indian place names.. For a description of Toronto he writes: "Where lonely water falls, or where the street / Sounds all day with the tramp of myriad feet; / Toronto triumphs" (12-15). He also uses sound to describe gentler places such as Mirimichi, which "flutes" (19). This is in contrast to Winnipeg, which "clangs" (16). Manitowapah simply "sings" (22), while "Restigouche takes the whelmed sound of sea" (18). The lesser

known Kamouraska, Metapedia and Metlakahtla all "ring a round of bells" (28).

Not only does Scott describe these places in terms of sound, the very pronunciation of the Indian words holds a unique significance to their chosen sound-related description. While perhaps not definitive examples of onomatopoeia, Scott seems to have at least made an attempt. "Restigouche takes the whelmed sound of sea" (18) is a good example. Here, Scott seems to imply directly that the native word, when pronounced properly, makes a sound similar to that of the sea. The 's' sound followed by the hard 'g' followed in turn by the 'ou' and 'sh' at the end of the word, do likely sound similar to that of the "whelmed sound of the sea" (18). The word 'Toronto' has its t's and o's following one another in succession like the "tramp of myriad feet" (14). With four soft 'i' sounds interrupted by a soft 'ch' sound, the pronunciation of Mirimichi is not unlike the sound made by a flute.

"The Sea by the Wood" is very much associated with another poem titled "The Wood by the Sea." Both poems deal with the contrasting elements of land and water. In "The Sea by the Wood" the sea is described as a weary place, tired of the presence of man. The imagery involves drowned sailors, sunken ships, and lost treasures. The most haunting and effective passage of the poem involves sounds both heard and unheard:

All the sea is haunted with human lips  
Ashen and sere and grey  
You can hear the sails of the sunken ships

Stir and shiver and sway... (17-20)

Scott is setting the haunting and weary mood of the poem by describing sounds that could not normally be heard. Just as it is not possible to hear "the sails of sunken ships" (19), it is not possible to hear the "sobs and the sudden sighs" (15) of the dead seamen. The waves can hear these sounds to the extent that they have grown weary of them. The persona that narrates the poem, "I dwell in the sea that is wild and deep" (1), is also able to hear these sounds and, like the waves, seems weary. "The weary solitude" (21) of the sea has the mystical narrator wishing that his dwelling could be consumed by the forest which is visible to him. It appears that the mystical narrator longs for the "trees that gather and sleep / In the wood upon the hill" (27-28). The forest is described in comforting terms which contrasts the haunting loneliness of the sea. Scott has chosen mainly sound imagery to convey this sense of eerie solitude. He initially describes the sea as a beautiful place: "The deeps are green as an emerald's face, / The caves are crystal calm" (5-6), but the following lines reveal the unhappiness the narrator has with his home: "But I wish the sea were a little trace / Of moisture in God's palm" (7-8). The narrator is some sort of spirit of the sea and can therefore hear that which would normally be lost in silence. It is this that Scott has chosen to describe, creating an effective use of sound imagery based on mystically perceived sounds lost in

the silence and solitude of the sea.

In "The Wood by the Sea" Scott has essentially repeated the poem but has framed it from an opposing perspective. Scott now presents a mystical narrator who resides in the woods and finds it to be a weary place. The narrator here does not actually see the sea; he is able to hear it:

I dwell in the wood that is dark and kind  
But afar off tolls the main,  
Afar, far off I hear the wind,  
And the roving of the rain. (1-4)

Similar to the narrator of "The Sea by the Wood" the narrator of "The Wood by the Sea" also wishes the destruction of his residence by the opposing element:

If mine were the hand of God,--O, then  
The wood should tramp into the sounding sea,  
Like a marching army of men! (22-24)

Again what makes the wood such a weary place is most effectively described in terms of sound:

The wood is very old and still,  
So still when the dead cones fall,  
Near in the vale or away on the hill,  
You can hear them one and all, (20-24)

Here the sound is something that can actually be heard and is not something that is mystically suggested. Again Scott has chosen as his most descriptive passage one that is full of sound. The overall mood of the poem is created by this sound of a pine cone interrupting the otherwise still and silent forest. The wood may be still, but unlike the sea it at least contains life. The poem occurs at night and so

much of the life inhabiting the wood is asleep. Just as the waves were weary, here the pines are weary. But while the waves cover the dead, the pines maintain life. Despite this, the mystical persona inhabiting the wood yearns to be at sea.

"Watkwenies" is a poem that can be best described as a portrait of a Native. The poem takes the form of a sonnet with the octave describing the solitary character's war-like nature: "Vengeance was once her nation's lore and law" (1). The solitary character, a Native woman, whose name titles the poem and translates as "The Woman who Conquers,"<sup>9</sup> represents her nation and the vitality, albeit a violent one, it once had. The sestet presents this woman as old "And wrinkled like an apple kept till May" (10). She and her nation have been conquered by time, social and economic change, and bureaucracy.

The war-like scene of the first stanza is made all the more terrifying by the sounds that fill the violent air. Before this woman kills the sentry, "Her long knife flashed and hissed and drank its fill" (3). The hissing of the knife is the ultimate prelude to the death that follows. It is perhaps meant to suggest the sound of a snake about to strike. The sound Scott has given to the knife animates the evil intent behind it. "The war-cry of the triumphant Iroquois" (8) fills the air and is not only described as simply "shrill" (6) but is given the ability to spring "through the dreaming hamlet

on the hill" (7). The war-cry is also animated and provides the whole scene with a sense of terror.

The sound of the war-cry is alluded to again in the second stanza. The woman's name has been called by the "Agent" and at the same time she hears, "The lads playing snow-snake in the stinging cold" (14). She is no longer a conqueror and neither is her race but the sound of her name being called triggers for her an association between the sounds of children playing and the war-whoops and the hissing knife of her past. The times have very much changed and it is a comparison of the sounds that can be heard that underscores this change.

"The Canadian's Home-Song" is a poem that, as the title states, is composed as a song. Just as a song is meant to be heard, Scott seems to suggest an equal importance to how his country is heard. Scott's love of his country is mainly described in terms of the outdoors. He does, however, make a brief reference to homes and people:

Oh! take me back to the homestead,  
To the great rooms warm and low,  
Where the frost creeps on the casement,  
When the year comes in with snow.  
Give me, give me the old folk  
Of the dear long ago. (25-30)

Other than these few lines the poem is entirely concerned with the outdoors with which he describes what it is that makes his heart "weary and weary / For my own country" (35-36).

The poet has placed himself in the depths of the wild

and he essentially lists the numerous things that appeal to him about the land. These are the things that represent the very essence of his nation. While he begins only one line of this song with "I see" (11) there are four lines which begin with the words "I hear" (7). Like "Rapids at Night" the poem is mainly made up of auditory images. What appeals to Scott most about this land are the sounds that emanate from it. The essence of Canada, for Scott, is composed of sound.

Scott begins in the first stanza dealing with the elements of the wind and the rain, making no direct references to how they sound. As common images, familiar to most people, there is no need to describe them in terms of sound. The reader will most likely hear the passage as much as see it:

There is rain upon the window,  
There is wind upon the tree  
The rain is slowly sobbing,  
The wind is blowing free:  
It bears my weary heart  
To my own country. (1-6)

In the second stanza Scott deals with the sounds the birds make and relates this in a direct manner: "I hear the white throat calling" (7), "I hear the sparrow sing" (10). The third and fourth stanzas deal with the sounds of snow shoes, which "creak and whisper" (15), a lynx cub who is "yelling" (17) and "The wolf-tongued rapid" (19), which he can hear "howl" (20). Scott even includes the sounds of a human presence: "I hear the trapper wake" (22). "The Canadian's Home-Song" proves that Scott is a poet aware of how his country



appeals to him. That his country appeals to him as a land of beauty expressed mainly in sound does not come as a surprise.

These ten poems prove to be good examples of Scott's employment of sound as a descriptive device. There are many other poems that contain auditory imagery and some of them are addressed in the following chapters. Poems such as "The Piper of Arll" do contain elements of sound that are employed to describe, but the presence of sound in these poems, as in several of the poems already discussed, serves a secondary function that is discussed in the next chapter of this study. Sound is an element in the poetry of Duncan Campbell Scott that serves a number of functions. Sound is not only employed by the author to describe settings and create sonic imagery, it is also used to create and magnify moods, and amplify his prominent themes. As a descriptive device, however, Scott has used sound in such a way that it not only describes, it also prepares for the journey into a more contemplative realm.

## Chapter One

### Notes

<sup>1</sup>Duncan Campbell Scott, "Poetry and Progress," in Duncan Campbell Scott: A Book of Criticism. Ed. S.L. Dragland (Ottawa: The Tecumseh Press, 1974): 14.

<sup>2</sup>Scott, 21.

<sup>3</sup>Scott, 21.

<sup>4</sup>Carolyn Roberts, "Words After Music: A Musical Reading of Scott's "Night Hymns on Lake Nipigon," Canadian Poetry 8 (Spring/Summer, 1981): 57.

<sup>5</sup>Roberts, 58.

<sup>6</sup>Roberts, 58.

<sup>7</sup>Roberts, 58.

<sup>8</sup>R.S. Kilpatrick, "Scott's 'Night Hymns on Lake Nipigon': 'Matins' in the Northern Midnight," Canadian Poetry 14 (Spring/Summer, 1984): 65.

<sup>9</sup>Glenn Clever, Selected Poetry of Duncan Campbell Scott (Ottawa: The Tecumseh Press, 1974): 13.

## CHAPTER TWO

Having already outlined the prominence of sound as a descriptive device, and the emphasis sound takes in much of the poetry of Duncan Campbell Scott, this study will now focus on Scott's use of sound as a medium by which the author reveals his poetic consciousness by entering a hypnotic state. Sound is not only used to describe this state, but is often found as an essential ingredient for it. The sounds that emanate from nature can send the author into an introspective realm from which he attempts to share and describe his desire to find a balance in life. How he reaches this state will be detailed in a discussion of the poems "Rapids at Night" and "The Height of Land."

Having broken down Scott's greater poetry into three types: "lyrical and descriptive pieces,"<sup>1</sup> the Indian ballads, and the poems dealing with "mystery, fantasy, or dream,"<sup>2</sup> Desmond Pacey suggests that the latter of these represent his best. Since it is possible to categorize Scott's poetic career, it can be suggested that his more introspective and mysterious poetry occurs earlier in his career. Scott's later poetry appears more direct, didactic, and less inclined to be spiritually oriented. Even in his early poetry Scott's spirituality is not clearly defined. There are mysterious elements to his poetry but they are not necessarily religious

ones. Scott appears to be at least aware of the existence of spiritual forces in nature. This awareness often allows him to contemplate various philosophical concepts. This contemplation ultimately reveals his poetic consciousness, but in order for this to occur he must first slowly allow himself to enter a sort of hypnotic state. The triggering principle for this action is the sound that emanates from nature in a specific setting. In order for Scott to reveal his inner states, he must posit himself in the wild and become overwhelmed with the essence of nature. This is a gradual process that begins with the author simply being aware of his surroundings and his place in them. What appear to permit his entry into the hypnotic state, more so than any other natural condition, are the sounds and silences that Scott becomes aware of. Once Scott has entered this state he is better able to contemplate the greater questions of life, such as destiny and mortality.

In her essay entitled "From Lifeless Pools to the Circle of Affection: The Significance of Space in the Poetry of D.C. Scott," Kathy Mezei states:

Since space, like language, is a mode of organizing meaning, experience, and feelings, the recurrence of certain spatial structures or images presents an entry into Scott's poetic process, thoughts and feelings.<sup>3</sup>

While Mezei argues her position effectively it may also be said that the presence of sound in certain conditions is the essential vehicle permitting "entry into Scott's poetic process,

thoughts and feelings."<sup>4</sup> While Mezei suggests that recurring spatial images may be a trigger for Scott's introspective journeys, it appears more likely that the sounds emanating from the landscape, the voice of nature in conflict, is the vehicle for Scott's journeys. Mezei herself employs terminology that often includes references to sound:

For Scott as Wordsworth before him, the spatial implications of landscape become projections and resonances of the poet's own mind.<sup>5</sup>

and

A recurring spatial image, such as deep pools in the night<sub>6</sub> forest, soon begins to sound a familiar thematic echo.

Not only does Scott describe the physical landscape in terms of how it sounds, he reconstructs the sounds found in nature and utilizes them as a medium by which he can reveal his poetic consciousness.

In her essay "In the Listening World: The Poetry of D.C. Scott," Catherine Kelly writes of Scott's "Consciousness of large, essential life at the core of being"<sup>7</sup> and notes:

such an experiential awareness of fundamental life reveals itself in three dominant ways: as being compelling and fulfilling, as being personal and intimate, as being unsettling and mysterious.<sup>8</sup>

She points out that the transcendental experience can only really be perceived by "the listening or receptive soul."<sup>9</sup>

In order for the soul to be listening or receptive there must exist a "sensuous appreciation of the natural world,"<sup>10</sup> which will be "the means of entry into the supernatural realm."<sup>11</sup>

Kelly suggests that in order for "sensuous appreciation"<sup>12</sup> to occur there must exist some sort of trigger or movement "initiating revelation of presence by some positive, enlightening power."<sup>13</sup> Without referring to anything specific, Kelly suggests that for the human spirit, at some early point in life,

a distinct apprehension is given from the natural environment or its essence and is definitely received, known, by the soul.<sup>14</sup>

She goes on to say that this experience "happens in full actuality before it can be articulated."<sup>15</sup> While Scott's spirituality is ambiguous and mysterious, it rarely seems to be the result of such instinctual planning. That which triggers the "revelation of presence,"<sup>16</sup> and allows entry into the poetic consciousness of the poet and its "supernatural realm"<sup>17</sup> is more likely a simple natural engagement such as the "sensuous appreciation"<sup>18</sup> that Kelly mentions. Kelly seems to have touched on the impetus of the matter but has effectively refrained from being specific. While Kathy Mezei refers specifically to spatial images as the trigger for Scott's introspective journeys, Kelly is reluctant to be so specific despite a reference to a sensual quality in the title of her paper. A "listening"<sup>19</sup> soul must be receptive, to be sure, but Kelly does not outline that which is being heard. And what is being heard are the sounds and silences of nature. Sound and silence are not only the key elements for the propagation of Scott's transcendental journeys, they are what enable Scott to remain attuned to his spiritual states.

By examining poems such as "Rapids at Night" and "The Height of Land," it becomes apparent that the numerous sounds and silences of nature likely serve as the triggering principle that allows an entry to Scott's poetic consciousness and the "supernatural realm."<sup>20</sup>

While many of D.C. Scott's poems deal with supernatural elements and a greater number are concerned with "consciousness of large, essential life at the core of being,"<sup>21</sup> the poems that reveal the poet moving from one realm of consciousness to another are few. What makes "Rapids at Night" and "The Height of the Land" unique among Scott's poems of mystery, is that he allows us to witness a more complete movement and he seems to articulate better in these poems than in others. In order for this movement to occur, certain poetic conditions must prevail. The setting is of utmost importance. In each of these poems the poet has travelled to a specific setting and this setting is described. In "Rapids at Night" and "The Height of Land" this setting is primarily described in terms of its sounds. Also, in both instances night has fallen, which means there is little to see but much to hear. In each case the poet becomes very much aware of his surroundings, which is, again, primarily due to the sounds he hears and even the silences he senses. The sounds emanating from the forest reveal the tremendous conflict going on about him. In Scott's never-ending quest for balance and harmony, and

in his attempt to reconcile opposites, he becomes overwhelmed by that which is occurring around him. In each case there are a number of opposing forces working simultaneously. As a result of his awareness of this he is able to slip into an undisturbed hypnotic state from which he is eventually able to contemplate the very meanings of life and other such philosophical matters. His body and mind transcend their location and he becomes in tune with the greater forces of nature. He is essentially attempting to find a harmony, a kind of reconciliation of conflict in himself, that he sees existing in nature. Nature is full of conflict, but from this conflict comes change, life and beauty, which is ultimately a kind of harmonious reconciliation of this conflict.

"Rapids at Night" was composed in 1899 and published six years later in the collection New World Lyrics and Ballads. "The Height of Land" was written in 1915 and published a year later in the collection Lundy's Lane.<sup>22</sup> Some sixteen years separate the composition of each poem and it is interesting to note the progress Scott made with regard to the expression of his contemplative hypnotic states. Where "The Height of the Land" places the poet directly in the poem to relate what goes on in a first person account, "Rapids at Night" is more subdued and less direct in its perspective. Scott describes the scene but does not specifically refer to the existence of his presence. Scott narrates from afar, displaying an



observer's point of view rather than an experiential one.

"Rapids at Night" is generally considered to be among the best of Scott's poetry. Desmond Pacey has referred to it as one of Scott's "most successful descriptive pieces."<sup>23</sup> G. Ross Roy suggests that "Rapids at Night" "is one of the most highly esteemed poems of our author,"<sup>24</sup> while from his memoir E.K. Brown states:

The melancholy reflective tone that was to rule so many of the best among the late poems runs through "Rapids at Night," a memory of a moment in one of the journeys of inspection.<sup>25</sup>

"Rapids at Night" is a poem found in most anthologies of Canadian poetry that include D.C. Scott and is usually included with "The Forsaken" and "Night Hymns on Lake Nipigon" as representatives of the collection from which they are chosen.

The setting of the poem plays a very significant role in Scott's transcendental journeys. It is the setting that provides the sounds necessary for Scott to escape the normal realm of conscious thought. These sounds can only be produced if the setting can provide all the necessary conditions. These include an environment that is not readily accessible. The location cannot be Scott's Ottawa or any place of great familiarity. Also, the setting should represent an incidental and perhaps even inconsequential point in an expedition. The setting should be at night in order to maximize the auditory effects of the landscape. The setting must also be experienced in solitude. The poet should be essentially alone or at least

remain undisturbed by any other people. This solitude will allow the poet to become very much aware of his immediate surroundings. In particular, he must become very aware of the sounds, and even the silences, that occur around him. He must also be aware of any conflict that is occurring around him. This conflict is an essential element of the hypnotic effect.

In "Rapids at Night" the setting is immediately outlined. The location of the poem is described in the first two lines of the poem:

Here at the roots of the mountains,  
Between the sombre legions of cedars and tamaracks  
The Rapids charge the ravine. (1-3)

It is not stated how or why the poet has decided to come to this place. It is likely that Scott was on one of his many official trips which often took him deep into the Canadian wilderness. In order for him to be here it is clear that he must have had to travel at least some distance from any populated area. Scott did not travel alone on such journeys, but he seems to be outlining this scene from a position of solitude. The poem is also likely to be a recollection. Similar to "The Height of Land," Scott is writing from memory. The poem takes place at night yet, "A little light, cast by foam under starlight / Wavers about the shimmering stems of the birches" (4-5). This is all the light that exists and as a result the remainder of the poem can only be described in terms of how things sound: "Here rise up the clangorous

sounds of battle, / Immense and mournful" (6-7). The setting is almost entirely made up of sonic imagery. Despite the lack of visuals, Scott is able to describe the setting as being dynamic and turbulent. The mood is one of violence and turmoil, despair and mourning. The poet, alone and troubled, "O human heart that sleeps, / Wild with rushing dreams and deep with sadness" (14-15), becomes very much aware of the cacophony around him. He becomes not only aware of that which he can hear but also that which exists unheard:

Deeper than all the voices that cry at the surface  
Dwells one fathomless sound,  
Under the hiss and cry, the stroke and the plangent clamour.  
(11-13)

The sounds are so loud and constant that "The abysmal roar drops into almost silence" (16). Scott is aware of the existence of silence despite the loudness of the rushing water. This silence is something that transcends normal human sensory experience. Scott is able to detect it as a result of his highly aware state. The sound of the rushing water is virtually mesmerizing and Scott's conscious thought seems to drift in and out of a hypnotic state. The closer he comes fully to reaching this state, the more the sound of the natural violence gives way to the silences. This state proves to be momentary:

Then rising calm, overwhelming,  
Slow in power,  
Rising in supreme utterance,  
It sways, and reconquers and floods all the spaces of  
silence. (19-22)

Scott seems to come out of his temporary hypnotic state and is reawakened to the "One voice, deep with sadness" (23).

His senses sharpened by the contrast, he hears the thrush:

"There by a nest in the glimmering birches, / Speaks a thrush  
as if startled from a slumber" (25-26). The thrush, like  
Scott, was in a dream-like state. The thrush, however, was:

Dreaming of Southern ricefields,  
The moted glow of the amber sunlight,  
Where the long ripple roves among the reeds. (27-29)

Perhaps while the thrush dreamt of "Southern ricefields" (27),  
Scott was also similarly longing for the South, for Ottawa.  
Perhaps his troubles and his sadness are merely a sense of  
separation from home. The sound inherent in this setting  
therefore comes to represent the immediate environment which,  
in turn, suggests Scott's state of mind. The setting is very  
much in tune with Scott's state of consciousness. The conflict  
inherent in the setting likely mirrors an undisclosed inner  
conflict in the poet.

Scott is certainly aware of the conflict going on around  
him. He uses military terminology to reveal this. The cedars  
are in "legions" (2), the rapids "charge" (3) and "Here rise  
up the clangorous sounds of battle" (6). The rushing water  
is at battle with the land that contains it. Other conflicts  
around him include the sounds he hears and the silences he  
senses, and the height of the night sky in contrast to the  
depth of his sadness. There are also the contrasting elements  
of cacophony and musicality. The "abysmal roar" (16) of the  
rapids contrasts the "various cadence" (17) he senses amid  
the noise. Also, Scott hears "Innumerable voices crashing

in laughter" (18), which is in conflict with the "One voice, deep with sadness" (23) that eventually overwhelms everything. There are the contrasting elements of light and darkness, of laughter and despair, and of calm and clamour. The setting is full of conflict and the poet has therefore chosen a dynamic environment in which to contemplate his troubles. Having arrived at this particular scene, and evidently somewhat disturbed or troubled, the poet, as a result of his condition, has allowed himself to become involved with his surroundings. It is not revealed what is exactly troubling the poet here, but the pathetic fallacy is unmistakable. The continuous actions, reactions, sounds, and conflicts of the setting combine virtually to overload the poet's sense of hearing, which is his only really useable sense in these conditions. As a result of the poet's extreme awareness of the setting, he becomes overwhelmed and eventually unaware of his immediate physical surroundings. It is at this point that the poet is better able to contemplate that which troubles him.

"The Height of Land" is a poem about a place that is central for Scott. Also known as the Arctic water-shed, this is the geographical point from which water flows either north to the Arctic Ocean or south to the Great Lakes. The value of this poem as a kind of thematic representation of Scott's poetry, or as a psychological profile of the poet, should not underestimated. Scott had about nine years to consider

his thoughts and feelings about the trip that took him to this place. While the poem was composed in 1915 and published a year later, the actual journey that brought him to the height of land had occurred in 1906.<sup>27</sup> Gordon Johnston states that the "Height of Land" is "the high point of Scott's poetic career for a number of reasons."<sup>28</sup> These reasons include the setting, which is "essential to our imaginations,"<sup>29</sup> and Scott's images. Scott's form is also praised: "The prosody shows Scott at his best. The lines are flexible and powerful."<sup>30</sup> In his memoir, E.K. Brown states: "'The Height of Land' is the nearest equivalent in verse to the evocation of the northern country in the work of so many of our painters."<sup>31</sup> Brown feels that Scott has shown "impressive intellectual power"<sup>32</sup> in "The Height of Land." Sound plays a vital role in this poem, particularly with regard to the setting and its usefulness for creating the necessary conditions for Scott to enter a contemplative state. Like "Rapids at Night," "The Height of Land" is included in most anthologies of Canadian poetry that include D.C. Scott. It is a poem that is often referred to by critics as a representative of Scott's central themes. Here the Canadian landscape becomes "the symbolic geography of his psychic explorations."<sup>33</sup> Chapter three of this study will discuss the thematic value of "The Height of Land."

The setting of "The Height of Land" is made very clear in the first lines of the poem:

Here is the height of land:  
The watershed on either hand  
Goes down to Hudson Bay

Or Lake Superior. (1-4)

Scott has come to this place as a resting point on a long journey that has taken him from Ottawa to the Canadian Northwest on official business. The poem is a reflective one. It is a memory written in present tense that contains a reflective tone for the events leading up to the arrival at this point in the journey. It is obvious that this is the most significant point in the journey for Scott, but it is likely that the reason for the journey has yet to occur. The signing of treaties and official business does not concern the poet to any degree, at least as far as the poem is concerned, and he does not bother the reader with any of the details. In order for him to reach higher realms of thought, the setting must be conducive for such contemplation. The setting, for this to occur, must be secluded and dynamic.

Similar to that in "Rapids at Night" the setting is one of darkness and the sounds of the immediate environment are what set the mood:

The stars are up, and far away  
The wind sounds in the wood, wearier  
Than the long Ojibwa cadence  
In which Potàn the Wise  
Declares the ills of life  
And the Chees-que-ne-ne makes a mournful sound  
Of acquiescence. (5-11)

The travellers are tired and the surroundings reflect their weariness through sound. Potàn the Wise was one of Scott's Indian guides in the poem "Spring on Mattagami." The wind from the woods makes sounds that are like his mournful song,

which is agreed upon by the Chees-que-ne-ne. This is the name given to "a shaman who is able to summon supernatural powers or beings."<sup>34</sup> It is not clear whether the Chees-que-ne-ne actually exists in the form of one of Scott's guides, or if this is a spiritual presence that exists in the landscape. Also similar to "Rapids at Night" there is a slight amount of light:

The fires burn low  
With just sufficient glow  
To light the flakes of ash that play  
At being moths, and flutter away  
To fall in the dark and die as ashes. (11-15)

It appears that the darkness brings death and mourning. Once there is enough light present it turns the dead ashes to life as moths only to die again as they "fall in the dark" (15). Also, the Indian guides are described as being "dead asleep" (22). Despite this presence of death,

Here there is peace in the lofty air,  
And Something comes by flashes  
Deeper than peace;--  
The spruces have retired a little space  
And left a field of sky in violet shadow  
With stars like marigolds in a water meadow. (16-21)

Something seems to exist here that is deeply spiritual which transcends the imagery and suggestion of death. The suggestion of death is not in a negative sense. The light and the presence of others must be removed in order for the right conditions to prevail and for the connection to the spirit world to exist. "Something" (17) greater than death and tranquility resides here. Perhaps this is a true pantheistic experience for Scott. From his ability to notice this "Something" (17) Scott becomes



more alive and more aware. His ability is granted by the conditions of the landscape and its aura which are defined by Scott in terms of sound. Once the Indian guides are "dead asleep" (22), "There is no sound unless the soul can hear / The gathering of the waters in their sources" (23-24). The existence of this silence leads Scott into a recollection of the last portage that brought them to this point. Within this silent realm Scott recollects a journey full of dreams and of natural imagery. Once they reach the height of land he compares: "The lonely north enlaced with lakes and streams" (42) to, "The crowded southern land / With all the welter of the lives of men" (4748). At this point the recollection ends and Scott notes:

But here is peace, -- a spell  
Golden and inappellable  
That gives the inarticulate part  
Of our strange being one moment of release  
That seems more native than the touch of time,  
And we must answer in chime;  
Though yet no man may tell  
The secret of that spell  
Golden and inappellable. (49-59)

It is the sound contained within the setting that plays the most crucial role for providing the necessary conditions for Scott's contemplative journey.

In the fourth stanza of the poem the sounds and silences of the setting swell and prepare the poet for his meditation. The stanza begins:

Now are there sounds walking in the wood,  
And all the spruces shiver and tremble,  
And the stars move a little in their courses. (60-62)

Scott does not outline what specifically is making these sounds. It is likely that the only sound to be heard is the sound of the wind in the trees which causes them to "shiver and tremble" (61). The next two lines read: "The ancient disturber of solitude / Breathes a pervasive sigh" (63-64). It is perhaps the wind which is the "ancient disturber of solitude" (63). Scott becomes aware of not only that which he can hear, such as the wind, but also that which he cannot hear: "And the soul seems to hear / The gathering of waters at their sources" (65-66). Scott has entered into what Gary Geddes has referred to as a "hyper-sensitive state."<sup>35</sup> The sounds of the setting have allowed Scott to become more in tune with the uniqueness of the surroundings and as a result he begins to enter a mystical state from which he communicates with the "region spirit" (68):

Then quiet ensues and pure starlight and dark;  
The region-spirit murmurs in meditation,  
The heart replies in exaltation  
And echoes faintly like an inland shell  
Ghost tremors of the spell;  
Thought reawakens and is linked again  
With all the welter of the lives of men. (67-73)

Scott completes his poetic transference passing from a state of extreme awareness of his surroundings to one of deeper consciousness: "And here, where we can think, on the bright uplands / Where the air is clear, we deeply brood on life" (77-78). What has enabled him to complete this movement can be found in the sounds described existing in this setting. Scott goes on to "deeply brood on life" (78) and recollect

parts of the journey. As E.K. Brown notes: "In the moments of illumination that are possible in ideal circumstances, the individual, Duncan Scott is telling us, is restored to a state that is natural to him."<sup>36</sup>

The height of land is a place that is full of conflict and of contrasting elements. Scott describes much of this conflict in terms of sound, which greatly adds to the overall effect of the setting. In the first stanza alone there are many contrasting elements present. Scott contrasts the elements of surface and depth, up and down, land and water, silence and sound, light and dark, wind and stillness, life and death, fear of the unknown and solace in pantheism, and of transcending tranquility and the violence inherent in nature. Perhaps the most significant of these opposing forces is that of sound and silence. At first there seems to be a significant amount of sound in this place and yet slightly later Scott points out that: "There is no sound unless the soul can hear / The gathering of the waters in their sources" (23-24). The sounds that do exist set the mood and allow the poet to notice the silence around him. It is Scott's poetic nature to attempt a reconciliation of contraries and he uses sound to do this to a great extent. This issue will be dealt with in greater detail in chapter three of this study.

Not only are we introduced to the height of land, we are introduced to the height of physical and sensory perception

of the poetic consciousness as revealed by the environment.

As E.K. Brown states in his Memoir:

The height of land leads Duncan Campbell Scott to think not only of the wilderness and its denizens, but, with perspective and a perfectly conveyed sense of renovation, of the world he has left and will return to. These are the surroundings in which his insight is sharpened and refined, and in "The<sup>37</sup> Height of Land" he rises to impressive intellectual power.

Again, it is the element of sound that propagates this concept. It is the sound of the forest and the surroundings that sets the eerie tone and mood. It is sound that suggests the presence of something spiritual, and it is sound that enables the poet to reveal his poetic consciousness. As in "Rapids at Night," where the constant noise of the rapids ultimately provides a kind of sonic plateau upon which the poet can enter his hypnotic contemplative state, in the "Height of Land" sound need not actually be heard for it to resonate in the poetic consciousness. The soul ultimately becomes able "to hear." The plateau of sound created here is the "gathering of waters in their sources" (24), which the poet's soul is enabled to hear. Having achieved this state, the poet is better able to contemplate philosophical matters, which he does for essentially the remainder of the poem.

Both "Rapids at Night" and "The Height of Land" are poems that contain the essential elements of Scott's greater poetic themes. Scott reveals much of what his poetry is generally about while he is in a contemplative hypnotic state. Sound

serves not only to allow Scott access to this state, but it also provides a foundation upon which Scott's themes can be discussed. While Scott uses sound to a large extent for descriptive purposes and as a force in nature that allows him to enter a contemplative state, sound is also used to a great extent in much of his poetry to outline opposing forces in nature and even to reconcile them. And it is this to which we must now turn our attention.

## Chapter Two

### Notes

<sup>1</sup>Desmond Pacey, "Duncan Campbell Scott." Ten Canadian Poets (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1969): 141.

<sup>2</sup>Pacey, 141.

<sup>3</sup>Kathy Mezei, "From Lifeless Pools to the Circle of Affection: The Significance of Space in the Poetry of D.C. Scott", in The Duncan Campbell Scott Symposium ed. K.P. Stich, (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1980): 23.

<sup>4</sup>Mezei, 23.

<sup>5</sup>Mezei, 24.

<sup>6</sup>Mezei, 23.

<sup>7</sup>Catherine Kelly, "In the Listening World: The Poetry of D.C. Scott," Studies in Canadian Literature 4 (Winter, 1979): 71.

<sup>8</sup>Kelly, 71.

<sup>9</sup>Kelly, 72.

<sup>10</sup>Kelly, 72.

<sup>11</sup>Kelly, 72.

<sup>12</sup>Kelly, 72.

<sup>13</sup>Kelly, 72.

<sup>14</sup>Kelly, 72.

<sup>15</sup>Kelly, 72.

<sup>16</sup>Kelly, 72.

<sup>17</sup>Kelly, 72.

<sup>18</sup>Kelly, 71.

<sup>19</sup>Kelly, 72.

<sup>20</sup>Kelly, 71.

<sup>21</sup>Kelly, 72.

<sup>22</sup>Robert McDougall, "D.C. Scott: The Dating of the Poems," Canadian Poetry 2 (Spring/Summer, 1978): 22.

<sup>23</sup>Pacey, 162.

<sup>24</sup>G. Ross Roy, "Duncan Campbell Scott," Duncan Campbell Scott: A Book of Criticism, ed. S.L. Dragland (Ottawa: The Tecumseh Press, 1974): 148.

<sup>25</sup>E.K. Brown, Memoir, Selected Poems of D.C. Scott (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1951): xxii.

<sup>26</sup>Bernard Muddiman, "Duncan Campbell Scott," Duncan Campbell Scott: A Book of Criticism, ed. S.L. Dragland (Ottawa: The Tecumseh Press, 1974): 38.

<sup>27</sup>Robert McDougall, "D.C. Scott: The Dating of the Poems," Canadian Poetry 2 (Spring/Summer, 1978): 22.

<sup>28</sup>Gordon Johnston, "Duncan Campbell Scott," in Canadian Writers and Their Works eds. Robert Lecker, Jack David, Ellen Quigley. (Downsview: ECW Press, 1983): 260.

<sup>29</sup>Johnston, 260.

<sup>30</sup>Johnston, 261.

<sup>31</sup>Brown, xxvi.

<sup>32</sup>Brown, xxvii.

<sup>33</sup>Glenys Stow, "The Wound Under the Feathers: Scott's Discontinuities," in Colony and Confederation: Early Canadian Poets and Their Background ed. George Woodcock. (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1974): 173.

<sup>34</sup>Donna Bennett and Russell Brown eds., An Anthology of Canadian Literature in English (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1982): 207.

<sup>35</sup>Gary Geddes, "Piper of Many Tunes," in Colony and Confederation: Early Canadian Poets and Their Background ed. George Woodcock (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1974): 150.

<sup>36</sup>Brown, xxvii.

<sup>37</sup>Brown, xxvii.

### CHAPTER THREE

Life and nature are in a constant state of change and often this change brings into conflict opposing forces. It is Duncan Campbell Scott's "fascination with the simultaneous presence of oppositions"<sup>1</sup> that allows him to convey an understanding of nature that might escape most individuals. If there is a central theme which seams together what most critics would consider to be the best of Scott's poetry, it would likely be the conflict found in nature and its related significance to humankind. Scott has written different kinds of poetry and he touches on several themes. It can be stated however, that the majority of his better poetry contains a central thematic element. Conflict, and the presence of opposing forces serve as a basic foundation from which his related themes and ideas are created.

In his only attempt to define poetry, Duncan Campbell Scott has suggested:

Perhaps the best, the only definition of poetry is a true poem, for poetry and the poetic is a quality or state of mind and cannot be described, it<sub>2</sub> is apprehended by sensation, not comprehended by reason.

Sound is a chief sensation that is apprehended by a reader of Scott's poetry and as such the reader is exposed to a great deal of conflict and Scott's fascination with it. As discussed in chapter one, Scott's primary use of sound is for description. As proposed in chapter two, Scott employs the sounds of nature



to propel himself into a spiritual realm where he can consider and contemplate philosophical matters. These philosophical matters most often deal with conflict: opposing forces in nature and man, alienation, and hopes for reconciliation. This chapter will deal with these subjects and attempt to reveal sound as a unifying thematic factor. Sound is often the chief method of description for the conflict inherent in nature. Also, as discussed in chapter two, sound is employed by Scott to help propel him to a state whereby he can attempt a reconciliation of the conflicts that trouble him personally, and those that plague humankind. By examining only the more successful of his poems, the central theme of conflict and peaceful resolution becomes more apparent. "The Piper of Arll" contains these themes as central elements and is generally regarded as among Scott's best. What defines that which is and is not considered to be his more successful poetry is a matter beyond the scope of this study. The poems that will be dealt with here, and that have been discussed in previous chapters, are those which best exemplify the themes that will be dealt with. These are also essentially the poems which receive the most critical attention and praise. These are also the poems most likely to survive in various anthologies and allow Scott's works to remain as historically significant.

The vast majority of the critical response to the poetry of Duncan Campbell Scott has included in some form or another

a recognition of the centrality of conflict to Scott's poetic vision. A few of these critics and writers, such as Desmond Pacey, A.J.M. Smith, and Tom Marshall, not only note the amount of conflict and its thematic significance, they also reveal a knowledge of the presence of sound and its ability to amplify theme. Others, such as Gordon Johnston, disagree that there might exist some sort of central theme to Scott's poetry. He does, however, note the abundance of conflict in the poetry and Scott's continual search for a resolution. Once the various critical views regarding the centrality of theme have been discussed, the poem "The Piper of Arll" will be dealt with directly. "The Piper of Arll" is a poem that can be used to represent Scott's thematic centrality. Not only does it contain Scott's major themes, contrast, isolation, and reconciliation, it is also a poem that contains a good deal of sound. Scott's use of sound can be found to aid in the understanding of Scott's basic themes. There are other poems which can also be used to reveal Scott's themes and the significance sound has for the presentation of them.

Conflict of one kind or another permeates the poetry of Duncan Campbell Scott -- his dream pieces, the Indian ballads, his descriptive pieces, and the poetry dealing with moments of recollection. In "The Forsaken," a poem normally associated with Scott's Indian ballads, the Native woman presented has struggled and suffered in her life so that her child may survive.

Years pass and the man this child has become abandons this woman leaving her to die alone on "an island on a lonely lake" (59). Scott's main themes are all present. The poem is full of opposing forces such as the plight of the woman in the violent snow storm and the concept of her abandonment despite her sacrifice. The theme of alienation is touched upon in that the woman has been isolated emotionally and physically. Similar to "The Height of Land" and "The Piper of Arll," there is an element of geographical isolation. It is likely that this woman could have been abandoned almost anywhere, but Scott has decided that his characters are to leave her on an island, which heightens the sense of alienation. The resolution and reconciliation of this situation is a tragic one, yet Scott depicts a scene of peace and beauty. The woman dies alone, covered gently in snow, with the suggestion that her death is her time for "rest" (94). Sound plays a significant role in each of these themes and serves to amplify and heighten the effect in each case. As previously discussed, sound is used to describe the conflict between nature and human kind as the woman attempts to fish for her child during a snow storm. Scott employs primarily auditory images for the storm this woman must endure. Her alienation on the island is emphasized by the lack of sound but her final reconciliation is described as "a silence deeper than silence" (93). While the silence of the island and the silence of her death indicate that she is alone in a physical sense, the "silence deeper

than silence" (93) indicates a spirituality present that transcends the physical realm and ultimately resolves the situation. Scott makes reference to this spiritual presence with the line: "Then all light was gathered up by the hand of God and hid in His breast" (92). This Native woman has been abandoned, but she does not die alone. "The Forsaken" is a poem that not only includes Scott's main themes, it is a poem in which sound is used to aid in the presentation of these themes.

"The Height of Land" is another poem that contains Duncan Campbell Scott's main themes. The location itself is alive with contrast in many ways. The presence of many opposing forces is difficult to ignore. The very essence of the environment is one of conflict. The poet's place in this environment and his awareness of the conflict all around him enable him effectively to distance himself from the others that are with him and enter a hypnotic state. The theme of alienation becomes apparent once the poet sets himself apart and reveals his poetic consciousness. The alienation here is self-inflicted. Scott has chosen to contemplate life from a position of mental solitude. The reconciliation Scott hopes for deals with a spiritual presence. After a description of a journey through a recently burned down forest, Scott considers life and death and reveals a hope for renewal:

How often in the autumn of the world  
Shall the crystal shrine of dawning be rebuilt  
With deeper meaning! Shall the poet then,

Wrapped in his mantle on the height of land,  
Brood on the welter of the lives of men  
And dream of his ideal hope and promise  
In the blush sunrise? (113-119)

This renewal can be found in nature and is a distinct part of the 'Something' that Scott finds here. Auditory imagery is used to describe many of the opposing forces that make up the height of land. The contrasting elements of sound and silence make up a significant part of the conflict inherent in this environment. Sound also enables the poet to achieve a sense of isolation and even alienation from his conscious self and his traveling companions. This leads him to seek out a reconciliation of the opposing forces he encounters and considers. Sound plays a role here too as Scott is able eventually to determine that life ultimately prevails even in forbidding circumstances. This resolution is described in terms of sound. At the end of the poem, Scott writes that he can hear what he describes as: "The thrill of life beat up the planet's margin / And break in the clear susurrus of deep joy (139-140), which "echoes and reechoes" (140) in his being. "The Height of Land" is a poem that contains Scott's major themes and uses sound to convey each one of them.

In his Ten Canadian Poets Desmond Pacey has divided Scott's work into three categories and observes that unity can be found among them. While discussing the Indian ballads he notes:

... the factors which above all unite these ballads with the fantasies and the descriptive poems, and give a single effect to Scott's work as a whole, are his fascination

the inevitable aftermath of storm and conflict.<sup>3</sup>

Scott often uses sound as a device by which this theme can be correctly conveyed to the reader. The following lines from the poem "A Night In June" are used by Pacey as an example of Scott's use of colour:

A bird calls madly from the eaves  
Then stops, the silence all at once  
Disturbed, falls dead again and stuns.  
A redder lightning flits about,  
But in the north a storm is rolled  
That splits the gloom with vivid gold. (7-12)

He follows this with a passage from the poem "Chiostro Verde" and writes:

The passages quoted from "A Night In June" and "Chiostro Verde" illustrate how frequently the effectiveness of Scott's descriptive poetry depends upon contrast -- in the former poem, upon the contrasts between sound and silence, darkness and light, in the latter, the contrast between the shadows of the cypresses and the glare of the sunlight.<sup>4</sup>

This is the only time Pacey refers to Scott's use of sound despite his admission of its thematic importance. The contrast between sound and silence is perhaps Scott's most intriguing and available of the conflicts that make up the "single effect to Scott's work as a whole."<sup>5</sup> In Pacey's conclusion to his section on Scott, he writes: "The final note of Scott's work is not that of the storm but of the silence which follows the storm."<sup>6</sup> It is perhaps by no mistake that Pacey chooses the contrasting elements of sound and silence as his example in a summation of Scott's themes.

A.J.M. Smith is a writer very much aware of Scott's need

to find reconciliation. In a paper simply titled "Duncan Campbell Scott" Smith suggests: "The hardest problem of the artist still remains -- to find the tragic reconciliation of beauty and terror."<sup>7</sup> The reconciliation of opposing forces that Scott often hopes for does not necessarily have to be a tragic one, as Smith suggests. Scott often places an emphasis on peace and beauty rather than dwell on the harshness that can exist in nature. In "The Forsaken" the death of the old Native woman is the reconciliation of the opposing forces that have existed in her life. This reconciliation has occurred as a result of the "silence deeper than silence" (93) that reveals a transcendence from the physical to the spiritual. Scott has therefore presented her death not so much as a tragic event, but more as a liberating event. Dealing with Scott's poems of love, Smith submits that:

They are tremulous and a little feverish. They hang in the balance, as it were, and we don't quite know which way they are going to fall. What contributes to this effect is the simultaneous presence of two opposing forces.

Borrowing from T.S. Eliot, Smith names these two opposing forces as "fascination and repulsion."<sup>9</sup> The manner in which Scott conveys these opposing forces to the reader is of concern to Smith, who is not unaware of the importance of audio imagery, which also consists of contrasting elements. From Scott's later collection, The Green Cloister, Smith cites a passage from "In the Rocky Mountains" and writes:

It is the intimate interplay of light and shade and the delicate half-states of twilight and mist together with the magnificent and slight distortions of sound that

seem to appeal most intensely to Scott and set him apart from the other poets of his generation in Canada.<sup>10</sup>

Smith acknowledges Scott's ability to use sound in ways both direct and subtle. For Scott's nature poetry, Smith writes: "His most vivid and characteristic scenes are pictures of change, flow, and conflict."<sup>11</sup> Smith is aware of the importance of sound as a means by which Scott can convey this conflict. He also cites sound along with sight and odour as elements that make Scott's descriptive pieces successful.

Another major element of conflict found in the poetry of Duncan Campbell Scott is that of alienation. From his essay "Between Two Worlds" Tom Marshall suggests that:

It has often been remarked that an important theme of colonial Canadian poetry is alienation: the alienation of races and cultures from one another, of old world from new, of culture from nature, and, either partly or wholly as a consequence,<sup>12</sup> of these, of man from his larger, or grander, self.

Marshall points out moments of alienation and the conflicts involved with this physical and emotional state. Using "The Piper of Arll" as an example, Marshall points out how sound is used to outline "the beauty and the terror of a world in which violence and love co-exist."<sup>13</sup> Marshall suggests that "the piper's song of alienation and loneliness is akin to the sailor's song of homesickness."<sup>14</sup> This alienation of both the sailors and the piper becomes resolved as both transcend their worldly existence and join one another in silence and beauty as jewels beneath the waves. Marshall also deals with



the poem "The Height of Land" and suggests that Scott:

seeks a point of balance between the imposed civilization and the wilderness, and also between two aspects of the wilderness (which may be seen, because the Canadian space opens one's mind to awareness of the cosmos, as two aspects of the universe): serenity and violence.<sup>15</sup>

Not only does Scott use sound to describe both serenity and violence in "The Height of Land" and other poems, he uses sound as a vehicle by which he may enter a contemplative state and attempt a reconciliation. By heightening his awareness of physical sound, the poet is able to reach a spiritual state of silence that transcends normal conscious thought. From this mental realm Scott can reveal his poetic consciousness through a series of musings and contemplations about philosophical matters. These musings and contemplations often consist of Scott hoping and even attempting to find resolutions to the conflicts he encounters.

From the poetry series Canadian Writers and Their Works, Gordon Johnston writes:

But there does not seem to be a consistent centre of intelligence or sensibility in his work; it is as though in an electrical storm the poles of an electromagnetic field were repeatedly reversing charges without warning. It is impossible, therefore, to be definitive about his thought. Nevertheless, it is clear that Scott imagined or, at least, hoped for some resolution of the contradictions he experienced.<sup>16</sup>

Johnston seems to be reluctant to suggest that Scott has any sort of recurring themes. While it may or may not be true that it is impossible to be definitive about Scott's thought, it is the resolution of the contradictions in his work that

can act as a central theme of sorts. Johnston writes that Scott's "point of view was irreconcilably double on all the issues he considered."<sup>17</sup> The presence of contrasts and conflict in Scott's poetry could be defined as the "centre of intelligence"<sup>18</sup> that Johnston believes does not exist. In a paper entitled "The Significance of Scott's Minor Poems," Johnston stresses: "Scott as a Poet wants to resolve ambiguity -- to see every truth as a form of a single rational truth."<sup>19</sup> Unlike Pacey, Marshall, and Smith, Johnston does not see any thematic centrality with regard to Scott's desire to "resolve ambiguity."<sup>20</sup> He does, however, suggest that: "The drama in many of Scott's poems is the mental drama of a conflict between concepts or values, and that conflict results in pain, uncertainty and fear."<sup>21</sup> Johnston, like the majority of critics and writers who have written about Duncan Campbell Scott's poetry, is aware of the conflict his poetry contains and Scott's desire to resolve that conflict.

In poems such as "The Piper of Arll," Scott does not use sound as a descriptive element to the same degree that he has in other poems. In this poem sound is used to convey a communication of ideas and is thematically central to the poetry. Scott's themes of conflict, alienation and reconciliation are all central to the poem and by extension, to the best of his poetry as a whole. "The Piper of Arll" was published in 1898 and resides in the collection Labour

and the Angel. It is considered by many critics to be Scott's most significant work. S.L. Dragland goes so far as to suggest that the poem "is on everybody's list of the central Canadian poems."<sup>22</sup> It is a poem that contains Scott's main themes which are often revealed by his use of sound. Many of the critics who have dealt with Scott point out the conflict, alienation and reconciliation found in "The Piper of Arll."

Tom Marshall refers to "The Piper of Arll" as Scott's "symbolic fable of the artist in exile."<sup>23</sup> He sees Arll as "a place of loneliness and isolation"<sup>24</sup> where the piper "confronts both the beauty and the terror of a world in which violence and love co-exist."<sup>25</sup> Gary Geddes also suggests the poem to be "an allegory of the artist."<sup>26</sup> But he is quick to point out, "That the poem is intentionally vague and mysterious there can be little doubt."<sup>27</sup> In his "Memoir", E.K. Brown agrees that the poem can be difficult, but suggests,

the main power of the poem is accessible -- a series of moods, rendered with a delicacy and intensity that are achieved with such fullness much more often in music than in words.<sup>28</sup>

Desmond Pacey refers to it while discussing the collection that contains the poem, Labour and the Angel: "Indeed 'The Piper of Arll' is the only really satisfying poem in the whole book."<sup>29</sup> Pacey points out that the "Piper of Arll" is:

a tissue of contrasts -- contrasts between the secluded bay and the wild ocean, between the rustic shepherd and the travelled sailors, between the peaceful setting and the violence suggested by such images as the three pines "like three warriors reaving home / The plunder of a burning town."<sup>30</sup>

Existing in a world so full of conflict and contrast the piper, when he "sings into nature's heart" (80), according to Geddes, "has experienced the reconciliation which was achieved by the Ancient Mariner when he blessed the water snakes unawares."<sup>31</sup> In her paper titled "In the Listening World," Catherine Kelly writes in reference to "The Piper of Arll":

Here the dynamic tension so apparent in Scott's work is seen to be at the core of his vision: at the very time the soul is uplifted in transcendent encounter it experiences the reality of evil as part of the natural universe, as part of itself.<sup>32</sup>

Kelly notes the centrality of conflict in Scott's poetry but also points out the reconciliation that is parallel to it. From The Duncan Campbell Scott Symposium John Matthews suggests in his paper "D.C. Scott and the Moment of Becoming," that "The Piper of Arll" is "very specifically a poem about the poet in Canada."<sup>33</sup> He goes on to outline his hypothesized allegory, suggesting that the piper represents the poet in Canada and that the sailors are the new settlers. He also writes that Scott sees violence as a "solution to the problem of poetic energy"<sup>34</sup> and that violence is the resolution to the clash of opposing forces and that peace will be the eventual outcome. In "The Piper of Arll" this is exactly what occurs. The sinking of the ship and the deaths of the sailors result in their transformation into something much more peaceful and beautiful. An explication of the poem will reveal how the conflicting elements resolve themselves.

Arll is a term for an imaginary place. It is described in the first two stanzas in such a way as to make Arll seem quite inviting and peaceful:

There was in Arll a little cove  
Where the salt wind came cool and free:  
A foamy beach that one would love,  
If he were longing for the sea.  
A brook hung sparkling on the hill,  
The hill swept far to ring the bay;  
The bay was faithful, wild or still,  
To the heart of the ocean far away. (1-8)

The heart of the ocean is far away yet the salt winds "came cool and free" (2). The relative tranquility of the scene seems to be somewhat countered in the next stanza:

There were three pines above the comb  
That, when the sun flared and went down,  
Grew like three warriors reaving home  
The plunder of a burning town. (9-12)

Scott uses a lot of foreshadowing in these four lines. The three pines would perhaps appear similar to the masts of a ship. Also, the sun flaring and going down is similar to the sinking ship described later in the poem. Scott uses military terminology to describe the shadow cast by the pines and employs a violent metaphor. The next stanza counters the previous one by re-introducing a peaceful scene and by introducing the piper, who is at peace: "His heart was swayed with faithful love, / From the springs of God's ocean clear and deep" (15-16). In the next two stanzas a ship appears and is described in terms of colour, primarily red. The next two stanzas have the piper listening to the sailors as "They sang their longing songs of home" (32). Once they have finished,

the piper replies with his own tune "Of lonely love and longed for death" (36). The piper and the sailors can only communicate in terms of the sounds they create.

Sound and silence are contrasted in the next stanza of the poem:

When the fair sound began to lull,  
From out the fireflies and the dew,  
A silence held the shadowy hull,  
Until the eerie tune was through. (37-40)

Silence exists, and holds the ship, but only as "the fair sound began to lull" (37). The sound emanating from the piper is able to co-exist or perhaps even create a state of silence for the sailors on the ship. This may not be unlike the silences that Scott encounters in natural surroundings that contain a great deal of sound. The sound overwhelms and essentially places the listener in a sort of hypnotic state where nothing can be heard despite the presence of sound. Once the tune ends, this effect dissipates: "A silence held the shadowy hull, / Until the eerie tune was through" (39-40). At this point an "Alien song began to thrill" (42) and the sailors as well as the piper fall asleep. This "alien song" (42) is mysteriously produced "from the dark and dreamy deck" (43) and mingles with the sounds natural to Arll, specifically the "drumming" (43) of the brook. This "alien song" (42) not only has an effect on the piper and sailors, it "stirred the braird upon the hill" (44). It may be that the "alien song" is somehow produced by the natural environment and is sensed, rather than heard, by both the sailors and the piper.

Their subsequent sleep may represent their state of transcending awareness from the physical to the spiritual. Specifically, the "alien song" might be the sound of the water as it splashes against the hull of the ship and reverberates out "from the dark and dreamy deck." In this analogy the ship would therefore be similar to a musical instrument and the spiritual presence would be the musician. In order for water to splash against the hull, a wind must be present. This wind would represent the cause of the waves and subsequently the "alien song." It would also be responsible for the "drumming" of the brook and the "stirring" of the braird. The silence of the wind, unseen and unheard in a direct way, indicates the spiritual presence in this analogy. When the wind dies and complete silence occurs, the ship sinks and the transcendence to another realm begins.

At this point in the poem the ship then sails off while the piper is still sleeping on the shore. When he awakes he sees the ship disappear over the horizon and becomes very angry. He throws down his pipe breaking it. Once he calms down he mends his pipe and plays it again:

A melody began to drip  
That mingled with a ghostly thrill  
The vision-spirit of the ship,  
The secret of his broken will.  
Beneath the pines he piped and swayed  
Master of passion and of power;  
He was his soul and what he played,  
Immortal for a happy hour. (73-80)

The piper plays from his soul and his tune mixes with "a ghostly

thrill" (74) not unlike the "alien thrill" (42) that had mysteriously appeared before and sent everyone to sleep. He plays his pipe "With deep, unconscious, childlike art" (83) and succeeds in bringing the ship back to Arll. The piper dies and the sailors send a boat for him and they row him back to the ship. As they do so they sing the piper's original tune. Death is signified here as a result of the comparison to an "exequy" (98), or funeral rite, and the sound the rowing makes. Once the piper is in the boat, the sailors have "laid him down," (99) which suggests his actual death. They then "loosed a rocket to the sky" (100), and wait for a breeze. The ship begins to sink and Scott describes the process in five stanzas. He uses a good deal of colour and light to describe the sunken ship and sailors:

    Their eyes are ruby in the green  
    Long shaft of sun that spreads and rays,  
    And upward with a wizard sheen  
    A fan of sea-light leaps and plays.  
    Tendrils of or and azure creep,  
    And globes of amber light are rolled,  
    And in the gloaming of the deep  
    Their eyes are starry pits of gold. (145-152)

The imagery seems so positive that this may in fact be a view of some sort of dream-state rather than death. References to gold, silver, amber, and light abound. The sailors and the ship seem to have been transformed into jewels.

"The Piper of Arll" is a poem that contains a good deal of sound. The sound of the sailors singing and of the piper's playing make up the entirety of the communication between



these two factions and all that they may represent. Sound is at the forefront of the action of the poem. Though Scott chooses to use primarily visual imagery in this poem, what is heard or that which is described as existing to be heard, carries the story and underlines the significance of the events as they occur. The piper appears to be at home, "Tending the pasture of his sheep; / His heart was swayed with faithful love" (13-14). Yet he pipes a tune described as "lonely" (36). It may be that the piper is only responding to the sailor's songs of homesickness. Either way the emotional contrast is carried by sound. The music contained within the poem is used to present not only the expression of both the piper's alienation and the sailor's, it is also used to express the reconciliation between the piper and nature:

He, singing into nature's heart,  
Guiding his will by the world's will,  
With deep, unconscious, childlike art  
Had sung his soul out and was still. (81-84)

At this point the piper dies and is later transformed along with the sailors into precious stones once the ship sinks. All of the contrasting elements of the poem are resolved in the end by a description of a scene that is both beautiful and peaceful.

Sound also aids in setting the various and shifting moods of the poem. The isolation of the piper is expressed by his "lonely" (36) tune just as the sailors express their homesickness in terms of sound. But the music contained in the poem is

not the only vehicle for the expression of mood. Were it not for the sound the oars made as the sailors paddled, "The oars beat out an exequy" (98), the piper's, "death", actual or allegorical, would be more difficult to determine. Here, the mood shifts from one of happiness to one of despair to one of impending doom.

The lack of sound, or silence, is also significant. Silence in this poem can signify different things. The two times Scott uses the terms 'silent' and 'silence,' the mood created is a serious one. He first uses the term at a point in the poem when the piper and the sailors have completed their initial musical communication:

When the fair sound began to lull,  
From out the fireflies and the dew,  
A silence held the shadowy hull,  
Until the eerie tune was through. (37-40)

The silence described here has a power to suspend those who might encounter it. Later in the poem, the silence of the sailors, as a result of their reluctance or inability now to sing, allows, for the first time, the sound of the environment to prevail and become significant in itself: "Silent they rowed him, dip and drip, / The oars beat out an exequy" (97-98). The silence of the sailors permits the inclusion of some audio imagery that might not otherwise have been heard. Though Scott does not use the term silence in this stanza, he describes a state where there is a distinct lack of sound:

But in the world there was no stir,  
The cordage slacked with never a creak,

They heard the flame begin to purr  
Within the lantern at the peak. (109-112)

The scene is so quiet that the sailors are actually able to hear the sound of the flame in the lantern. This lack of sound denotes a windless situation which ultimately causes the ship to sink. Silence may also therefore signify a spiritual presence. Just as Scott himself could reach a state where his "soul seems to hear" (65) in "The Height of Land," the piper and sailors respond to sounds produced by that which is unheard. The silence resulting from the lack of wind heightens the sensory abilities of those who experience it. The sailors and the piper are both affected by the "alien thrill" that results from the silence that "held the shadowy hull" (39). This silence permits them to become aware of the splashing of water against the hull as a result of the wind. This produces the "alien thrill" which is the song of the spiritual presence. The sailors, the piper, and the spiritual presence are all musicians here, yet the sounds produced by the spiritual presence are only heard by the soul once a state of silence is achieved. Silence appears again in stanza twenty-eight, which heightens the sailor's senses, allowing them to hear "the flame begin to purr / Within the lantern" (111). From this silence, the sailors are able to hear that which would normally remain unheard. The lack of wind and the resulting silence sinks the ship transporting everything into another realm. Once the ship sinks, the piper and sailors exist in the same realm as the spiritual presence.

They are all reconciled in a state of beauty and silence.

It is possible to dissect "The Piper of Arll" allegorically and find several different meanings through various interpretations. What may be considered consistent is the embodiment of Scott's themes in this poem. Found in this one poem are Scott's themes of conflict from opposing forces, alienation, and reconciliation. Referring to the contrasts in "The Piper of Arll," Pacey notes:

These contrasts are in themselves a form of conflict, but in almost all of Scott's poems there is conflict of a more direct sort. The essence of Scott's view of the world seems to be a vision of a battle-ground where nature is in conflict with itself, man in conflict with nature, and man in conflict with man. But he does not leave it at that. Out of the conflict emerges, whether sooner or later, peace and beauty.<sup>35</sup>

This is essentially what occurs in "The Piper of Arll." The various contrasts present conflict and alienation which is ultimately reconciled in a peaceful way. Sound in one form or another can be found to amplify all of these related themes.

Conflict, alienation, and reconciliation are Scott's major themes and they can be found to some degree in virtually all of his poetry, including those pieces which might not qualify as being considered among the best of his poetry. Often these themes can be found separately in various poems and there do exist a few poems where each of these themes can be found to exist individually. Invariably these are the poems that are Scott's most interesting and enduring. Scott's ability to use auditory imagery and sound in general

for descriptive effect, and to underscore his themes, has places him in a unique position in Canadian literature.

## Chapter Three

### Notes

<sup>1</sup>John P. Matthews, "D.C. Scott and the Moment of Becoming," in The Duncan Campbell Scott Symposium ed. K.P. Stich. (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1980): 2.

<sup>2</sup>Duncan Campbell Scott, "Poetry and Progress," in Duncan Campbell Scott: A Book of Criticism. Ed. S.L. Dragland (Ottawa: The Tecumseh Press, 1974): 20.

<sup>3</sup>Desmond Pacey, "Duncan Campbell Scott." Ten Canadian Poets (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1969): 163.

<sup>4</sup>Pacey, 163.

<sup>5</sup>Pacey, 163.

<sup>6</sup>Pacey, 164.

<sup>7</sup>A.J.M. Smith, "The Poetry of Duncan Campbell Scott," Dalhousie Review 28 (April, 1948): 112.

<sup>8</sup>Smith, 121.

<sup>9</sup>Smith, 122.

<sup>10</sup>Smith, 131.

<sup>11</sup>Smith, 131.

<sup>12</sup>Tom Marshall "Between two Worlds: D.C. Scott," Canadian Forum 57 (1977): 20.

<sup>13</sup>Marshall, 20.

<sup>14</sup>Marshall, 20.

<sup>15</sup>Marshall, 20.

<sup>16</sup>Gordon Johnston, "Duncan Campbell Scott," in Canadian Writers and Their Works eds. Robert Lecker, Jack David, Ellen Quigley. (Downsview: ECW Press, 1983): 250.

<sup>17</sup>Johnston, 250.

<sup>18</sup>Johnston, 250.

<sup>19</sup>Gordon Johnston, "The Significance of Scott's Minor Poems," in The Duncan Campbell Scott Symposium ed. K.P. Stich. (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1980): 11.

<sup>20</sup>Johnston, 11.

<sup>21</sup>Johnston, 11.

<sup>22</sup>S.L. Dragland, introduction, Duncan Campbell Scott: A Book of Criticism. Ed. S.L. Dragland (Ottawa: The Tecumseh Press, 1974): 135.

<sup>23</sup>Marshall, 20.

<sup>24</sup>Marshall, 20

<sup>25</sup>Marshall, 20

<sup>26</sup>Marshall, 20

<sup>27</sup>Marshall, 20

<sup>28</sup>Brown, Memoir, Selected Poems of D.C. Scott (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1951): xix.

<sup>29</sup>Pacey, 148.

<sup>30</sup>Pacey, 163.

<sup>31</sup>Gary Geddes, "Piper of Many Tunes," in Colony and Confederation: Early Canadian Poets and Their Background ed. George Woodcock (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1974): 157.

<sup>32</sup>Catherine Kelly, "In the Listening World: The Poetry of D.C. Scott," Studies in Canadian Literature 4 (Winter, 1979): 76.

<sup>33</sup>Matthews, 4.

<sup>34</sup>Matthews, 2.

<sup>35</sup>Pacey, 164.

## Conclusion

The elements of sound and silence play a significant role in the poetry of Duncan Campbell Scott. A recognition of the prominence and meaning of these elements is indispensable for a greater understanding and appreciation of Scott's poetry. Scott uses sound and silence in different ways in much of his poetry to convey a variety of things.

Sound is often used by Scott as a device with which he can describe the setting of certain poems in a unique manner. Scott creates images of the landscape and the natural elements by using sound quite often as his only descriptive device. In poems such as "Rapids at Night," the overwhelming and repetitive sound of the water crashing against the rocks serves as the sheets upon which Scott composes his intricate sonic movement. Many of Scott's poems occur in a nocturnal setting and so the sense of hearing is the primary human sense available for a participatory perception of what is occurring. This nocturnal setting is virtually required as darkness is often an essential part of the setting that is necessary to achieve insight. Often these natural settings are not only described in terms of auditory imagery, they are full of the natural occurring sounds and silences that are to be heard in the Canadian wilderness. The sounds of birds calling, pine-cones falling, water rushing, and of the wind in the trees, all



provide the reader with an awareness of sound in nature and the silence in nature that these sounds often interrupt or draw attention to. The silences Scott divulges in these landscapes often suggest the existence of a spiritual presence. This is the case in poems such as "The Forsaken," "The Height of Land," and "The Piper of Arll." Silence may already exist in some landscapes, while in other settings there is such a complete sense of sound that the poet becomes entranced by it and enters a transcending realm where sounds are unheard and silence permits a resolution of conflict.

In "The Height of Land" Scott's attempt at resolving the conflicts around him arrives in the form of a personal philosophy. Once Scott has reached the transcending realm, "Thought reawakens and is linked again / With all the welter of the lives of men" (72-73). From this point Scott declares, "And here, where we can think, on the bright uplands / Where the air is clear, we deeply brood on life" (77-78). He is not so much referring to his actual location as he is to his current state of mind. "Here" (77) is, in effect, the contemplative realm that Scott has moved to from the physical realm. The landscape, and specifically the sounds and silences within it, have enabled Scott to reach this state. Now that he is here, he can begin to think out possible solutions to the conflicts that plague mankind. What results is a philosophical concept involving a balance between deeds and

thoughts:

A Something to be guided by ideals--  
That in themselves are simple and serene--  
Of noble deed to foster noble thought  
Till deed and thought shall interpenetrate,  
Making life lovelier... (81-86)

But just how Scott goes about attempting a reconciliation of opposites is of lesser importance than the fact that he has enabled himself, and by extension, the reader, the ability to find the right state of mind for such a task. To a large degree Scott is presenting to the reader the option of finding harmony through the questions he asks, the philosophies he presents and the visual and auditory images he has created. Scott ultimately reveals how to employ the very conflicts that are troubling, to such an extent that they become the material from which a solution can be created.

Scott also uses the sounds and silences that exist in his poetry to reveal the continuing conflict found in nature. Placed in these natural settings of conflict and turmoil, Scott indicates a sensory acquisition of heightened appreciation for the sounds, and especially the silences, of these settings. As Kathy Mezei writes, "in many of Scott's poems, the beauty one discovers in nature leads one into an ideal and silent realm."<sup>1</sup> Scott reveals an ability to transcend the realm of normal conscious thought and enter a contemplative state. The reader is transported along with him and subsequently left to determine possible resolutions. He does this to

great effect in a direct way in "The Height of Land," and a more indirect way in "Rapids at Night." This same process seems to occur in an allegorical sense in "The Piper of Arll." In each case there is a sense of alienation which is an element of his poetry that is also often expressed in terms of sound and silence. Scott attempts to resolve the conflicts of the material world from his contemplative state. As Gordon Johnston states, referring to Scott's "process of thinking in terms of twinned opposites;"<sup>2</sup> "It is human reason which distinguishes oppositions, and then presides over the clash between them."<sup>3</sup> Though much of Scott's poetry can be considered quite ambiguous in terms of meaning and theme, he clearly demonstrates an ability to outline conflict and contrast, and his "use of nature as a correspondence to his inner world,"<sup>4</sup> reveals a genuine determination to reconcile the ambiguities of life. All of this Scott attempts to achieve with the elements of sound and silence as his poetic vehicles.

Scott's frequent use of sound and silence creates a unique and significant aspect of his poetry that has yet to be given a full consideration by any serious critics of Canadian poetry. Despite this, the work of Duncan Campbell Scott continues to be anthologized and he is perhaps considered to be more of a major contributor to the Confederation period of Canadian literature than he was during his lifetime. There is no doubt that continued analytical examinations of the collections

of his poetry and of specific poems, will augment his position as a major figure in Canadian literature.

## Conclusion

### Notes

<sup>1</sup>Kathy Mezei, "From Lifeless Pools to the Circle of Affection: The Significance of Space in the Poetry of D.C. Scott", in The Duncan Campbell Scott Symposium ed. K.P. Stich, (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1980): 32.

<sup>2</sup>Gordon Johnston, "The Significance of Scott's Minor Poems, in The Duncan Campbell Scott Symposium ed. K.P. Stich. (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1980): 11.

<sup>3</sup>Johnston, 11.

<sup>4</sup>Mezei, 23.

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