

It is significant that he suggests the fact that Canadians in the old river towns perceive 'the lights of moving cars' in the United States and remember that they live 'on a frontier that was more a link than a division'.¹²⁴

While other Canadian writers in the years preceding US entry into the War hinted at a (concealed) weakness in the big southern neighbor which refrained for years from joining the battle against the common enemy, MacLennan, possibly aware of the decisive role of the USA later on, offers no such allusion, but instead stresses the openness of the border, implying the ground the two cultures share. It was only long after the war was over that the metaphor of the appropriate fence appealed to him.

In the third of his national novels *The Precipice*, which was less successful in Canada than in the USA, MacLennan looked south and examined and contrasted the culture of the southern neighbor. Using symbolic landscapes and individuals who encapsulate dominant ideologies and mentalities MacLennan again chose a love romance for his plot. A Yankee businessman from Cleveland who visits a small backward Canadian town, Grenville in Ontario, fascinates and wins Lucy Cameron, one of three unmarried sisters, with his boyish charm so that she elopes with the divorcee and breaks with the strict lifestyle enforced by a staid and extremely 'proper' elder sibling who is a true daughter of a severe Calvinist.¹²⁵

As an 'authentic American' – his face 'larger and bolder than the faces of most Canadian men she knew' (*The Precipice*, p. 23) – Steve Lassiter can thus uproot Lucy Cameron, who has been restrained and restricted in her movements and actions by the heritage of her rigidly Calvinistic father and her elder sister, who assumed this role after his death.¹²⁶ The self-confident, brash, athletic Stephen together with his

¹²⁴ MacLennan, *Two Solitudes* (1945), chapter 59, quoted from MacMillan pb. ed. 1986, p. 411.

¹²⁵ *The Precipice*, Toronto 1948, esp. part 1, p. 170ff.

¹²⁶ It is significant that the representative of America is a male while the Canadian is female. On this aspect cf. E. Cameron, 'Will the Real Hugh MacLennan Please Stand Up: A Reassessment', in: Frank M. Tierney, ed., *Hugh MacLennan*, Ottawa