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The "Indian," the "Other"  
in the  
Canadian Quest for Identity

by

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A Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies  
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree  
of Master of Arts

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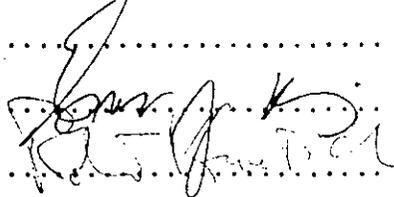
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IN THE  
CANADIAN QUEST FOR IDENTITY

BY

JOAN BRIDGEMAN

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of  
the University of Manitoba in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
of the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS.

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## Abstract

"The 'Indian,' the 'Other' in the Canadian Quest for Identity" focuses on four prairie novels of the 1970's to examine the relation of literature to a nation's identity. By looking at the way the authors use Indian characters and the myths of the place to connect with the "Wholly Other," the thesis suggests that some modern novelists see the necessity of learning from Indian characters both the shamanic metaphor--that man must learn to divine the mysteries of life and death--and the Metis metaphor--that we must learn to mix the ancestral presences we bring with us with those we find in the place--in order to re-establish contact with the spirit of the place, the collective unconscious, the sacred "Wholly Other" within and without.

In Gone Indian Robert Kroetsch sets up a dialectic in which the young quester disproves his advisor's inexorably tragic world view by following guides across the frontier of consciousness to overcome his fear of life and death. W. O. Mitchell has his protagonist in The Vanishing Point learn from the reserve, the Indians, and the trickster characters to reject his civilized rational death-in-life and to participate once again in the dance

of the living whole. In The Temptations of Big Bear Rudy Wiebe's attempt to "let the land speak" through an imaginative re-creation of the spirit of Big Bear is qualified by the author's allusive method which subsumes the spirit of Great Parent of Bear to the Christian "Wholly Other." Finally, in The Diviners, Margaret Laurence's heroine overcomes her modern anxiety about life and death by cognizing and recognizing her connections to the on-going cosmic process.

The "Indian," the "Other" in the Canadian Quest for Identity

Dedicated to All People for whom This Land is Sacred.

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The patience and encouragement of my advisor, Dr. David Williams, and the support of my husband, Ray Hoepfner, made this work possible.

Notes - Chapter Two

<sup>1</sup> W. O. Mitchell, The Vanishing Point (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1973), p. 128. All further references to this work will appear in parentheses in the text.

<sup>2</sup> Carlyle, pp. 310 - 11.

<sup>3</sup> Williams, p. 319. See also Tedlock and Tedlock, p.xx.

<sup>4</sup> Milton Wilson, commenting on Margaret Avison's poem "Perspective" which asks "does a train run pigeon-toed?" in A. J. M. Smith, ed., Masks of Poetry (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1962), p. 136.

<sup>5</sup> Hughes, p. 45.

<sup>6</sup> Tedlock and Tedlock, p. 111.

<sup>7</sup> Williams, p. 320.

<sup>8</sup> The focus of this paper is the way trickster figures help Carlyle Sinclair to change. It should also be noted that Carlyle himself has some Wesackashack tendencies and helps Archie learn to steer his own life too. Mitchell seems to suggest that every man is both Coyote and Christ.

<sup>9</sup> Williams, p. 317. "Victoria" suggests the prudish Victorian attitudes from which Carlyle must free himself. Ironically, the "accident" of her name is deliberate as Carlyle is the only person who does not call her "Vicky."

<sup>10</sup> Northrop Frye, Fearful Symmetry (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1947), p. 74.

## Introduction

"It is all so vast, so laid out in unending curving lines that you can begin to lose the sense of yourself in relation to it. . . . it can drive a small man to madness, this incomprehensible unending at any point seemly [sic] unresisting and unchecked space."<sup>1</sup> "It" is, of course, the prairie landscape, as encountered by an outsider, as envisioned by a modern prairie novelist. The landscape itself, the vastness and the emptiness, arouses feelings which lead to losing the sense of self. The questioning of the sense of self--who am I and why am I here?--is the basis of the quest for identity. The questioner, in this case Edgar Dewdney as created by Rudy Wiebe, goes on to comment that "old Big Bear has lived into his own understanding of that land and sometimes while I was out there his seemed the more beguiling prospect; it may, in the end, last much longer than steel."<sup>2</sup> When the landscape arouses feelings which call up questions which he cannot answer, the sensitive outsider recognizes intuitively that someone who has grown here, who has lived into his own understanding of this land, has the answers. This "other" who can help us find the sense of ourselves in relation to this land is most often, in recent prairie

fiction, an Indian character. The Indian as "other" in Rudy Wiebe's The Temptations of Big Bear reminds us of a world we have almost lost; an Indian as "other" helps a White character find himself in Robert Kroetsch's Gone Indian, in W. O. Mitchell's The Vanishing Point, and in Margaret Laurence's The Diviners.

The term "Indian" in my title is used somewhat loosely, in the way that anyone with some Indian blood has popularly been classified as "Indian" in Canadian society. Historically, since Columbus's big mistake, "Indian" has been the term used by Europeans to identify the original peoples of this continent. Legally, in Canada, an Indian is anyone so recognized for the purposes of the Indian Act. He may be a treaty Indian--a member of a band which at one time signed a treaty with the government. He may be a status Indian--a member of a recognized Indian band which has never signed a treaty. He may be a non-status Indian--usually meaning someone who sold his treaty rights for employment purposes or for enfranchisement, or who lost them by marriage. Traditionally, Indians have been willing to accept as Indian anyone who fully espoused an Indian way of life. By this definition, Indian means a way of life which includes a language and a highly structured system of religious belief and ritual which governs every aspect of day to day

life. The language and the religion are so tied in to the Indian's way of perceiving and interacting with his environment that for a traditional Indian, "the land is the culture."<sup>3</sup> Modern writers turn to Indian characters for help in learning, in accordance with the root meaning of "culture," how to worship, to communicate with the spirit of the place which informs the way of life, the identity, of the men who inhabit this land.

In the novels to be discussed, the legal Indians include Kroetsch's Daniel Beaver and his family, all of Mitchell's Stonys of Paradise Valley Reserve, and Wiebe's Big Bear and his people. By the traditional method of identifying an Indian, Grey Owl would also "pass," for he lived an Indian lifestyle and came to accept the world view which the land dictates. He was accepted as an Indian by Indians. Anahareo insists that she neither knew of nor suspected his other identity until after his death.<sup>4</sup> Jeremy Sadness, Carlyle Sinclair, and even the author, Rudy Wiebe as he "unearths" Big Bear, learn from Indian characters those values which most separate the Indian from the White world view--"lands, communal existence, conceptions of freedom, Indian religious attitudes and beliefs, the conception of death, and the value of individual existence;"<sup>5</sup> a positive passive acceptance of the world as it is;<sup>6</sup> and a seemingly peculiar conception

of Self as a part of, or connected to, the other people or things around it.<sup>7</sup>

In The Diviners, the "Indian" "others" with whom Morag associates are the Metis family, the Tonnerres. The Metis are people who have a mixture of Indian and White blood. A Metis would generally have a mixture of physical features of both races as well as at least a partial understanding of two languages; a religion, usually Christian, mixed with some native traditions and rituals; and a mixture of values, the significance of which the Metis character is usually unaware. In general it would seem that those Metis, like Jacques Tonnerre, who live closer to the land would have a lifestyle and world view closer to the Indian than would those who live in or on the fringes of White society, like Lazarus in Manawaka. Because of the loss of the traditional communal existence and the adoption of the Christian religion, the Tonnerres, like Morag, have problems with knowing who they are and where they belong. Jules's deracination and confusion are evident. Like Morag he has inherited pride and some techniques of connection which give him the potential to find himself, although in the novel, it is left to Pique to sing Jules's song.

Indian and Metis people often refer to themselves as Natives, especially for political purposes of providing

a united front to deal with government and media. "Native" assumes that the two groups share common goals and objectives with respect to rights and privileges. But the word "native" also implies simply "one who was born here." In this sense, "native" can also apply to White Canadians. White Canadians who were born here, like Kroetsch, Mitchell, Wiebe, and Laurence, are for the first time articulating a knowledge of the land which is indigenous. As Laurence's novel symbolically suggests, the Metis metaphor is necessary for a successful definition of a Canadian identity. Canadians must learn to mix--to accommodate our ancestral origins to the ancestors of our place before we can begin to feel at home with the land and with ourselves. If a Canadian is one who professes allegiance to a geographically and politically defined Canadian community,<sup>8</sup> then a native Canadian must be one whose allegiance is dependent upon a non-rational understanding of the land from whence he has sprung, an understanding inspired by the spirit of the place within. Thus all identity must first be a regional or at least a local identity, an identification with the peculiar details of a specific place. And the role of Canadian literature in defining identity must simply be to tell our own stories of the "once and future" heroes who inhabit our native land.

Prairie authors have lately been presenting as the "once and future" hero the Indian, our "other." The "other" is usually perceived as somehow different from the self. Historically, the "other" has tended to be either the one on whom we project all the negative and undesirable characteristics which we do not wish to acknowledge in ourselves, or the one who reveals all the shortcomings and faults of our own system.<sup>9</sup> This latter view is more pertinent to my thesis for, when the Indian is presented in this manner, he reveals more about ourselves than about himself.<sup>10</sup> The former view of the Indian as the totally opposite, "the dark inferior side," is found only superficially in recent novels, as a concept which immature characters learn to overcome. Psychological theory suggests that we must acknowledge the "other" as the other half of ourselves--selves which are a balance of positive and negative features.<sup>11</sup> In the four novels being studied, the Indian seems to be presented as a balanced character with a sense of himself as a Whole Person which the White characters wish to emulate. This sense of being a Whole Person seems somehow connected to the Indian character's awareness of the "wholly other" which he has retained and from which modern man "in search of a soul" has become alienated.

C. G. Jung has best explicated this idea of the

Whole Self in his psychological studies. For Jung, the Whole Self is composed of two parts--the ego of which one is conscious and the Self of which one is unconscious. The Self is partly personal and partly universal, connected, in Jung's terms, to the universal or collective unconscious. In order to know the Self, and thus to develop a sense of an identity as a Whole Person, one must become aware of the unconscious and integrate it into daily consciousness. This process of integration Jung calls individuation. The function of relationship between consciousness and Whole Self Jung calls soul.<sup>12</sup>

The term "wholly other" has connotations which Rudolf Otto has discussed in The Idea of the Holy. For Otto, the "wholly other" describes that which is mysterious or quite beyond the usual, the intelligible, and the familiar and which causes the religious feeling of wonder and awe.<sup>13</sup> Thus, the "wholly other" is holy. The unconscious nightside of existence to which Indian characters retain connection includes that which Otto calls the "numinous"--the "holy" without any moral or rational overtones.<sup>14</sup> Thus the quest for an identity like that of the Indian is a quest for the Whole Self, a quest for the "wholly other," a quest reaching into the personal and collective unconscious to heal modern man's separation from the primal, holy unity which each

and all once knew. As Margaret Atwood's heroine puts it upon surfacing, "the Indians did not own salvation but they had once known where it lived and their signs marked the sacred places, the places where you could learn the truth."<sup>15</sup>

Gary Snyder, a western American poet, has explained in his own way the necessity of sacred places in the quest for the Holy Self:

How does knowledge of place help us know the Self? The answer, simply put, is that we are all composite beings, not only physically but intellectually, whose sole individual identifying feature is a particular form or structure changing constantly in time. There is no "self" to be found in that, and yet oddly enough, there is. Part of you is out there waiting to come into you, and another part of you is behind you, and the "just this" of the ever-present moment holds all the transitory little selves in its mirror. . . .

[There is] no self-realization without the Whole Self, and the Whole Self is the Whole Thing. Thus knowing who and where are intimately linked.<sup>16</sup>

"[K]nowing who and where are intimately linked."

Each of the four authors to be discussed grew as a child on the prairies in a rural, farm or small town, environment. For them in general, the landscape is not threatening and alien but is rather more often awe-inspiring and evocative of memories of childhood and home. It is part of their personal unconscious. Authors who have grown here hold intuitively similar feelings towards the land, the place, as do the indigenous people. As Dick Harrison has commented, "There seems to be a surprisingly close correlation between a writer's imaginative understanding of the land and his sympathy for the native people."<sup>17</sup>

What is it that the Indians know about the land that the White authors have begun to articulate, and how is this knowledge related to a sense of identity? Snyder has described what the Indian meant to him in his personal quest for identity:

As a child I spoke with the old Salishan man a few times over the years. . . . I sensed what he represented, what he knew, and what it meant to me: he knew better than anyone else I had ever met, where I was. I had no notion of a white American or European heritage providing an identity; I defined myself by relation

to the place. . . . [and] never forgot, or left, that first ground: "the where" of our "who are we?"<sup>18</sup>

Snyder's experience corresponds with what Harrison sees in Canadian literature. Contemporary novelists, he says, "identify the Indian as the one potential 'ancestor' who is close to the soil, organically and elementally connected with it, and whose culture may reveal what the land has been trying to tell us from the beginning. In this view the land tends to emerge not only sympathetically but as an embodiment of darker subconscious states of the human mind and spirit with which we must re-establish contact."<sup>19</sup>

Robert Kroetsch too links the land to Harrison's "darker subconscious states of the human mind and spirit." Musing on the significance of "ground," Kroetsch has said:

Ground. That word so much in use today. What does it mean beyond the dirt that the dirt farmer uses to grow wheat? Some kind of ur-condition, existence itself before any naming. The stuff before the stuff that is history or culture or society or art. That which is before the self, even. The stuff of which "place" is made. By dwelling on place we

hope to get back through naming to the ground.<sup>20</sup>

The quotation reflects Kroetsch's obsession with the necessity to circumvent the words which have tended to obscure or falsify our own perception of this land.<sup>21</sup> But it also suggests what it is that we have missed or lost in our failure to perceive properly. Ground, he says, is what was there before anything else, "some kind of ur-condition," to which we hope to get back.

What is this ur-condition and how is it, the ground of the place, related to identity? Psychologist Otto Rank, speaking of identity, offers a possible answer:

At the highest level of human personality we have a process that psycho-analysis calls . . . "identification." This identification is the echo of an original identity, not merely of child and mother, but of everything living--witness the reverence of the primitive for animals. For man, identification aims at re-establishing a lost identity: not an identity which was lost once and for all, phylo-genetically through the differentiation of the sexes, or ontologically in birth, but an identity with the cosmic process, which has to be continually surrendered and

continually re-established in the course of self-development.<sup>22</sup>

Thus identity means re-establishing our severed connection with the "cosmic process" which Snyder found in his place, and Kroetsch in the "ground," and with which, Harrison says, the Indians provide a link. This cosmic process is that of which Chief Luther Standing Bear is speaking when he says: "in the Indian the spirit of the land is still vested; it will be until other men are able to divine and meet its rhythm. Men must be born and reborn to belong. Their bodies must be formed of the dust of their forefathers' bones."<sup>23</sup> This dust of the forefathers' bones is the very "ground" which peeks around and through the images in a Jackson Beardy painting:

Beardy's technique gives expression to the religio-philosophical view that even as through typicality the individual represents the species, so does the individual and species participate in the seamless indivisible whole that is Kitche Manitou. For the ground colour that breaks through the images represents the divine Kitche Manitou in which individual and species participate. . . . Ground represents the eternal and unknowable

ground of all being.<sup>24</sup>

Thus the cosmic process with which we must re-connect in order to re-establish our identity is the divine world without us in the ground, in nature, in the universe, and within us in our bodies formed from the dust of those who have died here before us. It is that "primal nothing" for which Jeremy Sadness is searching; the natural world which Carlyle Sinclair remembers he is both alien from and participant in; the Logos with Whom Big Bear communes; and the sacred which Morag Gunn divines.

The sacred "within me and without" is in literary terms a romantic notion; the authors being discussed tend to have a strong kinship with the English Romantic poets, beyond their obvious concern with the landscape and with man's relationship to it. As Meyer Abrams has pointed out, the Romantics were concerned with "the assimilation and reinterpretation of religious ideas, as constitutive elements in a world view."<sup>25</sup> Abrams, borrowing from Carlyle, entitles his study "Natural Supernaturalism" for, he says, "the general tendency was, in diverse degrees, to naturalize the supernatural and to humanize the divine."<sup>26</sup> But the tendency in modern western Canada seems to be to borrow from the Indians to redefine what is supernatural,<sup>27</sup> and to reassert the divinity within the human as within all creation.

An equally Romantic interest in time infuses all four Canadian novels. Professor Madham, Carlyle Sinclair, and the author, Rudy Wiebe, are obsessed with a past which they fear is "forever lost to me but still recoverable to the world." Laurence's resolution to "look ahead into the past and back into the future" echoes Wordsworth's "I look into past time as prophets look / Into futurity."<sup>28</sup> This interest in time leads to a parallel Romantic and prairie interest in childhood as that past time of the individual to which we must all return as adults, attempting to combine the perceptions of the child with the intellectual powers of the adult.<sup>29</sup> Like Wordsworth who suggests that "the child is father to the man," Jeremy Sadness, Carlyle Sinclair, and Morag Gunn attempt to solve present problems by resorting to strengths and remembered perceptions of wholeness and connection from their childhood, and Wiebe attempts to influence current Canadian attitudes by returning to ideas lost in the childhood of the nation.

The problem of time and of the necessity to return to childhood as a time of remembered cosmic connection leads Romantic writers to the question of memory. Wordsworth's idea that "the mind modifies sensation as much as sensation modifies the mind" is integral to Laurence. In her juxtaposing technique, memories of the past

are modified by and themselves modify the present, fiction modifies fact, and fact changes into myth. Laurence, like Wordsworth, "filters present experience back through memory and the unconscious river in his veins."<sup>30</sup> For Wordsworth, "you advance in life by traveling back again to the beginning, by reassessing your life, by binding your days together anew."<sup>31</sup>

Both Laurence and Wordsworth stress the importance of place as "the repository of memory. We can understand the relation in Wordsworth between mind and nature, once we understand that Wordsworth evolves his soul or sense of identity as he identifies more and more hallowed places."<sup>32</sup> As Wordsworth attempted to define personal and national identity by naming and recreating the sacred places of his own childhood and of the Celtic and Druidic past of his nation, and to translate with his "spots of time" temporal into spatial experience,<sup>33</sup> Canadian prairie writers of the 1970's return to home ground to identify our sacred places, to make us see that our home, the centre of reality, the axis mundi, is here--at Fort Duhamel, Storm and Misty, Bulls Head Hill, or Manawaka. A hallowed place is any place where someone has been born or reborn or where someone has died. We cannot, as Wordsworth knew, develop a sense of identity without an awareness of these hallowed places where man is

connected through the ground to the divine.

"By affirming both nature and spirit, the Romantic sanctioned at once a poetry of concrete environmentalism, and a technique of access to the sacrality in process of being sacrificed in the drive of western man toward secularization and science."<sup>34</sup> Canadian prairie novelists too are concerned with this "technique of access to the sacrality" which in religious terms is defined as shamanism.<sup>35</sup> Each of the four novels has a character who communes with, or who helps the hero commune with, the other side: Roger Dorck, Archie Nicotine and the little bare-bum shaman, Big Bear himself, and Christie Logan and Jules Tonnerre. Each of the novelists is using the shamanic metaphor to explain what art does for both the writer and the reader. Each author seems to be aware of Jung's definition of myth as "original revelations of the pre-conscious psyche"<sup>36</sup> and thus a vital link with the collective unconscious. Each novelist refers to old mythological heroes such as Weesackachak/Coyote, Buffalo Woman, and the Magic Horse, or to manufactured personal heroes such as Roger Dorck, Mateland Dean, Kitty McLean, or Piper Gunn who fulfil the shamanic role for his or her protagonist, in the same way that the author who creates the hero fulfils the shamanic role for the readers. In our modern secular world, the writer who grew up on the

land has accepted the role of prophet, seer, and healer in the same way that Wordsworth accepted his calling from the Druid priest on Salisbury Plain--"a voice from the past pointing to starry sky / Alternately, and Plain below," and whose rituals were "for both worlds, the living and the dead."<sup>37</sup>

To reinforce the idea of the Indian "other" who helps re-connect modern White man to the cosmic process, each author describes an hierogamos union between an Indian character and a White character who seeks to regain a lost wholeness. For Jeremy "Buffalo" Sadness and Bea as Buffalo Woman, for Carlyle Sinclair and Victoria Rider, or Big Bear and Kitty McLean, or Morag Gunn and Jules Tonnerre, sexual union provides an experience of mysterium coniunctionis,<sup>38</sup> and presages the rebirth of the hero as a Whole Person in an experience which belies the fearful modern question, "Is nothing sacred?" Finally, through sex, as through death and through the art of creation, modern man repeats that sacred unity of earth and sky, that cosmic process, "as it was in the beginning. . . ." <sup>39</sup>

Notes - Introduction

<sup>1</sup> Rudy Wiebe, The Temptations of Big Bear (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1973), p. 114.

<sup>2</sup> Wiebe, p. 115.

<sup>3</sup> The title of a film commissioned by the Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs. Note also that by these definitions, a legal Indian is not necessarily a traditional Indian.

<sup>4</sup> Lynne Schuyler, "Still Bucking the Wind: The Passion of Anahareo," Today Magazine, 24 May, 1980, p. 9.

<sup>5</sup> Vine Deloria, Jr., God Is Red (New York: Dell, 1973), p. 55.

<sup>6</sup> Werner Muller, "The 'Passivity' of Language and the Experience of Nature: A Study in the Structure of the Primitive Mind," in Myths and Symbols, ed. Joseph M. Kitagawa and Charles H. Long (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1969), pp. 227 - 39.

<sup>7</sup> Dorothy Lee, "Notes on the Conception of the Self Among the Wintu Indians," Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, 45(1950), 538 - 43.

<sup>8</sup> Lionel Rubinoff, "Nationalism and Celebration: Reflections on the Sources of Canadian Identity," QQ, 82(Spring 1975), 1 - 13.

<sup>9</sup> For various aspects of this discussion see: Robert F. Berkhofer, Jr., The White Man's Indian (New York: Knopf, 1978); Edward Dudley and Maximillian E. Novak, eds., The Wild Man Within (Univ. of Pittsburgh Press, 1972); Leslie Fiedler, The Return of the Vanishing American (New York: Stein and Day, 1968); John J. Teunissen and Evelyn J. Hinz, "Roger Williams, Thomas More, and the Narragansett Utopia," EAL, 11(1976/77).

<sup>10</sup> Dorothy Livesay, "The Native People in our Canadian Literature," The English Quarterly, 4(Spring 1971), 21 - 32. See also Margaret Atwood, Survival (Toronto: Anansi, 1972) and Elizabeth Waterston, Survey (Toronto: Methuen, 1973).

<sup>11</sup> C. G. Jung, "Aion," in Psyche and Symbol, ed. Violet S. de Laszlo (New York: Doubleday, 1958), p. 50.

<sup>12</sup> Jung, "The Psychology of the Child Archetype," in Psyche and Symbol, p. 128. See also the editor's introduction, p. xxxii.

<sup>13</sup> Rudolf Otto, The Idea of the Holy, trans. John W. Harvey (1923; rpt. London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1978), p. 26.

<sup>14</sup> Otto, p. 6.

<sup>15</sup> Margaret Atwood, Surfacing (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1972), p. 166.

<sup>16</sup> Gary Snyder, The Old Ways (San Francisco: City Lights, 1977), p. 63.

<sup>17</sup> Dick Harrison, Unnamed Country: The Struggle for a Canadian Prairie Fiction (Edmonton: Univ. of Alberta Press, 1977), p. 63. Harrison does not develop the idea.

<sup>18</sup> Snyder, pp. 57 - 58.

<sup>19</sup> Harrison, p. 199.

<sup>20</sup> Kroetsch journal, cited by Peter Thomas, "Keeping Mum: Kroetsch's 'Alberta'," JCF, 2( Spring 1973), p. 55.

<sup>21</sup> See "Unhiding the Hidden: Recent Canadian Fiction," JCF, 3, No. 3(1974), 43 - 46, and Robert Enright and Dennis Cooley, "Uncovering Our Dream World: An Interview with Robert Kroetsch," Arts Manitoba, Jan - Feb, 1977, pp. 32 - 39 for Kroetsch's comments on language obscuring perception.

<sup>22</sup> Otto Rank, "The Artist's Fight with Art," in The Myth of the Birth of the Hero and Other Writings, ed. Philip Freund (1932; rpt. New York: Knopf, 1959), p. 195.

<sup>23</sup> Cited by Deloria, p. 73.

<sup>24</sup> Kenneth James Hughes, Jackson Beardy--Life and Art (Winnipeg: Special Issue, Canadian Dimension, 14, No. 2, 1979), p. 26 and p. 44.

<sup>25</sup> Meyer Abrams, Natural Supernaturalism (New York: Norton, 1971), p. 13.

<sup>26</sup> Cited by Abrams, p. 68.

<sup>27</sup> Dennis Tedlock and Barbara Tedlock, Teachings from the American Earth (New York: Liveright, 1975), p. 151.

<sup>28</sup> Cited by Abrams, p. 71.

<sup>29</sup> See Abrams, p. 380. See also Jung, "The Psychology of the Child Archetype"; Eli Mandel, Another Time (Erin: Press Porcepic, 1977); Wilfred Pelletier, "Childhood in an Indian Village," in Native Peoples in Canadian Literature, ed. William Mowat and Christine Mowat (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1975), pp. 43 - 55.

<sup>30</sup> Robert Langbaum, The Mysteries of Identity (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1977), p. 42.

<sup>31</sup> Langbaum, p. 44.

<sup>32</sup> Langbaum, p. 44.

<sup>33</sup> See Deloria on a personal affective rather than an intellectual experience of religion, "Thinking in Time and Space," God Is Red, pp. 75 - 89. See also Langbaum on faith versus revelation, p. 42.

<sup>34</sup> Tom Henighan, "Shamans, Tribes, and the Sorcerer's Apprentices: Notes on the Discovery of the Primitive in Modern Poetry," DR, 59(Winter 1979 - 80), p. 607.

<sup>35</sup> Mircea Eliade, Rites and Symbols of Initiation, trans. Willard Trask (New York: Harper and Row, 1958), pp. 95 - 102.

<sup>36</sup> Jung, "The Psychology of the Child Archetype," Psyche and Symbol, p. 117.

<sup>37</sup> William Wordsworth, The Prelude, Book XII, lines 313 - 379, from the 1805 text edited by Ernest de

Selincourt and revised by Stephen Gill (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1970), p. 226 - 28.

<sup>38</sup> Jung, "Aion," Psyche and Symbol, p. 53.

<sup>39</sup> Evelyn J. Hinz, "Hierogamy versus Wedlock: Types of Marriage Plots and Their Relationship to Genres of Prose Fiction," PMLA 91 (October 1976), 900 - 12. See also David Williams, "The Indian Our Ancestor: Three Modes of Vision in Recent Canadian Fiction," DR, 58(Summer 1978), p. 325.

## Chapter One - The Last Frontier:

### Gone Indian's Message from the Other Side of Self

Gone Indian is a novel about the frontiers of self. The different stances taken by Professor R. Mark Madham and his student, Jeremy Bentham Sadness, in relation to the frontier borderline define the psychological dialectic Kroetsch sets up in the novel and, consequently, help to define the Canadian identity itself. The novel is set in the northern prairie town of Notikeewin, Alberta. Notikeewin is a frontier town in the sense that it straddles the line dividing civilization and the wilderness to the North. Although this line is not marked on the map, it is, as W. L. Morton has suggested, a line which runs "through the psyche"<sup>1</sup> of each of the characters who confronts it. The rejection, or the embrace of this frontier, Kroetsch suggests, may differentiate Freudian from Jungian, rational from romantic, historic from mythic world views.

In Gone Indian, Kroetsch has deliberately sent an outsider, born and raised in New York City, to experience the mythic landscape already familiar to his readers from the first two novels of his prairie triptych.<sup>2</sup> But this outlander, Sadness, is more familiar than one might expect with the frontier because of his early reading of

Grey Owl's books. Jeremy's recorded observations and reactions are self-consciously edited by his thesis advisor, a prairie native, who has his own counter-thesis to write on outlanders who seek to "know" his land. For this advisor, Madham, is not only a deliberate exile but, as we shall see, a man with a hidden past who sends an alter ego, a surrogate son, into that land "forever lost to me."<sup>3</sup>

Jeremy's journey to "that last city on the far, last edge of our civilization" (p. 6) becomes a personal quest to find answers to his questions about who he is and what he intends to do with his life. Ostensibly, he is flying to Edmonton for a job interview. But he also has subconscious motivations which have roots both in his childhood and in his current psychological condition. He knows that he is looking for something or someone. When Jill Sunderman asks "Is there someone you are looking for?" he replies: "No. . . . Nothing. Yes, I am looking for nothing. The primal darkness. The purest light. For the first word. For the voice that spoke the first word. The inventor of zero" (p. 22). In some ways, he is the "eternal scrounging lazy unemployed bum of a graduate student" (p. 21) that his advisor describes. He still has not, after nine years, completed his dissertation. His marriage is strained from pressures caused

by finances, professional frustration, sexual infidelity, and the dispute about whether to have a family. This combination of difficulties seems to be the cause of Jeremy's not being able to sustain an erection while lying down. His journey helps to resolve some of his problems, though in ways neither Madham nor Jeremy has foreseen. He identifies himself, penetrates Madham's disguise, completes a thesis on the tapes mailed to Binghamton, and then vanishes after having found "nothing" and "the voice that spoke the first word."

Madham, while acknowledging Jeremy's interest in the frontier, more than once claims responsibility for his student's journey. "He dreamed NorthWest . . . it was I who sent him there" (p. 6). Madham, who "was born out there on those wind-torn prairies" (p. 13), has an unconscious desire to re-establish contact with the lost other side of himself. "I sent him . . . on a veritable quest for something forever lost to me and yet recoverable to the world. And he was . . . failing. Failing miserably" (p. 14). By choosing a surrogate son whom he considers to be both romantic (meaning unrealistic) and incompetent, Madham seeks to justify his own decision to leave that place of vulnerability and to consolidate his power both over Jeremy and over his own self-controlled life. In his role as editor, he omits or editorializes

the parts of Jeremy's story which do not fit his own view about the "diffusion of personality" (p. 152) which the prairie landscape causes. The professor insists on interpreting the ending tragically and refuses to consider that Jeremy may have found a healing solution to modern man's schizophrenia which Madham has missed or has chosen not to see. Madham's depression at the end results from his awareness both of his own tragic condition and of Jeremy's possible escape from it into a romantic (meaning holistic) unity.

It is clear upon his arrival at the Edmonton International Airport that Jeremy is experiencing an identity crisis, a diffusion of identities which is both comic and confusing. He encounters immediately two situations of mistaken identity. Upon being confronted by customs officials with "his" suitcase, he realizes that "this isn't mine" (p. 6) and he is taken aside for interrogation when he insists that he is not Roger Dorck. "Just for a moment, Professor, I couldn't remember my name" (p. 7). When asked the purpose of his trip to Edmonton, he replies, "I want to be Grey Owl. . . . Grey Owl. I want to become--" (p. 6). Adding to his confusion while at the same time giving him ideas to which he will later return, he meets and admires a transvestite smuggler who insists that in a previous existence he was a buffalo. Finally

Jeremy evades the investigation of his identity by dressing in his just-stripped clothes and slipping away, "DISGUISED AS MYSELF" (p. 11). When he telephones one of the numbers supposedly belonging to Roger Dorck, the woman answering the telephone mistakes him for her vanished husband, Robert, who phoned after he drowned. " 'Who are you?' she said. 'What are you trying to tell me--' " (p. 13). With this rapid "diffusion of personality" Kroetsch has set the stage for both the quest and the conquest of the question of identity.

Jeremy's rather tenuous grip on his own sense of identity is not improved by his further adventures in Notikeewin and Edmonton. The cowboy who gives him a ride mistakes him for a trapper from the North. When he first meets Jill, she demands to know "Just who on earth do you think you are?" (p. 22). Even when he imagines calling home to his wife, Carol chastises him. "Why don't you identify yourself when you call; you know I hate people who don't identify themselves" (p. 44). Seeing himself on the festival poster, he must now ask "Who the hell is this Jeremy Sadness? Who is this imposter?" (p. 64).

Jeremy's anxiety about who he is, about his undefined self, is heightened by his first encounters with the undiscovered country. On the trip to Notikeewin Jeremy is almost overwhelmed by the space and the darkness and

the silence. The telegraph poles "made me notice the space--they or their shadows on the snow, on the horizon--and I couldn't even pretend to sleep. Because if I did I might wink out and be gone forever" (p. 15). "The poplar groves, pencilled on the white fields, were only big enough to emphasize the emptiness" (p. 16). "That's when the driver said, 'Notikeewin.' As if by speaking the name he had created a place on the blank earth. I was moved. . . . I wasn't moved at all; I had been terrified, and now I was relieved" (p. 17). The fear of entropy and of disappearance or loss of self in the vast space, and the consequent clinging to the markers of civilization seem to be the outsider's response to the first encounter with the prairie landscape. The fear is within the visitor. Jeremy's fear of losing himself stems from not knowing how to find, to define, and to redefine himself again. He feels he has no one to whom he can turn to help him with the answers, no one who has been there before.

Of course, Jeremy is mistaken about being alone and without guides. The plot of Gone Indian is in a sense the story of his learning to hear the voices in the silence, whether they come from a grandfather clock, a bird, a bear, a buffalo, a cowboy, an Indian, or from a "living corpse" (p. 27), from natural or supernatural sources, from words or from the language of silence, from

this side or the other side of the frontier.

These voices in the silence, from the animal, subconscious, dark side, are the voices of the opposite of everything for which the university--the fortress of the rational mind--stands. But the university is not solely to blame for Jeremy's lack of education about the world of ancestors, the world which Kroetsch has defined elsewhere as "the world of the dead, of the underground, of the grave."<sup>4</sup> The roots of Jeremy's malaise are shown to go back to his fatherless childhood. At age nine he set off to the library to find out about his namesake, Jeremy Bentham. He "found instead a photograph of a dead man, his body manicured and dusted, his head of wax wearing curls and a broad-brimmed hat, his skull on the floor between his feet. All of him attired in his accustomed clothes" (p. 51). Madham's interpretation of this experience is that "That hero of our reasonable world had ordered himself stuffed and embalmed: he had become his own icon, sitting in a chair in a fine display case. . . . The frightened boy went racing home to mother." By describing Bentham ironically as "that hero of our reasonable world," Madham suggests that reason cannot fully explain such a seemingly unreasonable act. By describing him "attired in his accustomed clothes," Madham is evoking Diogenes Teufelsdröckh's metaphor which sees

clothes as a mask and denial of man's mysterious and spiritual nature.<sup>5</sup> Carlyle himself saw utilitarianism's view of man--mechanical, rational, will-dominated--as a denial of the religious instinct and thus of the true nature of humanity. Madham's diction does suggest his own awareness of this dialectic. And his further comment that Bentham "had become his own icon" suggests that a denial of the religious instinct will lead to making an icon or religious object of the egotistical and/or material self. But with Madham it seems to be a case of comprehending without accepting. His voice of reason recognizes only the child's fear and smirks at Jeremy's finding comfort in his mother, without giving due consideration to the mother, the womb, the tomb, the ground--all dwelling places of the numinous--as an antidote to the reasonable fear of death.

In the same year he endured this death trauma, Jeremy experienced another setback. "I TOOK AN OATH OF CHASTITY WHEN I WAS NINE YEARS OLD. STOP IT, MY AUNT SAID. STOP MEASURING YOUR PRICK IN MY CLOTHES CLOSET, WILL YOU? WITH MY TAPE MEASURE. AND GO WASH YOUR HANDS" (p. 36). Thus as a child he is made to associate his sex organs with guilt and shame. The denial of the life forces and the anxiety about measuring his prick, or about another sort of "prick" who somehow does not measure up, have

followed him to adulthood. On the other hand, Bentham's denial of death, his refusal to be buried, his refusal to accept the fact of physical mortality, has added a conflicting voice to Jeremy's confusion. He is afraid of life and afraid of death and has no one to help him to overcome or to understand his pervasive anxiety.

Jeremy's anxiety is likewise aggravated by Madham's advice and attitude. Madham is the "modern man" who defines himself, creates himself, through controlling words and domineering will. He boasts to Jill that "I am my own man," and that the documents he is sending her "will show me to be, so to speak, unfallen" (p. 3). He holds tightly to concepts of "hard academic truth" (p. 2), of the "professor's domain: the world of reflection, of understanding. The insight born of leisurely and loving meditation. The word made human" (p. 13). He is concerned with beginnings and endings--"When will you begin?" (p. 23); "So have I waited, if for nothing more than the end" (p. 10). He has faith only in the rational controlled world of modern thought. Since modern thought cannot explain the irrational or coincidental, Madham hides behind the theory of accidents to explain the inexplicable. "Accident is part of our daily lives; if not, then all of modern physics is madness" (p. 51). Madham accepts what Kroetsch calls "the Freudian metaphor"<sup>6</sup> and like Freud

believes that the unusual, the co-incidental, the extraordinary are to be explained in terms of pathology. Thus Madham explains the unsettling effect which northern landscape has on people in terms of schizophrenia and dismisses the Arctic ecstasy of shamanism as insanity (p. 123). This reductive interpretation is a direct result of logic's inability to comprehend any reality beyond the boundaries of its own rational limits. In relation to the frontier of consciousness, Madham stands firmly on the one side and denies that anything of value exists on the other side of that line.

Madham thus refers to the "accident" of naming as "that one portion of identity which is at once so totally invented and so totally real" (p. 51). "Accident" suggests that the naming is unplanned, "invented" that the name is a technological extension of what we already know. "Totally real" suggests on the other hand that the name contains the essence of the person, the psychological truth of the personality. The significance of this paradoxical remark pivots on the interpretation of accident. For Madham, names are accidents of invention, acts of willing. But for non-rational man, for Jung's archaic man,<sup>7</sup> there is no such thing as accident or coincidence and thus names pre-define personality; name is destiny. R. Mark Madham, who follows Mark Twain's

lead but has still retained the initial of Robert Sunderman, probably invented his name to suggest the American Adam beginning anew without any past. And he probably realized the "mad" Adam only after recognizing that "killing" Robert Sunderman has ensured his schizoid fallen state. Jeremy's quest, on the other hand, is not so much to escape his name as to find its proper interpretation. These two approaches to naming then parallel two approaches to knowing. Rational man "knows" what he wills to know; archaic man knows the hidden truth that is revealed to him with the force of revelation.

By his own definition and self-naming, Madham as modern man is a tragic character. Jeremy knows his professor all too well. "I know what you will say, Madham, even before you say it. . . . Separate and alone, Sadness, my boy. Separate and alone, the tragic figure of our unhappy days, embracing the shadow of his imagined self. Dreaming his universe in his own little skull. Lost in his own conniving" (p. 108). Jeremy does not accept Madham's tragic vision. He sees Madham's world view as a "death in life," Madham and his university friends as "morticians of knowledge" (p. 88). Even Madham's concept of freedom is negative and life-denying. For the forty-seven year old professor who prefers younger men's wives, freedom means "no commitments" rather than the freedom

to surrender one's self to another. Sex has become "mind-fucking," a deracinated intellectualized version of Jeremy's rutting. Since Jeremy recognizes that Madham's world is not for him, the trip to Edmonton becomes an escape from the domineering will of the advisor. In the confession scene Jeremy "kills the father;" he refers to Madham as "a shithead of the first order" (p. 43) and uses "the recorder to insult everything the university must stand for" (p. 1). He recognizes that "One false move, Professor, and instead of addressing you, I'll be you. That's serious" (p. 62). Recognizing what he does not want to be or to become is a necessary stage in Jeremy's development. He rids himself of nine dead years in his present preparation for rebirth.

The tragedy of Madham's story is that he has deliberately willed his own life, has chosen his alienation. For R. Mark Madham is really Robert Sunderman who drowned, or, as Madham says of Grey Owl, who "faked his own death." Jeremy's comment, as he wonders why Madham is sweating, is that Grey Owl "died into a new life. . . . he woke up free nevertheless" (p. 62). Kroetsch's clues about Madham's identity are rather subtle. Madham reminds us several times that he was born in the Northwest and mentions that he took the journey east by train in the middle of a hard winter (p. 153). Robert Sunderman kept a collection of

antique clocks at Worlds End and Mark Madham collects antiques in Binghamton. Robert Sunderman, who "drowned" while skating on a pond, was an exceptional hockey player "being scouted by the Rangers" (p. 131). Madham, never quite able to quit the past, takes Carol in to New York City to see the Rangers play the Bruins (p. 95). Jeremy's description of Madham's "squash-player's perfect figure" echoes Bea's description of Robert's "perfect body" (p. 33). And when Jeremy first meets Bea, he comments perceptively, "This, Professor, is the woman you should have married" (p. 30).

Bea, of course, is convinced that Robert Sunderman is still alive because he phoned her after he drowned. On the first night Jeremy sleeps at Worlds End, he has a dream which anticipates his final night there with Bea, when he finally and fully substitutes for the man who never died. In the dream, "Robert Sunderman himself was due any moment, sliding as sudden as an owl, through the half-open door" (p. 34). On the final night, after the dream's resurrection crocus has sprung from his crotch, Jeremy and Bea are interrupted by a phone call. The dream suggests that the call is from Robert; shortly, Bea announces to Jeremy that "He's alive" (p. 156). Madham's editing covers the fact that the "he" referred to is Robert Sunderman as much as it is Roger Dorck. But

Jeremy has heard the truth. He screams into the tape which he is preparing for Madham "CAN YOU HEAR ME? . . . COME BACK" (p. 150). Apparently he is commanding Bea to return to bed, but the image of the slow glacier crawling southward reveals another direction in which his remark is aimed; he is calling to the boy who ran away to return in proof that worlds do not end.

Once he discovers Madham's true identity and so finds himself in his professor's old bed, Jeremy recognizes that he is also the lost Robert Sunderman. Unlike the first Robert, Jeremy recognizes the good fortune of his position. To escape the first husband's tragic vision, the couple give themselves up to the "nothing" which threatens their being. Madham must make up his own tragic version of the "accident" which was "willed and chosen and deserved" (p. 101) in order to preserve his own grip on the tragically rational world. But in formulating his explanation of the "mystery," he slips. "It would surely seem impossible that anyone might drown in all that ice and snow," (p. 155) he says. "God knows, I shall never forget it."

Madham's only respite from mankind's "tragic" fate is the self-deluding belief that man creates himself, defines his own identity, controls his life by acts of will. Madham's interpretation of Bea's attitude towards

her husband's disappearance is that "She admired him. By God that was obvious and certain: she admired Robert Sunderman for having the courage to leave. To knock a hole in the ice, fake his own death, and disappear. If he hadn't really drowned. If she was right about the phone call. And she went on admiring the sheer will power that enabled him to stay away" (p. 33). Such self-delusion is typical of the way Madham misinterprets Jeremy's problems and probable end. By describing him as being "almost anally fixated" (p. 7) and "hunched fetally on the bench" (p. 25), Madham proves in his very Freudian determinism to hold a self-contradictory interpretation of Jeremy's and Bea's relationship--"And the lost mother represents--forgive me, but I must say it out--the cunt he was always trying so unsuccessfully to get back into" (p. 154). Madham's next comment reveals the pathological state of his own mind. "I personally feel he was a self-deluded little asshole (in spite of his height) who should have been strangled at birth. Or set on a hillside to perish." Thus it is Madham who suffers from the Oedipal complex--the Oedipus who will create whatever excuse he can to avoid the inevitable approach of old age, death, and being overthrown by his adult sons. Or rather he is the father, Laius, who chose to forego sex and parenthood and who set his infant son on a hillside to perish in the

futile attempt to circumvent his own death by becoming his own immortal successor.<sup>8</sup>

Madham's sending Jeremy out is an unconscious admission of the American Adam's failure to sever himself completely from the other world; it is an unconscious admission of the failure of the Freudian metaphor to come to terms with the mystery of the Whole Self which is composed of will-dominated Ego plus cosmicly-connected Self. Subconsciously, Madham's sending the surrogate son could be seen as an attempt to avoid a tragic end (which for Freudians death is) by substituting a young man for his old prairie self and himself usurping the son's place at home. But Madham's scheme fails when Jeremy refuses to accept the tragic split personality (Ego apart from Self) and Madham is left still with only one half of life and, moreover, with his student's holistic journey as proof of the professor's mistaken thesis.

Madham, in rejecting the inevitabilities of marriage, parenthood, and aging, has in effect rejected life and is merely waiting for "the end." In the futility of his own existence he refuses to see the possibilities of fulfillment for others. He must destroy the fragments of Jeremy's story which he has been "ordering" but which were cluttering up his desk (p. 154). He has to create a tragic end:

I am certain that Jeremy and Bea were killed.  
. . . I hesitate to call to your mind the  
thought of your own mother and her lover  
falling; but fall they surely did. Perhaps  
indeed they saw the train before the moment  
of impact: together they leapt, clinging  
together as they had clung in their  
fornications; together they fell, turning  
in the dark and storm-torn night, writhing  
and twisting in vain, calling out to the  
deaf night, asking for a stay that could  
not be granted, slamming onto the sculpt-  
ured and smithereened ice. Cracking through  
to the gush of black and freezing water  
beneath the appalling surface. (pp. 150 - 151)

His description seems to revel in the violence and retri-  
bution of the fall, in its finality. He must see them  
as lost and trapped in the indifferent snow because that  
is the only view of the world he can comprehend--random  
indifference delineated by the boundaries of man's own  
little skull--modern man, "lost in his own conniving."  
But the author has the last comment on modern Madham's  
"unfallen" state; the name Sunderman, which in his  
sundered state he has failed really to change, translates

"sinnerman." The sinnerman, for Eliade, is the fallen man, the man immersed in history--resisting nature, terrorized by his belief in the beginning and end of time, affirming his own autonomy.<sup>9</sup> For N. O. Brown, the fallen man's world is the world where the halves are split from the whole.<sup>10</sup> "The Fall is into Division, and the Resurrection is to Unity."<sup>11</sup>

Jeremy then rejects the old mad Adam's world--rejects the Theory of Consequence for the sake of the Quest Unquestioned. Madham's shortsighted "single vision" has not been of any help. But Jeremy has recognized some helpers, although he does not always understand their messages until later. The transvestite smuggler at the airport suggests to Jeremy the possibility of other existences. Jeremy comes to "admire that boy for his patience, for his tolerance of fools. I see that I have come to a new possibility. Be patient, I tell myself. Like that brave youth who was once a buffalo, out on these plains in a blizzard. Waiting out the storm. . . . Waiting out the winter" (p. 10). Later, in his dream in the den of Daniel Beaver's truck, he realizes that he too "is" the fucking buffalo (p. 106), making the earth move with Buffalo Woman. The dream suggests the acceptance of man's animal nature which the horrified aunt, the thesis-advisor, and Carol have denigrated. It suggests the possibility of

metamorphosis in which Jeremy has always been interested (p. 13). Metamorphosis suggests that identity is not fixed or final. The possibility of changing, as Madham points out without realizing the significance, gives the illusion of hope (p. 7). Hope, illusive or otherwise, allows for a comic rather than a tragic view of life. The metamorphosis and conjunction with Buffalo Woman suggest the significance of the union of male and female. Buffalo Woman, which Bea's initial must suggest, foretells the future. " 'Yes,' she said, 'We will be happy. You have strong medicine' " (p. 108).

The cowboy is a like messenger from "across the line." His philosophy of the rodeo circuit is: "If you're going to die anyways you might as well get paid for it" (p. 15). And the next time Jeremy sees the cowboy, he is flying. The Bear at the Winter Carnival has just pointed out the ski-jump scaffold as the place to "Go free yourself" (p. 74). After repeating the simple maxim that "you go up--you're bound to come down. It's that easy" (p. 77), the cowboy crashes. Jeremy now feels only loss and a sense of being left alone again. But the message persists in the cowboy's jump and in the rumour that he "sees with a new clarity. . . . The sky, incidentally, is very close to the earth." The message is that freedom means overcoming fear; that death should not be feared; that

man can approach the divine by way of the axis mundi raised at that sacred place where the earth and heaven meet.<sup>12</sup> Death is the way to become divine, immortal, to return to unity; the dead become the ancestors; the historic becomes the mythic.<sup>13</sup>

The guide of whom Jeremy is most conscious in his encounter with the vanishing frontier is Grey Owl whom he wants to be, to become. It is Grey Owl who first helps him cope with the landscape. The first night, when he is afraid of getting lost in the unmarked snow, he recalls the advice: "if you get lost at night--stop; build a fire; wait for daylight" (p. 15). This is an exact reversal of Madham's "waiting for the end." After "running out of himself" in the snowshoe race, Jeremy is informed by Daniel Beaver that "Grey Owl would be proud. . . . He was something like you. . . . He was brave like you. He would fight the white man. . . . But when he got to town, sometimes he went wild" (pp. 100 - 01). Civilization, apparently, is relative. Again, on the final night, it is Grey Owl's advice which guides Jeremy to Worlds End. He recalls the passage describing the fear and panic of the trapper lost and travelling in endless circles. Grey Owl's advice is to wait for daylight, that all will be well. Jeremy acts upon the assumption of hope and of positive forces guiding him. "I gave myself over to my hands on the

steering gear" (p. 144). He moves from being lost in the blizzard to a silent forest and thence to Worlds End. Kroetsch's plot thereby suggests a re-interpretation of the idea of being lost. As N. O. Brown says, "The solution to the problem of identity is, get lost."<sup>14</sup> Grey Owl would add, get "correctly" lost, and he might suggest: "I am still in doubt as to whether that blizzard was intended to destroy me, or if it was not merely one of those rough, but friendly attempts to set us on the right road, that we sometimes suffer at the hands of our friends."<sup>15</sup>

This question of losing comes up in other ways with another guide, Daniel Beaver. Jeremy recognizes Beaver immediately as one who is going to help him--"FOLLOW THAT INDIAN" (p. 63). He asks Beaver three important questions which the Indian answers one way or another. The first question is about Grey Owl (p. 65). The second question is "How do you woo a bear?" (p. 74) Immediately Beaver goes out and loses the dogsled race by stepping on the brake at the finish line. Jeremy at first does not understand the significance of winning by losing. He should take a clue from Joe who in response to the newsman's question "How do you feel after winning?" replies, "Dead" (p. 80). Beaver later tries to explain his action by saying "I could have won. . . . I saw I could win"

(p. 96). Competing with himself, he has no compulsion to prove anything to others or to attempt to improve his own position at the expense of others. He too, like Grey Owl, is content to be patient, to wait, to live by an attitude of passive acceptance rather than by trying to dominate, to impose his will.

The third question Jeremy asks Beaver is the question he has been worrying about himself--"Who are you?" (p. 96). Again the Indian's response is significant. "I am a Plains Cree. From the bush up north. . . . My name is Daniel Beaver." The Cree identifies himself first by his community or group, secondly by his place of residence, and only thirdly by his individual name. Before the story ends, Jeremy has assimilated both the method of identification and the Indian persona as the symbolic basis of his own life. He remembers that as a child he was always the Indian in the block fights (p. 94); the cowboy thought he was a trapper from up north (p. 16); the men in the pub ask him if he is from the Hobbema Reserve--"You part Indian or ain't you?"--and instead of answering them, he begins to see "the potential truth of the observation" (p. 91). His identification with Indians as a group has been latent since he was a child. He has also sensed that the frontier is the place he belongs. Madham remarks disparagingly that "Jeremy believed that his whole life

was shaped and governed by some deep American need to seek out the frontier" (p. 5). But as noted before, the frontier is both a place on a map and that line in the psyche which he crosses while running the race: "I saw where I had run to. I had run right through some invisible gate, some wide and unseen gate in the endless white snow" (p. 91). He has crossed the frontier and entered the wilderness of the unconscious; he has left his former egotistical self behind. Having "gone Indian," his new self will be at home on "the other side" and will use from his known past only those selves which follow the pattern of wholeness, which recognize and incorporate both sides of the frontier.

The Indian characters who help to accomplish Jeremy's re-integration of personality do so by first pointing to the sacredness of place from which all identity springs. Mrs. Beaver reveals that the place of the ski-jump scaffold is sacred to the Indians as the place where the last sundance was held, where her Grandfather stood with "the pointed sticks through the muscles of his chest. The rope to the top of the pole, to the medicine bundle--" (p. 100). In his dream of the buffaloes' return, Jeremy is then named into the tribe, as well as the place, by Poundmaker. "You are no longer Antelope Standing Still. . . . Now . . . you are Has-Two-Chances" (p. 106). And

the last truth given him by the Beavers is a new-found sense of community with the animal life which surrounds him. Now that he has two chances (as a man reborn, as a man who is also a buffalo), and is surrounded by "the jaws and assholes of nine hungry sleigh dogs" (p. 108), he has lost modern man's typical feeling of superiority to other forms of life. His refutation of Madham's "separate and alone" is now a parodic part of the comic vision which, as it deflates the paranoid ego, also provides comfort and hope in the suggestion that life is only as tragic as we choose to view it.

After experiencing the re-naming and thus learning that identity is not fixed, Jeremy is now able to come to terms with the "accident" of his own name. Instead of linking it with the remembered fear of death and with his own deserting father who, like Sunderman, flees the role of parent, and instead of linking it with his own adult refusal or inability to "die" sexually, Jeremy learns to think of Bentham's embalming as symbolic of a kind of immortality. He learns that the epigraph "Too Good For Earth / God Called Him Home" (p. 132), which applies equally to Jeremy and to Bentham, suggests the possibility of an otherworldly home. He learns that Bentham's philosophy of the greatest good for the greatest number can mean "getting back to the basics of life" for he recognizes

that the greatest good for the greatest number is to lie down with one's woman. Jeremy is able to do this once he has escaped from Madham's tragic vision. In learning to accept the possibility that "name is destiny," Jeremy is moving further from a rational belief in an uncontrolled universe towards the possibility that man's identity is given to him in ways which he has only to understand.

There is one last message about identity which Jeremy must learn to decipher; it is somehow hidden in Roger Dorck's suitcase. Jeremy's identity, we recall, becomes confused with Dorck's as soon as he lands in Edmonton. Dorck has been "across the line" on business and has arrived home on the same flight as Jeremy. Their suitcases, which are identical, become exchanged. Before Jeremy can catch up with Dorck, the older man is involved in a snowmobile accident. When Jeremy finally meets Dorck, the other lies comatose in the Notikeewin Hospital. It is on this quest for Dorck that Jeremy first meets Bea. He imagines himself usurping Dorck's place--"I want that woman. . . . Her pale and healing hands must touch me; I can only barely keep from flinging myself onto the bed. I could pitch old Roger out of his kingly silence, onto the floor" (p. 30). But before Jeremy can lie down in Dorck's place he must learn how to make the fateful leap, how to cross the line, and how to know what is in the bag

on his return.

Dorck himself is in suspension, hovering on that borderline between this world and the next. This suspended animation suggests the numinous state paralleling that of the hanged man on that tree connecting heaven and earth. Jeremy feels like a hanged man also throughout the story. In Jill's apartment, he sees his "decapitated body hung in suspension in the night air" (p. 53). "I woke up to find . . . my neck very nearly broken" (p. 62). After getting thrown out of the pub, "my neck ached as if I'd recently been hanged" (p. 93). And after he "judges" the beauty contest, he recognizes how easily the crowd could turn into a lynch mob (p. 116). Thus Jeremy, like Dorck, is a man in suspension. But Dorck's is a result of his plunging off a cliff. The leap has rapidly become a legend. "In the curling rink the curlers speak only of their king; and they speak as if he vaulted the night itself, and only sleeps to restore his spending" (p. 26). Jeremy learns the significance of the leap--that the flying free from earth and plunging, falling into Wildfire Lake are two parts of "man's fatal impulse to seek out the unknown" (p. 72). After losing the cowboy, Jeremy begins to think: "Learning to fall. . . . that's the trick. Flying is easy. The whole, the absolute mastery resides in knowing how to fall" (p. 78). Thus, man must fall. The fall is the

return, the comeback. He learns that taking the plunge, vaulting up and falling back down, is one way to cross the frontier. He learns that on the other side of the frontier is silence, darkness, emptiness, and death. He learns that none of these so-called negatives is anything to fear or to try to avoid. And he learns that men who have knowledge of this "other side" live a richer life on this side. Dorck brings this revelation to Jeremy the last night Jeremy visits him in the hospital. Just after telling Dorck that he "knows" Dorck is watching from above, and after asking for a sign, Jeremy notices a suitcase under Dorck's bed. "I swear to God it was my suitcase. Like a goddamned egg under that calm and sitting bird. My survival kit in this humdrum world. A packed bag. It must be mine. The long journey waiting" (p. 142). As soon as Jeremy has received this message, Dorck sits up in bed and asks "Where are we?"

The figure of Dorck and to a lesser extent that of the lost cowboy thus function as do Eliade's shamans. We recall that Madham characteristically sides with those who regard shamanism as insanity, although "a Mr. Eliade disputes their conclusions" (p. 123). For Eliade, the shaman is the man who learns how to die and how to return with messages from the other world.

The shaman or the medicine man can be

defined as a specialist in the sacred, that is, an individual who participates in the sacred more completely, or more truly, than other men. . . . the man who can die, and then return to life, many times. . . . the shaman learns . . . how to orient himself in unknown regions . . . to explore new planes of existence . . . He knows the road to the center of the world, the hole in the sky through which he can fly up to the highest Heaven, or the aperture in the earth through which he can descend to Hell . . . In the archaic religions, the shaman and the medicine man play the role of the mystics in developed religions; hence they constitute an exemplary model for the rest of the community precisely because they have realized transcendence and freedom . . . The shaman is the man who knows and remembers, that is, who understands the mysteries of life and death.<sup>16</sup>

Roger Dorck, with his phallic name, who has been Winter King, lover of Bea, who vaults the night on the god Odin's steed and plunges into Wildfire Lake is the shaman who

knows the mysteries of life and death. From his state of suspension he reveals truths about another world which Jeremy has only suspected. After the revelation the new Jeremy, aware of both his divine and animal natures, assumes the role of the shaman himself; the old king remembers nothing.

Jeremy's identification with Dorck is so complete that he sees the suspended man as his own soul (p. 143). If, as Jung suggests, soul is the function of relationship between consciousness and whole Self,<sup>17</sup> then Jeremy's encounter with Dorck here is a transformation scene where, consistent with shamanic initiation, Jeremy inherits conscious awareness of the unconscious other world, and of his own divinity as part of that other world. The hovering "Jesus-bird" and the egg are symbols associated with spiritual transformation.<sup>18</sup> The egg is a symbol, as in Leda's egg containing twin opposites, of the unity in duality defining the whole. It is a symbol of immortality, of potentiality, and of the mystery of life. The Egg of the World is a symbol of the cosmos--a universal symbol uniting all mythologies.<sup>19</sup> Jeremy's survival will be as a whole created in uniting with that "other" half of the world, on the "other" side of the frontier.

There remains only for Jeremy to go, with his soul intact, to Bea. This is the final stage in his identif-

ication with Dorck. He has already confessed to the "corpse," "Bless me Father, for I have sinned" (p. 141). Now, after Dorck has given him the sign from the other world, it is as if Jeremy knows that "I am the father now." As a Sky God freshly hatched he has only to unite with the Earth Goddess for Time and Creation to begin anew.

Jeremy heads immediately for Worlds End. "I was in the trackless snow, making my own path. . . . a buffalo on the prairie . . . a cowboy, lost . . . a trapper . . . remembering Grey Owl" (p. 144). In the bedroom finally he becomes "the mysterious youth who one night years ago walked into the darkness, vanished from the very surface of the earth" (p. 148). In this final surrender of self to the transpersonal collective, Jeremy's identity crisis disappears. He finds in that bed, with that woman Madham has rejected, everything he has come to value in his journey to the frontier. In Bea's body he finds the "nothing," the "primal darkness," "the voice that spoke the first word." As Jeremy describes it:

She gave to the whole room the smell of earth. . . . The Columbus Quest for the oldest New World. The darkest gold. The last first. I was lifting my hidden face. To the gateway beyond. To the place of

difficult entrance. To the real gate to  
the dreamed cave. The dream cave's lost  
mouth, encompassing the compass. . . .  
The lava lapping, into the sea. At the  
volcano's lip, the sweet stench, the  
scorched charisma of the mountainous  
hole. I had tongued the unspeakable  
silence. (p. 147)

In succeeding Dorck and in becoming the "impersonal" lover, Jeremy has also taken over the role of Robert Sunderman. But unlike Sunderman, Jeremy chooses the woman--chooses the chthonic stillness and silence and emptiness which the woman represents. By overcoming his fear of losing himself, and by voluntarily surrendering himself to the other, he has experienced the reunion with the ground, with the cosmos, which is Rank's definition of the true process of identification.<sup>20</sup>

Madham, the modern man locked in a room during a hurricane, depressed and psychologically alone, is yet guilty of his own charge of "failing to understand the nature of freedom." He remains schizoid because of his stubborn will to cling to a vision which his student has proven to be unsatisfactory and indefensible. Madham is still coping with the frontier by trying to deny it.

Jeremy, on the other hand, who has applied what he has learned from the empty Canadian landscape and from his guides who have been there before him, can live the Jungian metaphor by accepting the reality of the unconscious. He copes with the frontier by accepting it and by overcoming his fear of it. He and Bea may be alive and well and living north of Prince Albert, or they may be dead. The question is no longer relevant. As Shakespeare's graduate student learned, "The readiness is all." Once the fear has been overcome, the frontier can be crossed. By being at all times ready to die, by being able to wait patiently and to accept what comes, life can be lived more fully. The world is won by those who let it go.

It is still possible to look at Jeremy's union with Bea as only another example of escaping the realities of aging and death by marrying a woman past the child-bearing age. But Jeremy and Bea have transcended the fall which was originally responsible for the problem of death and of the necessity of generation to overcome death.<sup>21</sup> Jeremy and Bea have overcome the fall by surrendering to it, by returning to an original unity, by being resurrected. The necessity of generation is not there. Jeremy, in his role either as shaman or as artist (who is telling this story to Madham), can concentrate instead

on creation, on transcendence, because he is free of the fear of death as the end of the world. He is free instead to approach the World's End as a sacred place, a place of extremity, where heaven and earth are very close together. The two attitudes--"worlds do end" compared to "the world's end"--contrast the modern and archaic, the historic and the mythic, the secular and the sacred world views in Gone Indian.

## Notes - Chapter One

- <sup>1</sup> W. L. Morton, The Canadian Identity (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1961), p. 93.
- <sup>2</sup> Russell M. Brown, "An Interview with Robert Kroetsch," UWR, 7(Spring 1972), p. 2.
- <sup>3</sup> Robert Kroetsch, Gone Indian (Toronto: New Press, 1973), p. 14. All further references to this work will appear in parentheses in the text.
- <sup>4</sup> Donald Cameron, "The American Experience and the Canadian Voice," JCF, 1(Summer 1972), p. 52.
- <sup>5</sup> Thomas Carlyle, Sartor Resartus (1833; rpt. London: J. M. Dent, 1902), p. 129.
- <sup>6</sup> Cameron, p. 49.
- <sup>7</sup> C. G. Jung, "Archaic Man," in Modern Man in Search of a Soul, trans. W. S. Dell and Cary F. Baynes (1933; rpt. New York: Harcourt, n.d.), p. 126.
- <sup>8</sup> Rank, "Forms of Kinship and the Individual's Role in the Family," in The Myth of the Birth of the Hero, pp. 296 - 315.
- <sup>9</sup> Mircea Eliade, The Myth of the Eternal Return, trans. Willard Trask, Bollingen Series XLVI (New York: Pantheon Books, 1954), pp. 150 - 162.
- <sup>10</sup> N. O. Brown, Love's Body (New York: Random House, 1966), p. 143.

- 11 N. O. Brown, p. 253.
- 12 Eliade, Myth, p. 12.
- 13 Eliade, Myth, p. 46.
- 14 N. O. Brown, p. 161.
- 15 Grey Owl, "On Being Lost," in Men of the Last Frontier (1931; rpt. Toronto: Macmillan, 1972), p. 126.
- 16 Eliade, Rites and Symbols, pp. 95 - 102.
- 17 Jung, Psyche and Symbol, p. xxxii.
- 18 Erich Neumann, The Great Mother, trans. Ralph Manheim, Bollingen Series XLVII (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1955), pp. 326 - 28 and Plate 170.
- 19 J. E. Cirlot, A Dictionary of Symbols, trans. Jack Sage (New York: Philosophical Library, 1962), "egg".
- 20 Rank, p. 195.
- 21 Francis Huxley, The Way of the Sacred (New York: Doubleday, 1974), p. 272, discusses generation as a necessity for overcoming the fall.

Chapter Two - "Contrary the Backwards":  
The Reversal of Self in The Vanishing Point

After Jeremy Bentham Sadness has won the snowshoe race, the men at the finish line discuss a runner's motivation. " 'You see,' someone was arguing, 'there are runners who run to overtake. There are runners who run to run away' " (p. 89). The Vanishing Point involves Carlyle Sinclair in a similar discussion upon his arrival in Paradise Valley. "How come you're here--taking on this job?"<sup>1</sup> Peter Sanders asks, and Carlyle does not answer the question. Later Carlyle suggests that he has come to the reserve in a backwards attempt to escape the memory of his lost wife and child, but the plot of W. O. Mitchell's novel suggests that Carlyle has come because he is constrained to look for something. "Come on, Wizard," he says, "change me over . . . contrary the backward. . . ." (p. 14, Mitchell's ellipsis). Before he can identify and find what he is looking for, he has to reverse the "negative assent" which brought him to the reserve, to re-order the personal values of his egotistical self, and then positively to proclaim his own "everlasting yea" to life.

Carlyle's coming to the reserve has been a result of "negative assent;" he came not because he wanted to or

wished to but because he felt he had to, of necessity. His conscious motivation is to escape; he is backing away from unpleasant memories. He recalls that the reason he resigned from Shelby School and applied to the Indian Department was that "everywhere he turned, the town--the people--reminded him of Grace. He could no longer pass the hospital to or from school without remembering the the baby daughter there wouldn't be. The window seat in the living-room, where Grace had sat so still for hour after hour, saddened him. . . . He hadn't made any decision; a calcified placenta, post-partum psychosis, finally death, had made the decision for him" (p. 119). The unfolding of Carlyle's story reveals that Grace's death is just the latest in a seemingly unending line of deaths, including that of the unborn child, Carlyle's father, Maitland Dean, Carlyle's mother, and even his cousin Willis Rooney who died before Carlyle was born. So it is true that death has made the decision for Carlyle. Paradise seems like a place where he can escape the idea of death and the memory of all the significant others who have vanished from his life. He does not seem to realize that his "negative assent" to Death's "Everlasting No"<sup>2</sup> is really, as Thomas Carlyle's hero discovered, a denial of humanity and a withdrawal from his responsibility to himself and to others.

If Carlyle's conscious motivation is to escape, subconsciously he is looking for something. He remembers an earlier happy time when thoughts of death did not dominate and destroy the spirit within him. Carlyle's upbringing as a puritanical Methodist, and now the ascetic existence he lives on the reserve, stress the denial of life and the stoical control of both passion and pain. Such a world view leads inevitably to failure because neither the unconscious need for passionate union with others nor the sensible need to deal with inevitable pain is adequately answered. Carlyle fears depression, which can itself be seen as an attempt to elude pain; his family history, both his father's alcoholism and his wife's post-partum depression, are examples of a way in which eluding rather than coping with the pain can lead to a passively willed death, a slipping backwards out of life. Carlyle is aware of the dangers but he is not completely convinced of their inevitability, for he latently remembers childhood experiences that deny the vanishing. Subconsciously, he has come to Paradise to attempt to move back into the life-and-death accepting world view that he remembers from his childhood.

As a seven-year-old child, Carlyle had already intuited that sexual generation, symbolized by his pecker, is one way to counter the vanishing. Because of his

mother's illness and subsequent death, Carlyle is exiled to the home of his widowed aunt in Winnipeg. Here he suffers boredom and loneliness and confusion over his father's insistence that he will be better off living with Aunt Pearl. Late one afternoon while playing with the magic lantern he looks at a picture of his parents beside a waterfall. The picture of his vanished mother makes him cry. He takes the photograph out and frantically looks for something else to project on the white plaster wall. After trying both hands and feet, "he got up on his knees on the table. He found he had to take his pants right off and be very careful of the hot metal and it was blurred so he had to reach ahead and fix the snout. It came clear: his pecker on the opposite wall, way larger than his father's" (p. 310 - 11). Thus the affirmation of the pecker and the magnification of life in the magic lantern are the child's intuitive response to the painful disappearance of the lost loved one.

Four years later Carlyle has a slightly different, although still physical, response to the pervasive fear of vanishing himself. After he has been banished from the classroom and strapped for his "accidental" disobedience during art class, Carlyle panics.

Suddenly he realized how very still it was

in Old Kacky's office. And lonely. Here he stood by himself, and outside the office walls were all the others properly together and busy all around his own empty desk. He had vanished from them. Old Kacky had vanished him from them to vanishment. And then the really crazy thought happened. He was being vanished from himself . . . stepping outside and apart and walking away farther and farther from himself, getting smaller and smaller and smaller . . . dwindling right down to a point. That was crazy enough to scare the shit out of a person! Literally. (p. 322)

Carlyle's physical response to the fear of vanishing causes him to leave an anonymous deposit in the principal's desk. But the incident gives Carlyle an early response to the "single-vision" Cartesian definition of existence.<sup>3</sup>

Carlyle's action suggests "I shit; therefore, I am." Man's connection to animals and his relationship with the natural world constitute one possible affirmation of life in the face of that death fear which thinking has both caused and failed to cure.

The Alberta landscape and the telephone poles along the highway keep memories of his childhood ever-present

(pp. 31 - 32). Carlyle observes that "These highway edges and marching telephone poles disappeared before they could come together properly at a vanishing point" (p. 32).

Later he recalls how his best childhood friend, Mate Dean, had insisted, from personal observations, that the vanishing point does not exist. " 'Ain't any vanishing point,' Mate said . . . 'look--they don't meet--the rails don't meet. . . . Look up the tracks--stays open--same on the highway--stays open--even the way it looks--there isn't any vanishing point. It doesn't come to a point--it only comes almost to a vanishing point. . . . ' " (p. 325).

Carlyle does not totally accept Mate's assurances, especially after Mate takes the train to Winnipeg, then dies himself. Carlyle holds instead to Old Kacky's deterministic version of the point into which all lines disappear. He continues to expect the lines to "come together properly" and he continues to see the train disappearing into that dot and carrying his loved ones with it. As one commentator notes, the European post-Renaissance concept of perspective falsifies and distorts the Canadian landscape.<sup>4</sup> Renaissance perspective implies individualism and puts the viewer in a relationship of power and domination over the objects funnelled to him;<sup>5</sup> the converse, however, is just as possible, as it is for Carlyle, that the viewer is placed in a relationship of

powerlessness towards the objects disappearing into the vanishing point. Thus for Carlyle, the vanishing point is part of that failure of his culture to "see" truly the natural world in which it lives. Mate has revealed the truth to him, but he has first to learn not to let fear of vanishing make his life-decisions for him.

Carlyle does not overcome his negative assent to the Everlasting No until the final night at the dance tent. As the call of the drum bridges him back, Carlyle suddenly remembers the force of his own childhood intuition: "A wild and distant drum had pulsed for him and for Mate, when they had stood with the total thrust of prairie sun upon their defenceless heads. Together they had discovered that they were both alien from and part of a living whole. The dry husk of a dead gopher, an abandoned garter-snake skin, magpies, undertaker beetles, had taught them the terror of being human. But they knew that they were accountable to each other" (p. 384). Being alien from and part of a living whole suggests that man, through his animal nature, is connected with all life but that his unique moral intelligence also makes him his brother-alien's keeper. Carlyle has been so caught up in the terror of thinking-humanity that he has refused his responsibility to others. By allowing death to decide for him, he has acquiesced to determinism as the rule of life.

Now he recognizes his own failure, the negative assent to which he has been given in "a spent melancholy--a loosening tautness of mind--an original blinding flash of contempt for them--for all other men--for himself" (p. 385).

Once he has recognized and can thus correct his failure, he can go on to proclaim his Everlasting Yea to life. But first he must agree to self-mockery and the loss, beyond self-esteem, of his immunity from life in such self-willed isolation. In a special sense, he must will for himself what he asks the "contrary" god Coyote to accomplish for him: "Come on, Wizard, change me over. . . . contrary the backward. . . ." (p. 14) But in another sense, the Indian trickster figure may serve him in its traditional role as the clown whose function it is to free people from oppression and thus more fully open them to experience. "By startling people . . . clowns reverse their polarity, as it were, curing them by releasing them from any idle thoughts or worries."<sup>6</sup> If an individual or a society becomes overburdened or unbalanced in any one direction, it is the clown's role to "contrary the backwards." Carlyle's childhood life was formerly balanced, in part, by his friend Mate who, fearing insanity, envisioned himself as a clown-acrobat; "I'll get sadder and sadder even though I'm making everybody laugh" (pp. 326 - 27). In Paradise Valley three new

clown-contraries, Peter Sanders, Archie Nicotine, and Heally Richards, mock and subvert Carlyle's puritanical defenses, preparing him psychologically for the time when he will make his reversal. For Carlyle must be able to say "No" to his culture's fear of the authority of death in order to say "Yes" to the cyclical and hence dualistic life of nature, and to the unacknowledged "other" half of himself.

Peter Sanders forces Carlyle to look for deeper reasons than his admitted ones in coming to Paradise Valley. Sanders makes him realize that his own stance is as Puritan as Aunt Pearl's, although, as Peter says, there is hope for him since "A puritan with crabs can't be all bad" (p. 156). It is Peter who suggests to him the racism in his desire to see white blood in Victoria as well as the possibility that white might not be inherently superior. Sanders calls it the "white taint" and asks bluntly, about the possibility of white blood, "Does it matter?" (p. 147) It is Sanders who awakens in him the pleasant recollections of the lost childhood of skinny-dipping and fishing and of feeling at one with nature--with both the unity and the terror (p. 177). It is the discussion with Sanders which forces Carlyle to articulate his rational "single-vision" of life which emphasizes how far Carlyle has backed away from the optimism of childhood. Carlyle

says: "Our problem is--we're human and we know it. God damn her anyhow. . . . she picked one and she tried it and she gave Adam a bite or two and right then they clearly knew--they weren't any osprey or rainbow or fungus after all--they were humans--the only living thing that could look at itself, and there was no way they could get away from it . . ." (p. 185). Of course, Carlyle's explanation echoes Descartes's "I think; therefore, I am," but his tone suggests that he blames man's intelligence for cutting him off from unity with nature. He completely ignores the rational responsibility to build a two-way bridge between man and nature, between man and other men. With Mate, Carlyle knew both sides of the equation; Sanders hints at one whole "vanished" side of it when he tells Carlyle to keep a good supply of love on the dispensary shelves (p. 242). Sanders helps to increase the urgency of Carlyle's quest for Victoria when he confides to Carlyle that he has tuberculosis and does not expect to live longer than a year (p. 241). The threat of the loss of another friend makes Carlyle's search for the "thrust from self to the centre of a loved one" (p. 4) desperate indeed. Sanders leaves Carlyle with the suggestion that Aunt Pearl's anal eroticism and her mechanistic desire for domination and control is responsible for the polluted world (p. 244), and that Carlyle, by pushing Victoria into

this technological world, is "pointing her the wrong way" (p. 241). He is trying to make her into his own image, which he cannot yet acknowledge as backwards.

Archie Nicotine too makes a habit of mocking Carlyle's cultural defenses. Archie needles Carlyle about White exclusiveness; Whites, he says, try to over-control nature to the point of breeding white-uddered cows who suffer from sunscorching off the snow (p. 26). Archie is ironically serious about the criticism and later turns to the doctor to find a solution (p. 206). But Carlyle interprets Archie's remarks as personal vindictiveness, though Carlyle himself is fully aware of the dangers of mechanistic over-control. He uses the same image himself when he criticizes Fyfe's breeding of orchids. "All the hybridizing--breeding . . . You're trying to--for something that hasn't got anything to do with what the orchid wants" (p. 85). It is only later, after he has given up, that Carlyle recognizes his own guilt, that he has not "let her tell her own delight and need!" (p. 85). Archie provides further ironic commentary on the one-sidedness of a commercial culture where you can buy shit but where "relieving yourself" becomes "indecent exposure." The suggestion is that trying to deny rather than learning to accept nature's realities is backwards indeed.

It is Archie who teaches Carlyle the most about

saying "yea" to life as it might be lived on the reserve. Archie suggests the new technique of tying cheque payments to school attendance. Archie explains to Carlyle that neither power nor domination but getting "even"--balanced, equated--is the prime fact of life on the reserve. Balance rather than unnatural perfection is the ideal. It is Archie who saves Carlyle a lot of embarrassment by explaining the translation of "No-watch-es-nichuh" and who for some inexplicable reason takes Carlyle on his first trip up to Storm and Misty. Archie successfully implements the agricultural improvements which Carlyle encourages; he also "evens" the score with Norman Catface by getting back the money and by carrying out his threat against Norman for pimping Victoria. It is Archie who refuses to give up hope that Old Esau might be healed. Archie's dilettantish sampling of White religions annoys Carlyle because it seems to assert optimism and a quest for belief in the face of Carlyle's own pessimistic rationalism. In the end, as Carlyle comes to recognize, it is Archie who carries out the human responsibility of building the bridge to Victoria after Carlyle rejects her and leaves her for lost.

It is also Archie who articulates the significance of his people's ties to the land. "Our blood is in that ground and hills. Our great fathers were buried there, and

we want to live here with them" (p. 378). This counters Carlyle's earlier claim that "he hadn't stained the dirt--grass--hills--mountains--with himself--with his own needs and his own fears" (p. 14). This implicit reference to the Coyote legend suggests that, once Carlyle is no longer "virgin Sinclair unprepared for the orgasm of pain" (p. 366), he too will belong.<sup>7</sup> Once he can give up his unnatural ideal of himself as self-denying and self-controlled and can accept the freedom of being, like Archie, a human animal, with human weaknesses and strengths, his polarities will be reversed and his life in a more natural balance. Even the renaissance of Archie's truck, after all those unsuccessful attempts, parallels the renaissance of Carlyle's life. For the first time that spring morning, Carlyle appreciates and accepts Archie for the balanced whole which he represents,<sup>8</sup> the natural shrewdness combined with education that bears watching (p. 121).

The third foil who helps Carlyle reverse his polarities is the Reverend Heally Richards. Richards is ultimately presented as the negative mirror image of Carlyle. When a television crew first looks at the white-haired, white-attired preacher on the monitor, one workman remarks to another, "Looks just like a goddam photograph negative!" (p. 73). But the history of Heally's early life is both the positive and negative image of Carlyle's life. Heally's

mother, like both Carlyle's wife and Mate's mother, has retreated into madness. Both men feel, likewise, that their fathers failed them. Carlyle and Heally have fond memories of a special best childhood friend and of fishing and swimming. Both have been involved in selling--Carlyle with the Wear-Rite Beauty Garments and Tite-Wove Lingerie, and Heally with the Masters and Scholars Encyclopedia. Both have had two year marriages, Heally's starting with, and Carlyle's ending because of, a "false" pregnancy (p. 276). Both men have haunting recurring dreams which are identically reversed. Carlyle dreams a "wading dream with the steady tug of the current at his legs, so real that panic would wake him" (p. 134). Heally dreams of "being forced higher and higher and more frighteningly higher, the sickening vertigo and the awful anticipation as he fell towards the most terrible impact imaginable. He always awoke in time; if he didn't, he would probably be destroyed in his sleep" (p. 277). Both dreams suggest the fear of a fall, of loss of control, especially of death. If the one suggests overreaching ambition, the other suggests Carlyle's "negative assent" as he helplessly wades into the tug of the natural current which he fears.

Carlyle is thus intuitively suspicious of Heally before he even meets him. Carlyle's first comment, "He's

not getting into Paradise, Archie" (p. 21) makes Heally seem like Satan, hovering around the boundary. Even though Heally rescues Carlyle from his drunkenness, Carlyle continues to resist the irrational bullying of the preacher's sermon. "The voice riding high over the congregation chorus kindled only resistance in him-- unwillingness to be urged--like a cow turning off, now one way and now another, refusing to be herded by the voice behind" (p. 358). Yet Carlyle recognizes something beyond the words which Heally is doing to himself and to his audience. "He had heard these same beseeching harmonies that came and were destroyed again and again. He'd heard that lyric ecstasy that decayed to frightening anguish; he'd heard it flow from others no longer able to keep their own plight to themselves--or their own delight at releasing it when the bonds of self had been broken. Oh, God--oh, God--if only his own could be!" (p. 358). Thus Heally reveals to Carlyle the necessity to be free of the bonds of egotistical self by giving up the defensive dominance of rationalism.

Carlyle does not respect Heally who, he recognizes, makes a mockery of the things Carlyle had felt most deeply in his childhood. Heally is a sham because he lacks the "compassion halo" (p. 354). But Carlyle still recognizes in Heally the other side of Mate's "open" equation. The

author's presentation of the two characters suggests that both Heally and Carlyle are just "half" men. And until Carlyle embraces his other half, or his negative self, he will never be whole. Carlyle does come to recognize in the revival tent the need for ecstatic release of self and union with the other through the flesh which Heally dares to touch. For the animal body is one of the "bridges" which Carlyle subconsciously seeks but consciously fears because its end is death. At this point Carlyle still insists on seeing the preacher as a fraud and a failure; he will come to recognize, after admitting his own sham and failure, the significance of the revelation which comes not from but through Heally.

Carlyle is yet "forced," by the great crisis of his life which begins with Victoria's disappearance, to reconsider his own "negative assent" to the Everlasting No to Life. He awakens one spring morning to the drum call of the ruffed grouse's mating dance. As Carlyle's body responds to the inflationary effects of the spring air, he recalls Aunt Pearl's disapproval of his blowing up the wrinkled blue scrotum balloon (p. 5). Although Carlyle denies that there is a woman to whom to direct his need to "thrust from self to the centre of a loved one" (p. 4), it becomes clear later that the day is "Victoria Day" because of his obsession with Victoria.<sup>9</sup> Carlyle

subconsciously recognizes his own needs, consciously but not subconsciously rejects Aunt Pearl's control, and completely misses the connection between Victoria and his own desire to accept the invitation to "join the living whole" (p. 3).

The crisis begins when Carlyle learns that Victoria has been absent for two weeks from her nurse's training course. His frantic search for her takes him back first to the reserve and up Beulah Creek to Storm and Misty, a sacred place where he suspects she might be camping. He does not find Victoria but his night in the mountains anticipates his coming quest. After feeling lost and uncertain, after crossing an appalling wasteland from which "the forming soul had fled for ever" (p. 107), after finally giving up hope "that there would ever be an end to it, he was free of it" (p. 107). Storm and Misty is to him "a shaman place" where "a hero could seek vision and solution so that he could lead his people out of want and danger. Here he could purify and prepare, and be absolved from self, and that was the great trick--the true magic--not to turn into an osprey or a falcon or an eagle or a magpie--but to fly free of self. This was the seed place . . . this was where Beulah began, flowing north, now above, now underground" (p. 108). Storm and Misty then, and the Beulah that comes out of it, become the

vanishing point of self to which Heally will point him and Victoria will lead him when, together, they recover the lost happy days. Still, Mitchell's use of the shamanic metaphor is deliberately limited, here and throughout the story, since his view of human salvation is restricted to what is generally recognized as natural. One therefore loses oneself not in shamanic "death" but in natural processes, and one finds oneself not in spirit but in the ongoing rhythms of biological life.

Carlyle's continuing quest for Victoria in the city is thus symbolically a quest for salvation, out of a need to ensure his own existence. "He knew he was not trying simply to find her. He knew that he must put back together something he had been trying all his life to keep from being splintered--broken beyond repair. It was something mortally important to him, and it had never--ever--been whole for him really; Aunt Pearl and Old Kacky had seen to that. And his father" (p. 323). Once he has brought these ghosts into his consciousness, he rejects them and their denial of life and seemingly rids himself of their domination in one cathartic bout of drunkenness. It is not until after he has attended Heally's revival meeting that he chances to meet Victoria on the street. He confesses to her that she is "the whole thing" but her response, "Don't load me up like that," reveals that

she will fight his attempt to portray her as singly whole and to force her to carry alone an unnatural burden. When she tells him she is pregnant, she already knows he will see her as a failure. True to form, he rejects her idea of the inevitable naturalness of her condition and walks away from her on the street (p. 365). His moralistic "single-vision" thus causes the splintering which he fears; it is its own self-fulfilling prophecy.

The pain Carlyle experiences after Victoria's revelation forces him to realize that he is "not one bit different from Heally Richards," "unprepared for the orgasm of pain" (p. 366). He realizes that "without twinning pain his compassion had been specious" (p. 366). Even though the magic lantern of the television projects "Violence and grace growing--decaying--swift, gliding patterns forming--flowing--re-forming" (p. 367), and the dark Indian maiden insists "that pure self could free itself from impertinent reality" (p. 368), Carlyle chooses instead to see only pain--his own pain as Victoria's words tighten and close on his carnation heart. He clings to the relative safety of the Everlasting No. He has not been able to overcome his cultural training. His obsession with Victoria's virginity, indeed the on-going battle against "blanket marriages" on the reserve, suggest that "there can be a good deal of autoerotic frustration in

virginity."<sup>10</sup> Certainly Carlyle's defenses make self-containment the safer virtue. So with answers all around him, Carlyle retreats to the reserve in despair.

In reverting to his posture of "negative assent" Carlyle insults everyone with his defeatism (p. 374). He becomes very tired: "He had held himself against the current too long; all he wanted to do now was to give up and be swept away. He had lost all will for living--for self-determination" (p. 376). He sits alone in the dark and tries to block out the memory of his vanished wife and of the vanished child whose hand had once sought his on a city street (p. 380). But in his exhaustion and despair of mere self, he no longer has the will to resist the pull of the drum in the pulsing dance tent, swelling and throbbing with magic shadows like the old lantern of the toy room. In the tent he wants to continue to mourn the loss of Victoria and to concentrate on thoughts of illness and death (p. 384); but, as suddenly as the dancer's reversal, he remembers nature's childhood lesson of being both alien from and part of the living whole and of his human responsibility to bridge the terror (p. 384). He realizes that in his "negative assent" to the Everlasting No to life, he has failed to be fully human. Recognizing the necessity of the bridge from self to other, Carlyle finally accepts Victoria's proffered hand. "Song and

dancer and watching band were one, under the bruising drum that shattered time and self and all other things that bound them" (p. 385). Now "self" has suddenly vanished into a new unity with the lost mate.

The next morning, Carlyle wonders why it has taken him so long. He realizes that his life has "given him the wrong commandments: be loved--don't love; tell--don't ask; take--don't give" (p. 388). He finally realizes the significance of the reversal he has made. He remembers that he has not always acquiesced to the determinists. In his germinal confrontation with Old Kacky, the banishment had resulted from Carlyle's deliberate disobedience. At first, Carlyle "could not find the reason he had put the trees in his drawing. It had been a sort of an accident. . . . after I happened to think them . . . then I--drew them deliberate--" (p. 320). Carlyle then assented or gave in without fighting to the forces of determinism and repression which he intuitively opposed. Finally now, after his reversal in the dance tent, he recognizes the efficacy of his original childish response. "Without waking her, he got out of bed. . . . Sorry, Aunt Pearl. The poplar tree couldn't outline and shade itself, Mr. Mackey old Kacky--but it happened all the same--sort of an accident. Oh no--oh no--it had been deliberate all right!" (p. 388). This deliberate assent, Carlyle's "Everlasting

Yea" to Nature's will, to life and death, together with his deliberate dissent from willlessness, contraries the backwardness and returns him to the holistic world he knew in the beginning.

This theme of a willed recovery of a lost unity is skillfully reinforced by Mitchell's use of allusion and imagery. One of Carlyle's childhood friends is named Billy Blake; he has an indelible purple pencil mark dividing one side of his tongue from the other (p. 314). He has frequent nosebleeds and is excessively afraid of Old Kacky, that symbol of discipline and repression (p. 316). The "poor little lamb," the lost boy, and the little lost girl therefore properly evoke William Blake's Songs of Innocence and Of Experience Shewing the Two Contrary States of the Human Soul, which further contains poems entitled "The Shepherd," and "The Nurse's Song." Blake believes in "the endless renewal of contraries in progression" and wishes for "a whole man who should remain a child."<sup>11</sup> "Experience itself must learn, fasting in the desert, to follow a greater innocence, by choice."<sup>12</sup> The willed return by experience to innocence becomes Carlyle's "fate" when he responds intuitively to the call of the drum and then realizes the efficacy of his deliberate choice. For Blake, "the Fall of Man came not from violating but from accepting the initial 'thou shalt

not' . . . Blake proposes . . . the simultaneous and unreserved embracement of the truth inherent in both of the extremes, or 'contraries'."<sup>13</sup> For Mitchell as for Blake, "the fall comes about through a splintering or disintegration of the unitary spirit into self-sufficing parts, salvation is to be achieved through the faculty of imagination (the divine agency in man), and the apocalypse is attendant upon the triumphant reintegration of the total man."<sup>14</sup>

One of Blake's symbols which Mitchell uses to good effect is Beulah. "Beulah is . . . nature in its aspect of a nourishing mother, the garden of the world in which the 'spring' of living water and of young life is to be found. It is the bed in which we bury the seed before it rises again, and the bed of sleeping love in which new human life is created. . . . In the Bible Beulah is the abode of pleasant pastures and still waters, and is most fully described in the Song of Songs, the wedding song of a king and a bride who is more definitely Isaiah's married land."<sup>15</sup> Thus Beulah is the spring and the bride (Victoria) and the land with which Carlyle unites in his quest for identity with that lost prairie landscape of his childhood beside Mate-land Dean.

The second source of literary allusion in The Vanishing Point, to which reference has already been made,

is Thomas Carlyle, the Romantic Victorian. Carlyle Sinclair, in a perversion of the Clothes Philosophy of Sartor Resartus, believes that by dressing Victoria in the "proper" clothes he can ensure her escape from her "embarassing" past (p. 238). Like the hero in Sartor Resartus (whose name which translates "God-Begotten-Devil's Dung"<sup>16</sup> parallels Mitchell's ironic play with shit in the novel), Carlyle Sinclair struggles and finally succeeds in giving an Everlasting No to "all the forces that had denied meaning to life. . . . negative forces, which had hitherto held the hero in bondage."<sup>17</sup> At the end of the novel, when Carlyle accepts the little bare-bum shaman as his equal, he is following Thomas Carlyle's advice that "the Fraction of Life can be increased in value not so much by increasing your Numerator as by lessening your Denominator."<sup>18</sup> Mitchell, like Thomas Carlyle, is concerned about "the limitations of the conscious analytic intellect and praises instead the instinctive responses of the unconsciously healthy soul, responses which include a sense of religious awe."<sup>19</sup>

In Heroes and Hero-Worship, Thomas Carlyle talks about the psychological truths in all pagan religion. He stresses the importance of the seed which he identifies as Odin's message about how man conquers death.<sup>20</sup> In The Vanishing Point this seed is a place--in Nature--the seed

place Storm and Misty. This seed place links the worldly and the divine for "the essence of . . . all Pagan Mythologies, we found to be recognition of the divineness of Nature."<sup>21</sup> This Divine Nature is composed of contraries as suggested in the dark turmoil of "Storm" and the mystical unity of "Misty." The "seed" place suggests "genesis" and "germination" and "generation" and unites the themes of creation, birth, or rebirth with the images of Beulah, the stream and the bride. Thus nature (Storm and Misty and the natural human mate) becomes the vanishing point where self disappears in union with divinity. Thomas Carlyle's "We touch Heaven when we lay our hand on a human body!"<sup>22</sup> reminds us of the importance of the child's hand to Carlyle Sinclair in the city, but it also suggests all those other touchings with Mate and with people in Gloria's and in Heally's tents, as well as the final touchings which Victoria initiates in the dance tent. Carlyle learns to reject alienation and to accept the bridge of touch. Although he frequently uses God's name, he does not seem to believe personally as did Thomas Carlyle, in a supernatural God. But Carlyle Sinclair does believe in the mystery of humanity, of emotion, of the unseen unknown "behind the eyes" (pp. 203 and 216). In his rejection of past and future for the Present Here and Now (p. 385), he is seeking in Nature, including human nature, the divine

meaning which modern existential man creates for himself.

Indians as "others" in The Vanishing Point are thus characters who pass on their awareness of the mysteries of humanity to the hero. The "other" may be at once the trickster god who "reverses" determinism into that mystery of willing what Nature wills, and the traditional man who reveals the sources of identity in his mysterious connection to the land in which his grandfathers are buried. Finally, the Indian as "other" is the woman who invites the hero to "join the living whole." In her, in that seed place, the hero learns to consolidate his connection with that sacred ground which is both within him and without.

- 11 J. Bronowski, William Blake: A Man Without a Mask (New York: Haskell House, 1967), p. 105.
- 12 Bronowski, p. 116.
- 13 Meyer Abrams et al., The Norton Anthology of English Literature, Vol. 2 (New York: Norton, 1962), p. 60.
- 14 Abrams et al., p. 44.
- 15 Frye, p. 230.
- 16 Abrams et al., p. 675.
- 17 Abrams et al., p. 681.
- 18 Carlyle, p. 344.
- 19 Abrams et al., p. 650.
- 20 Thomas Carlyle, On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History (1838; rpt. New York: Macmillan, 1918), p. 44. Note that the egg is also Dorck's message.
- 21 Carlyle, On Heroes, p. 40.
- 22 Carlyle, On Heroes, p. 14, and Sartor Resartus, p. 419.

## Chapter Three - Conjuring With Big Bear

### Rudy Wiebe's Imposition of Self

At the end of The Vanishing Point, Carlyle Sinclair proposes to the little bare-bum shaman, "Let's you and I conjure together," after promising that "I won't destroy you with distorted image. . . . at least I will try not to" (p. 389). Robert Kroetsch and W. O. Mitchell have both conjured, in varying ways, the unknown other who speaks through the human and animal characters of the place. From this other side of self, Jeremy Bentham Sadness learns to reject his rational education and to follow his guides across the frontier into the wilderness of the unconscious. Carlyle Sinclair does not go quite as far, but he does learn to give up his rational cynicism and his negative assent to death-in-life and to accept a life lived fully in the positive and negative wholeness of the natural world.

In The Temptations of Big Bear these advances of consciousness receive a setback. Rudy Wiebe conjures the Indian characters differently. He tries to present his image of natural man in the landscape of his place; he combines academic research and imaginative projection to breathe a sort of life back into an historical figure.

He succeeds in presenting an appealing picture of the natural life of a time that is past, but his attempt to "let the land speak" is qualified by his allusive method. By suggesting that all is explicable in terms of Biblical patterns and allusions, by making Saskatchewan a type of the Holy Land, Wiebe has reduced the many to the one, the universal archetype to a foreign signature.<sup>1</sup> By subsuming the psychological wilderness within Biblical patterns, he is in fact denying the unconscious of that place. The allusive method thus tends to define the Indian spirit in terms of the Christian Self, thereby connecting the Indian to a foreign signature more than to the "wholly other."

It seems clear that Wiebe has only commendable intentions where his Indian characters are concerned.<sup>2</sup> In writing his serious novel with Big Bear as its centre, Wiebe, like Mitchell, locates the Indian and thus the Indian side of ourselves, in nature. He has masterfully conjured up a warm, living, sensuous, and appealing picture of the old ways of life on the Canadian prairie. He recreates the "coned warmth of the lodge, a thick weighed darkness of roasting meat and women and firelight and fur; soft darkness of leather and people sweat."<sup>3</sup> In the completed circle of sun and sky and earth and death, Wiebe moves "from a linear historical view of time to a

natural cyclical view which again gives man his place in eternity--and reunites him with the earth."<sup>4</sup> Big Bear's life is presented as one "long prayer to the Only One" (p. 414); his entire existence is permeated with religiosity--"All living has soul and the greatest of all living is Sun. It is good to pay respect when he comes back to the circle of Earth to rest" (p. 49). Most of the externals of Cree religion seem to be present, including the vision quest, the power bundle, the sacred pipe ceremony, the memekwe-cewak, Coyote/Weesa-kayjac, the thirst dance, and the Sand Hills.<sup>5</sup> But Wiebe does not take it upon himself to explain the inspiration behind the practices. The method of presentation suggests that what has been lost was worthy of more respect than the invading peoples have accorded it. The historical novel seems to suggest that what was in the past still lives, especially as it persists in imaginative art.

Granting Wiebe's good intentions and haunting depictions, the novel does, however, seem to sound suspiciously unfaithful, at certain key interfaces, to the natural Plains Cree. To begin with, the novel assumes without question that Cree religious beliefs provided a monotheistic parallel to the Christian "Only One." Not all scholars agree, firstly, that monotheism is the evolutionary Ultimate in beliefs, and secondly, that the

Indians were monotheistic before the arrival of the Whiteman.<sup>6</sup> Also, it seems strange to apply the "great man theory of history" to a culture which valued government by consensus and which preferred to resolve internal disputes by a peaceful splitting of camps. Again, the pacifism of the story of "the great negotiated triumph," "as it was told wherever People lived, to the great glory of Big Bear and Little Pine and the River People" (p. 89), and of Big Bear's desperate attempts to stop the fighting (p. 258), "seems more native to Wiebe's Mennonite world view than to Big Bear's Cree."<sup>7</sup> Kingbird's "forgiveness" of Sits Green On Earth--"I love you too much . . . you're too much woman to let go" (p. 344)--sounds curiously romantic and much more like Christ forgiving the prostitute than one would expect from the energetic and impetuous young husband who has been setting Kitty McLean's heart aflutter. Finally, Big Bear's request in court for pity does not ring true. It seems incredible that a man of his vision and pride, with the understanding he has of the White mentality, would stoop, in what would obviously to him be a wasted effort, to beg pity from his all-White audience of conquerors. Mercy perhaps, or even Christian charity. But not pity. The word connotes a pathos which only total loss of faith in the Spirit could cause. Thus, pathos and pity, along with White concepts of pacifism,

romantic love, singular leadership, and monotheism are examples which suggest an interpretation rather than a presentation of natural man.

The nature of the interpretation becomes especially apparent in the allusions and images which Wiebe uses to present his story. Critics have remarked on how much Big Bear seems like an Old Testament patriarch. John Moss says specifically that Big Bear is "a pagan Moses for whom Egypt has become the Promised Land."<sup>8</sup> Throughout the novel, in a curious reversal of identity, albeit a reversal typical of the problems Canadians have in defining their own identity, Wiebe evokes Old Testament parallels and presents the native leader as a Biblical hero, leading his people for forty years of wanderings in the "wilder-ness" (p. 364).

After describing him slowly coming down the hillside and being seated in the circle of chiefs on the ground, Wiebe focuses on Big Bear's face: "the seated man was blurring into focus because his head was lifting. The light hung there, split down the long shale divide of nose, the mouth opening gigantically, black" (p. 19). The seated leader with light in his face and power in his voice is evocative of Moses. In Michelangelo's well-known statue, Moses' gaze is "turned afar, and apparently aimed into the unlimited distance. . . . the free arm is sinewy

and muscular. . . . The statue fuses together physical strength and spiritual leadership."<sup>9</sup> In an irony of history, this description of Moses seems surprisingly like the familiar photograph of Big Bear taken at Stony Mountain.<sup>10</sup> And Wiebe is, in one sense, on solid historical ground since the gaze, the robe, the heroic aspect are all Big Bear's. In the photograph, one hand holds a pipe and the other cradles the iron ball attached to the prisoner's ankle; in the statue of Moses, the arm cradles tablets of clay. But in another sense, Wiebe systematically exploits the likeness.

Moses' name, meaning "drawn from the water"<sup>11</sup>, is evocative for Wiebe of Big Bear's belief that the Great Spirit sticks in his finger and draws men up out of the earth (p. 397). Both Moses and Big Bear committed murder before the laws against it were introduced. Both men are political leaders who were "called" to their positions and who derive their power from the communion they have with the Powers of the invisible world. Moses had several "face to face" encounters with God Who spoke to him from the burning bush, the dark cloud, the pillar of cloud and fire in the temple, and Whose back he saw on the mountain. Wiebe's Big Bear on his vision quest has a direct encounter with Great Parent of Bear (p. 183). After wrestling with the Little Man, the future death by hanging

of six River People is revealed to him (p. 66). At the last Buffalo Run, Coyote reveals the coming blood bath (p. 130). At the Thirst Dance Thunderbird speaks to him and reinforces his conviction that a Great Council, an Indian united front, is necessary (p. 165). Thus Big Bear and Moses both have the ability to communicate with "supernatural" realities and the conviction that what they are advocating is divinely inspired.

As well as their personal similarities, Moses and Big Bear are shown by Wiebe to share similar circumstances. Both lead nomadic lifestyles with their people living in tents and celebrating similar rituals. The Jewish Feast of the Tabernacles includes a procession with leafy boughs, and a water ceremony with prayers for rain<sup>12</sup> which recall for Wiebe Big Bear's Thirst Dance. In both mythologies, the presence of the cloud in the tent (Big Bear's Thunderbird) symbolizes the presence of God among the people.<sup>13</sup> Wiebe seems by his emphasis on these parallels to be implying that Big Bear's memory should become for Canadians what the Feast of the Tabernacles is for Jewish people--a symbol of both the past and the future--of the wanderings in the wilderness and past sins, and of the future where tents will be the "dwellings of the just" in the presence of the Lord.<sup>14</sup>

Wiebe indirectly depicts Big Bear as Moses in other

allusions as well. General Middleton's giant horse sinking into the newly-thawed muskeg (p. 325) evokes the destruction of Pharaoh's army at the Red Sea. For the Israelites, the Exodus marks "the end of slavery to sin and the entrance into a new existence"<sup>15</sup>, but before that new existence comes, the Chosen People suffer years of wandering and bondage to the Law into which Moses has delivered them. For the Cree too, the crossing of the waters leads to eventual surrender, trial, punishment, and death. It is for them the end of all happy days and freedom. It is a deliverance into the bondage of the reservation and of the Queen's law. No happy new existence awaits them within the limits of Wiebe's novel as none awaited any of the individuals, save for Caleb and Joshua, who set out from Egypt with Moses.

Both Big Bear and Moses are leaders who are themselves bound, if in different senses, to a newly imposed Law. In the two visual depictions already alluded to, Moses is laden with heavy tablets of clay while Big Bear is burdened by a ball and chain. Both are psychologically bound to suffer the anger and frustrations of leaders whose people will not follow. Moses is fettered when his people refuse to obey God's law, when God refuses to reveal His full glory, and when He informs Moses "you shall not go over this Jordan."<sup>16</sup> Even the Law which

Moses is forced to impose on his people is viewed by St. Paul as a kind of bondage (Gal. v:1). Big Bear is fettered by the forces of control of that Great Grandmother, "that one Whiteskin than whom there is none higher!" (p. 197) and with whom he is never permitted to converse "face to face." Wiebe's italics call attention to the fact that the political leader has replaced the spiritual leader in the Whiteskin's new cosmology. Big Bear realizes that the power he is given by the Great Parent Bear, while "higher," is not viable in a White world. The Whiteskin's power, he recognizes, lies in the LAW, and that law for him is a ball and chain.

Big Bear knows as Wiebe's story begins that this new law is not for him. He tells Lieutenant-Governor Morris about his greatest fear. "There is something that I dread," he says. "To feel the rope around my neck" (p. 25). The officials, although confused by Big Bear's characteristic habit of speaking in metaphor, conclude that "he knows that's the way we punish killing. . . . Maybe he means our law, the whole thing" (pp. 25 - 26). Morris's explanation, "It is given us by The Great Spirit, man shall not shed his brother's blood, and it was spoken to us that he who shed his brother's blood should have his own spilt" (p. 26), makes it obvious that the new law coming into the land is really the Old Testament law of

an eye for an eye which Wiebe's Big Bear intuitively rejects.

Big Bear's opposition to hanging, while misunderstood by his contemporary Whites, is symbolic of his opposition to all the changes which the law will bring. With most Indians, he believes that the soul leaves the body with a dying man's last breath, and that when a person is hanged, the soul is confined in the body by the rope.<sup>17</sup> In the same way that hanging kills a man's soul, the new law will destroy the soul of the culture.

Although the officials promise that the law "will not bind" (p. 30) the Indian, the assumptions which accompany it, especially land ownership and the tenet that "all must work for their food" (p. 30), are anathema to the old way of life: "The old chiefs knew; they were afraid for their people before surveyors, settlers, sickness, whisky traders . . . there was so obviously nothing these natives could do before such scourges, all as one impossible to their way of life. The old chiefs knew" (p. 29). Thus Big Bear comes to recognize his own loss of power: "It seemed to him momentarily that he did not know anything which he had just an instant before known so certainly he would never have to think about it. What he had known as certainly all his long life. There had been prayer and power and now between the long green

earth and sky something more was gone, gone" (pp. 195 - 96). The soul, the defining spirit of his life, has been killed by the new law.

Big Bear recognizes that the source of power now lies in the words, the written treaties, the law. He argues with Dewdney that "people believe words they hear too often. That's the way words are; power" (p. 144). Speaking in council about his vision of Fort Carlton burning, he says "No one likes that big a fire. And I think only words can stop it" (p. 207). Again at his trial he says: "A word is power, it comes from nothing into meaning and a Person takes his name with him when he dies. I have said my last words. Who will say a word for my people? Give my people help! I have spoken" (p. 398). And the great leader who had rejected the syllabics because they said only what the missionaries said (p. 144), now communicates by letter (p. 361), and asks the court to "print my words and scatter them among White People. That is my defence!" (p. 400).

The leader who could not comprehend how any one person could own a piece of Earth (p. 29) thus converts to the argument that "This land belonged to me. . . . the Master of Life had given us our place on the earth and that was enough for us. But you have taken our inheritance and our strength. The land is torn up, black with

fires, and empty. You have done this. And there is nothing left now but that you must help us" (p. 398). His words are quickly corrected. "This land never belonged to you. The land was and is the Queen's. She has allowed you to use it" (p. 399). Thus Big Bear becomes converted to the efficacy of the literal word as the source of power; but, his arguments are denied and turned against him. As he has known since the beginning when Morris insisted that the law is the same for red and white, "That may be. But itself, it is only white" (p. 31). The law of the invading culture both binds and destroys; it does not "conjure together" with the River Cree.

Big Bear is converted publicly to the efficacy of the literal word, the letter of the law, as the source of power by which he is later defeated, but he does not convert privately. Dewdney tells Sir John that Big Bear is "a man who seemingly contains so complete an assurance of and confidence in his own self-ness . . . that he cannot be moved by any, mere, white words" (p. 117). In the trial scene, when Kitty realizes that Big Bear does not understand the words, it must be remembered that they are only words, and mere white words at that. He comprehends completely what has happened to his people. But his is not a literal understanding; because it is not such, Kitty feels devastated (p. 398), as all who believe

in the supremacy of the letter of the law must feel when Spirit, that greatness independent of rational constructs, is destroyed by those constructs. Big Bear has "declined to be christened" (p. 402), and, in his dying moments, the man who has feared that the sun was developing corners (p. 93) and who has seen his beloved Earth ravaged, envisions his last ride to the Sand Hills where sand joined by snow gradually rounds him over (p. 415). He has remained true to his own myths until the end.

Wiebe's Big Bear is then not unfaithful to the Cree world view. He is preserved as the mythic Voice in tune with "Other" realities. McKay warns Morris "Wait till you hear his voice" (p. 15) and when he hears it, the Governor "found his head turning into blackness, slowly down into enormous, strange depths of that incomprehensible voice" (p. 19). Wiebe's Big Bear may approximate Jeremy Bentham Sadness's "voice that spoke the first word"; like the "primal nothingness" with which Sadness sought to connect, Big Bear's voice is "deep and soft as moss" (p. 227), sound coming out of a "wide black hole in the middle of his face" (p. 287), and it "seemed to growl up from the earth itself" (p. 400). By being part of that world of earth and darkness and ancestors, Wiebe's Big Bear is depicted as being mythic, unfallen, imbued with divinity, like the original creative spirit, the Logos Who

was before there was anything else. Big Bear, who appears to lead his men directly through the sun (p. 17), who has a special relationship with Great Parent of Bear (p. 113), and who speaks to the Great Spirit as "Father" (p. 414), retains the secular and sacred unity of the pre-fallen mythic world. "I am fed by the Mother Earth. The only water I will be touched by comes from above, the rain from The Only One who makes the grass grow and the rivers run and the buffalo feed there and drink so that I and my children live. That we have life!" (p. 23).

Of course Big Bear knows that the idyllic life is ending. The buffalo which have been given are being taken away (p. 125). With the failure of the attempt to unite the tribes, Big Bear sees that those days of the good life will not come back (p. 99). "My people . . . are driven from the land which was our great inheritance" (p. 397). Big Bear's futile attempt to use the Literal Word to aid his people is a failure. That creation of merely rational technology, the "worm," the "slug," insinuating itself through the hills, drowns out the voices of the ancestors (p. 135). The mythic Voice, the spiritual Logos, begins to fade.

The significance of the loss of the Divine Word is viewed differently by Big Bear and by Wiebe. The tragedy of Big Bear's story is that, because of his tribulations,

he too loses confidence in The Only One's concern for his people. He wonders more than once whether perhaps the Great Spirit has sent the Whiteskins (pp. 97, 105). The Fish first suggests that "it is for our good" (p. 24). For, if the Word which Big Bear encounters and rejects is the Old Testament Law of death and wrath, a Christian interpretation might see the Logos as Christ replacing the Old Law with love and eternal life.<sup>18</sup> Without the fall into history, the eternal love of God for His creation might not be manifest. The fall would therefore be both fortunate and inevitable. Big Bear/Sun as Logos connecting Kitty through love to the arch of earth (p. 314) may prefigure the Love of God which will redeem the world, but first he is defeated and deserted (pp. 405 - 15), his fate recalling the fate of the Word who died, broken, to fulfil the Divine Plan.

Wiebe puts the argument about the metamorphosis of the Word spoken by the place into the Word which was broken into the mouth of a reliable first person narrator,<sup>19</sup> the Reverend John McDougall. McDougall's chapter in Section One is written as a flashback. Thus he has the benefit of hindsight as well as the closest proximity in time to Wiebe's readers. McDougall introduces his reminiscences by acknowledging that he has heard both sides of the arguments for and against treaties--arguments varying from

"lazy savages, given our money every year" to "everything they had, how could you take part in that?" (p. 36).

McDougall defends his own credibility. He has lived intimately with the land; he has ridden over it, killed buffalo on it, protected his family from hostile Indians, and lost his father to the snow. He maintains his credibility too with the Indians. He speaks their language and respects their religious sincerity, "albeit almost completely false and most tragically limited" (p. 42).

Sweetgrass claims that McDougall is a White who thinks like an Indian--"When you speak I hear my own voice" (p. 47). When the Indians ask his advice about the treaty, he recalls, "The Queen's law had come, what could I say?" (p. 42); "out over the land, black on the fierce white snow, I could see a few, solitary, buffalo" (p. 48); "how could anyone not a fool expect me to say anything else? . . . Who can not know there was only one word I could say?" The emphasis on there being "only one word" which Wiebe puts into the mouth of the missionary suggests that the death of Big Bear conforms to the pattern of the one revealed Truth.

Perhaps even stronger evidence for seeing The Temptations of Big Bear as using "pre-Christian" types of Christ is to be found in the epigraph which Wiebe has chosen from St. Paul speaking to the Greeks:

God who made the world and all that is  
in it, from one blood created every race  
of men to live over the face of the whole  
earth. He has fixed the times of their  
existence and the limits of their territory,  
so that they should search for God  
and, it might be, feel after him, and find him.  
And indeed, he is not far from any of us,  
for in him we live, and move,  
and have our being.

In other verses in the same chapter, Acts 17, St. Paul  
claims that Christians have been sent to reveal to the  
Greeks that the unknown god they have been worshipping  
all along is really the Christian God. The Indians then,  
like the Greeks, are noble pagans for whom "the times of  
their / existence and the limits of their territory" are  
part of a Divine Plan of redemption.

Wiebe uses allusions and images to suggest this  
operation, in a new context, of a salvific grace. Although  
Rudy Wiebe has himself visited Big Bear's grave on the  
Battle River,<sup>20</sup> in the novel he depicts instead an unknown  
tomb on an unknown hilltop. This evocation of the unknown  
tomb of Moses suggests that, like Moses' before him, Big  
Bear's death foreshadows the failure of Israel to hold the  
Promised Land but prophesies the sacrificial death which

will complete God's purpose. The references to pouring water and fountains of blood (pp. 130, 226), though evoking Moses' miracles in Egypt and the desert, also suggest Christ's "If anyone is thirsty let him come to me and drink. For the scriptures declare that rivers of living water shall flow from the inmost being of anyone who believes in me" (John vii: 37 & 38). The image of the people as water, and, elsewhere (p. 409), the image of the lingering presence of the pillar and cloud suggest that in a mythology other than the Cree the Saving Presence remains; the Lord is with the Cree even in their suffering.

A final allusion making Big Bear like Christ is found in Wiebe's references to rock. In Cree language and legend, rock is animate.<sup>21</sup> Big Bear tells the story of the man whose wish to live forever is granted when he is transformed into rock; "Rock gives us the pipe by which we pray to The First One, for rock is the grandfather of all, the first of all being as well as the last" (p. 315). The echo of Christ's "I am the Alpha and the Omega" and the parallel between the Cree "living rock" which Big Bear becomes and Christ as "the living stone" (I Pet. ii:4)-- "that spiritual Rock that followed them" (I Cor. x:4)-- suggest that for Wiebe Big Bear is in death like Christ. As Scofield says, "the smitten-rock aspect of the death

of Christ looks toward the outpouring of the Holy Spirit as a result of accomplished redemption, rather than toward our guilt."<sup>22</sup> Big Bear's sufferings then point less toward our common human guilt than toward our possible connection with the Christian "Wholly Other."

By implying that Great Parent of Bear, like the Unknown God, is really the God to whom Christians pray, Wiebe has subsumed Cree myth--the whole archaic world view--from the universal into the particular Christian version. This emphasis upon a foreign "signature" to the myth may in fact then hinder the expression of the local character of the myth. If true identification means re-establishing contact with the cosmic process, with the earth, sky, and water from whence we come; if the myths of the place are the sources of contact with the spirits that inhabit that land; and if we discover who we are by recognizing ourselves in the hero or ancestor of the myths,<sup>23</sup> then the sources of identity have to be more geographically and tribally based. By making Big Bear belong to the "tribe" of Moses and Christ, Wiebe's only claim to local legitimacy lies in his evocation of the land.

Historically, the basic problem of the formation of a Canadian identity has been our insistence on imposing this foreign Self onto the Canadian landscape. In order

to make himself feel at home, the newcomer re-names his new place after his old. In Wiebe's case, rather than London, or Edmonton, or York, or Altona, we have instead Saskatchewan as the type of the Holy Land, a place authorized by scripture where all Christians are at home. Until we learn to find our Self in the ground under our feet, we will always be that rootless people constantly moving and building and destroying in an attempt to fill the emptiness of our time and space which we have sensed but do not understand. We cannot impose; we must only learn, from Big Bear and from those in whom his spirit lives today, to take that necessary step backwards into a future where all living creatures are connected and all life is sacred in that Great Circle of Earth and Sky.

Notes - Chapter Three

<sup>1</sup> Leslie Fiedler, "Archetype and Signature," in No! in Thunder (New York; Stein and Day, 1960), p. 317, defines "Archetype" as "any of the immemorial patterns of response to the human situation in its most permanent aspects: death, love, the biological family, the relationship with the Unknown, etc., whether those patterns be considered to reside in the Jungian Collective Unconscious or the Platonic world of Ideas. The archetypal belongs to the infra- or meta-personal, to what Freudians call the id or the unconscious; that is, it belongs to the Community at its deepest, pre-conscious levels of acceptance." Fiedler uses "Signature" to mean "the sum total of individuating factors in a work, the sign of the Persona or Personality through which an Archetype is rendered."

<sup>2</sup> Wiebe, in "Western Canada Fiction: Past and Future," in WAL, 6(Spring 1971), p. 29, says: "the Indian hardly appears in the pioneering realistic novels and even in some of the best recent ones he remains a fringe character, seen sympathetically perhaps but not vital to what happens in the novel world which is, essentially, white.

. . . The Indian . . . must become our central, not our fringe figure, exotic, a bit mysterious perhaps, but mostly drunken and prostituted; he must become the centre

of serious fiction as other small groups have."

<sup>3</sup> Rudy Wiebe, The Temptations of Big Bear (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1973), p. 51. All further references to this work will appear in parentheses in the text.

<sup>4</sup> Harrison, p. 204.

<sup>5</sup> David G. Mandelbaum, The Plains Cree: An Ethno-Graphic, Historical, and Comparative Study, Canadian Plains Study 9 (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Centre, 1979), pp. 157 - 81.

<sup>6</sup> See Mandelbaum, p. 301, and Deloria, pp. 79 and 292.

<sup>7</sup> David Williams, rev. of The Temptations of Big Bear, QQ, 81(Spring 1974), p. 143.

<sup>8</sup> John Moss, Sex and Violence in the Canadian Novel: The Ancestral Present (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1977), p. 266.

<sup>9</sup> Hillel Barzel, "Moses: Tragedy and Sublimity," in Literary Interpretations of Biblical Narratives, ed. Kenneth R. R. Gros Louis et al. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1974), pp. 136 - 37. For a picture of Michelangelo's Moses see H. W. Janson, History of Art (New York: Abrams, 1962), p. 357.

<sup>10</sup> George F. G. Stanley, The Birth of Western Canada (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1960), between p. 280 and p. 281.

<sup>11</sup> William Smith, L.L.D., A Dictionary of the Bible (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1948), p. 417.

<sup>12</sup> T. Francis Glasson, Moses in the Fourth Gospel, Studies in Biblical Theology, 40 (London: SCM Press, 1963), p. 49.

<sup>13</sup> Jean Danielou, S.J., The Bible and the Liturgy (Notre Dame, Indiana: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1956), p. 340.

<sup>14</sup> Danielou, p. 335.

<sup>15</sup> Danielou, p. 88.

<sup>16</sup> Barzel, pp. 127 - 28.

<sup>17</sup> James McLaughlin, cited by Deloria, p. 177.

<sup>18</sup> T. M. Manson, "The Johnine Logos," in On John and Paul, Studies in Biblical Theology, 38 (London: SCM Press, 1963), pp. 136 - 59. See also "Logos," The Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Vol. 5.

<sup>19</sup> See Wayne C. Booth, The Rhetoric of Fiction (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1961), p. 158, for comments on reliability.

<sup>20</sup> Wiebe, "On the Trail of Big Bear," JCF, 3, No. 2(1974), p. 48.

<sup>21</sup> Carl Ray and James Stevens, Sacred Legends of the Sandy Lake Cree (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1971), p. 13.

<sup>22</sup> Rev. C. I. Scofield, D.D., The Scofield Reference Bible (1909; rpt., New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1945), p. 91 n.

<sup>23</sup> Mircea Eliade, No Souvenirs: Journal, 1957 - 1969, trans. Fred H. Johnson, Jr. (New York: Harper, 1977), p. 182.

## Chapter Four - Divining for the Self:

### Techniques of Connection with the Wholly Other

While Rudy Wiebe tries to depict the Spirit of the Cree by identifying it with his Christian Self, Margaret Laurence's heroine in The Diviners tries to discover her Unknown Self by re-discovering the Spirit in the place "where the world began." The Spirit of the place which she rediscovers is none other than Rudolph Otto's "wholly other"<sup>1</sup>--the numinous Unknown that was "there before anything else."<sup>2</sup> In Morag's quest to know "what kind of a character am I?"<sup>3</sup>, she both practises and articulates "techniques of connection" which overcome her egotistical fear of aging and death by identifying her own involvement in that unconscious world that existed before she did and will remain after she is gone. In discovering her Unknown Self, Morag uses her faculty of divination which Otto has defined as "the faculty . . . of genuinely cognizing and recognizing the holy in its appearances."<sup>4</sup>

The Diviners then is a novel about the integration of the conscious self with the numinous unconscious to form a Holy Self. Morag subscribes to Jung's view of the Whole Self as ego plus Self. She uses the Jungian term "totally individuated persons" (p. 10). When she says that she is "trying to avoid thought" (p. 3), she is

acknowledging that she is composed of two selves--the mind or ego which her will should be able to control ("but this ploy was not successful"), and her hidden unconscious Self which is both spontaneous and compulsive. In order to better understand her personal unconscious, she turns to an examination of her own Time Past. In her personal past, she comes to recognize the connections she already has with what she terms the "mysteries" of Royland's "work, her own, the generations, and the river" (p. 4). These mysteries are all part of the collective unconscious--the mysterium tremendum, the participation mystique, the creature feeling, the fear, wonder, and awe experienced by all who recognize both man's connection to and separation from that Unnamed Other. Once the existence of and connection to the Wholly Other is acknowledged, the unconscious can be united with the egotistical self to form an integrated, Holy Self.

The Indian "other" who helps Morag experience her connection to the "wholly other" is her Metis lover, Jules Tonnerre. But neither Jules nor Morag is fully aware of the significance of what they have together. It is left to Pique, their Metis child, to mediate between the parents. In her determination to know where she belongs, to be "together" (p. 287), Pique will unite the two worlds of mother and father, Celt and Metis, conscious and

unconscious, living and dead. By symbolizing the integration of the two races which inhabit the land, Pique Tonnerre Gunn comes to symbolize Morag's integrated Self and, by extension, the individuated Canadian.

Pique, whose name sounds like "peak" meaning the top of a mountain but translates "a prick or goad," is equivalent to Jung's "child as Beginning and End"--the child as phallus which is "symbol of the begetter [sic] . . . and of a renewed begetting."<sup>5</sup> Jung goes on to say, "the 'child' symbolizes the pre-conscious and the post-conscious nature of man. His pre-conscious nature is the unconscious state of earliest childhood; his post-conscious nature is an anticipation by analogy of life after death."<sup>6</sup> If every child is divine,<sup>7</sup> and if the dream-child symbolizes the integrated self after a process of rebirth,<sup>8</sup> then Morag's quest for her Unknown Self will lead to a recognition of her own, as well as her child's, divinity and thus of her own immortality because of her involvement in the on-going process of generation. The Canadian signature of this child archetype<sup>9</sup> must be a Metis child, whose pre-conscious nature is derived from his Indian ancestors who have "lived" their understanding of their involvement in the on-going cosmic process, his Indian ancestors who know that this land is sacred.

The structure of the five distinct sections of The

Diviners corresponds to the pattern of Morag's gradual psychological growth towards integration. In reviewing her personal past, Morag becomes aware of the ways she lost contact with and came to fear part of the world of the collective unconscious--the realm of silence, darkness, pain, violence, and death. Her story reveals how the ego tries to will these negative experiences away, and how the individuated character alone can learn to accept and to balance. Morag's recollection in "The River of Now and Then" of her early childhood with her parents reveals how her happy, solitary play in the cave of spruce boughs with the characters inside her head was changed forever to fear of darkness and of vanishing after her parents' unexplained deaths. Morag in the present still suffers from the consequences of the fear which dominates her attitude towards the Unknown. She is afraid of what might happen to her independent daughter; she is afraid to swim; she is afraid sometimes to go to sleep; she is afraid of death.

This fear of the dark unknown which began at her parents' deaths is not mitigated by the later development of her personality under the influences of an ego-destroying small town. But even as Morag suffered as the adopted daughter of the town scavenger from the taunts and tortures of "civilized" society, she also learned, if

unconsciously at first, the importance to her Self of her ties to the Unknown Other. It is from the nuisance grounds, Christie's "happy hunting grounds" (p. 108), that talismans linking her with the world of the dead are first brought. Likewise, in "The Nuisance Grounds" section, Morag first experiences feelings of "connection" through nature and through sex. It is from Christie Logan--whose name suggests both Jung's Christ as symbol of integrated self<sup>10</sup> and the importance of word and/or spirit (Logos) in the quest for integration--that Morag learns how tales are capable of circumventing obstruction from the ego to open the personal self to the collective unconscious. In Christie's tales, Morag has her first positive experience of identity when, like Eliade's archaic man,<sup>11</sup> she recognizes herself as one of the heroes of old. Morag learns through Christie's example that stories can be recalled or changed or invented to suit any situation. Although she learns through reading and through school to mistrust anything that is not "fact," the psychological truths of Christie's myths and mythic method remain with her. She knows that the stories make her feel better, but she does not yet recognize that it is because they come directly from the collective unconscious. So in typical youthful rebellion, she rejects all she knows from this embarrassing past and seeks instead the ego-gratification

"Out There Out There Out There" (p. 134).

Morag seeks, in "The Halls of Sion" section, to escape the more unhappy experiences of her youth by avoiding and denying her past. Her relationship with Brooke Skelton is an attempt to live purely as ego, by an act of will.

"I will never let him see the Black Celt in me. . . . And if this act of willing, however willingly undertaken, is false to her, can it be true to Brooke?" (p. 186). As the name Skelton suggests, certain integral parts of the whole remain hidden. Most clearly in Brooke, the "closeting" of the unconscious results in a "Professor Higgins-like" attempt to rearrange the surfaces and to deny the depths of both himself and his child bride. For Morag, keeping certain important parts hidden results in the eruption of her unconscious in violence, in art, in angry speech, and finally in sex with Jules.

With the failure of her attempt to live a life of pure ego, Morag over-compensates by submerging herself in the frightening, painful world of the unconscious. In Section Four, "Rites of Passage," she has a child, compulsively and inexplicably. The people she meets seem more fictional than real to her, like characters from her own novel. She associates with people who, like herself, are experiencing the pain of divorce. She dates men and feels like she is immersed--"as though she is looking at

the world through six fathoms of seawater" (p. 262). She is physically assaulted and experiences what she calls a "blood fear of retribution" (p. 269) for her sin of separating the flesh from the spirit. She responds compulsively to a need to go to England where she feels she has something she must learn from her ancestral place. Here she begins her ascent from the depths of the unconscious with the help of McRaith who teaches her about the importance of integrating the spirit with consciousness. He refuses to paint her body (p. 309), concentrating instead on her spirit as revealed through her eyes. He helps her see in her own art the "you and not you" (p. 308), the Self but not necessarily the ego, that goes into her creations.

With Dan McRaith's help, Morag at last becomes reconciled to her life as an artist alone with her child and her work. And from him she learns of the artist's need for home, for place. Although Dan's ego may resent Bridie's "disapproving silences" (p. 310), he unconsciously chooses the place, which includes the woman and children, which is the necessary source of his artistic life. As Laurence has said elsewhere, the place, the land teaches us how to see; the land determines what we know and what it is we have to say.<sup>12</sup> Once Morag sees this creative necessity of place and that Canada, not Scotland, is her

ancestral place, she heads immediately for home.

As a newly individuated person, Morag is finally, in "The Diviners" section, able to accept the balanced equation--both the positive and the negative sides of life. She remembers having asked, as a child, "Can [flies] be both beautiful and filthy" (p. 33), and she recalls Christie, echoing Hamlet, insisting "Oh what a piece of work is man oh what a bloody awful piece of work is man . . . the opposite is also true" (p. 71). But it is only in the present that she comes, with Royland's help, to accept the inevitability of the unintentionally inflicted pain and of the unavoidable passing on. "The gift [both of divining and of life], or portion of grace . . . was finally withdrawn, to be given to someone else" (p. 369). Now she is able to accept a new equation of past, present, and future. Morag's summation, "Look ahead into the past, and back into the future, until the silence" (p. 370), describes both what she has learned and what she has done. The future telling reorders the past; the past foretells the future. Both are set within the silence which is that mysterious world of the ancestors and the dead which persists in the personal and collective unconscious.

This process of "integration" in Morag's life would not be possible, however, without the development of several "techniques of connection" (which she calls

"magic") which she has either inherited or intuited. In nature, in sacred symbols, in the talismans and the talesmen's words in art and myth, in sex and the generations of ancestors and children, and in place or home, she "cognizes" or recognizes the holy in that spirit which is hidden within and which speaks to her through these conduits.

The first technique of connection that Morag uses is her openness to nature which provides an "access to sacrality"<sup>13</sup> for her as it did for the Romantics. Although the spectral trees and images of wrinkled skin now "prey to age" (p. 4) merely confirm her own obsession with death --metaphorically extended into visions of apocalypse and river-slaying--she is still subconsciously aware of the sacred which resides in nature. Her opening description of the "river of now and then" is evidence: "The river flowed both ways. The current moved from north to south, but the wind usually came from the south, rippling the bronze-green water in the opposite direction. This apparently impossible contradiction, made apparent and possible, still fascinated Morag, even after the years of river-watching" (p. 3). This "apparently impossible contradiction, made apparent and possible" echoes the definition of a sacrament, "an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace."<sup>14</sup> The inward spiritual

grace speaks to her either directly or symbolically as she communes with her environment. She can hear a crow's or a bullfrog's voice in the same way that Christie heard a horse's scream (p. 73), as not merely sound but meaning. Her attitude to the trees is changed as her own understanding of the mysteries increases. In the beginning she passes over the willows, maples, and oaks to focus on the elms: "There were more dead elms this year, dry bones, the grey skeletons of trees. Soon there would be no elms left" (p. 4). Later she sees not death but life continuous. "The light-leaved willows and tall solid maples were like ancestors, carrying within themselves the land's past" (p. 235).

As a child she recognized her kinship to Wordsworth who tended to humanize the spirit in nature (p. 51), and later, as an adolescent, she began to trust her own feelings and to question her teacher's criticism: "What if Miss Melrose is wrong, though, just in that one way? Not that clouds or that would have human feelings, but that the trees and river and even this bridge might have their own spirits" (p. 102). Nature also speaks to Morag metaphorically, as well as through the symbolic voice or spirit. In times of great emotional stress, she is able to see toughness and determination in the poplar trees which can survive on the prairies, and she remembers the

promise which the prairie crocus brings:

The crocuses used to grow out of the snow. You would find them in pastures, the black-pitted dying snow still there, and the crocuses already growing, their greengrey featherstems, and the petals a pale greymauve. People who'd never lived hereabouts always imagined it was dull, bleak, hundreds of miles of nothing. They didn't know. They didn't know the renewal that came out of the dead cold. (p. 231)

The river also is suggestive of life and the process of identity which Morag discovers as she writes her own book called The Diviners:

How far could anyone see into the river? Not far. Near shore, in the shallows, the water was clear, and there were the clean and broken clamshells of creatures now dead, and the wavering of the underwater weed-forests, and the flicker of small live fishes, and the undulating lines of gold as the sand ripples received the sun. Only slightly further out, the water deepened and kept its life from sight. (p. 370)

So life continues to flow, even though parts become hidden from sight. Morag sees in all nature the "wheeling magic circle" or mandala which "Jung considered the symbol of god within, the mark of true individuation."<sup>15</sup> The marsh marigold flowers "connected to a whole web of green stalks and floating leaves" (p. 102), and "the sky [which] actually was growing light, as though the sun, still hidden, were some kind of galactic plant putting forth tendrils" (p. 43) are symbolic of all life, in the mystery of growth, connected and interconnected to that one cosmic source which is itself sacred.

Morag finds her own connection to the universal unconscious with the sacred symbols which follow her through life. The bleeding heart which is the Logan family crest--"A passion nail piercing a human heart, proper" (p. 39)--is also found on the wall of the Tonnerre shack--"Jesus with a Bleeding Heart, his chest open and displaying a valentine-shaped heart pierced with a spiky thorn and dripping blood in neat little drops" (p. 113)--and on the wall of her room at Mrs. Crawley's--"Jesus with a soft, yielding, nothing-type face and a straggling wispy beard, His expression that of a dog who knows it is about to be shot. As usual in these pictures, the Heart Itself is shown in violent purplish red, His chest having apparently been sawn open to reveal It, oozing with neatly symmetrical

drops of lifeblood, drip-drip-drip. All tear-shaped. . . . She would have wanted to throw up every time she looked at the heart" (p. 142). Morag's reaction is revealing in that she "throws up" whenever she is confronted with something she does not want to face. The Bleeding Heart seems to symbolize the universality of the experience of pain. Morag prefers to deny pain, to will it away, and marries a man who likes her because she can make him laugh. But the reality of pain cannot be denied and bursts forth for Morag therapeutically in the creation of Lilac Stonehouse "whose staggering naïveté is never presented as anything but harmful, and in fact it damages not only herself but others" (p. 184). Ironically, "the dust jacket for Spear of Innocence shows a spear, proper, piercing a human heart, valentine. Morag is beside herself with embarrassment and fury" (p. 214). Apparently the unconscious symbol will not let her reject as sentimental or deny as provincial the pain that is universal.

While the Bleeding Heart symbolizes pain, Morag seems to associate blood, another sacred symbol, with death, another aspect of the unconscious which she would rather not think about. The image of blood and splattered bodies haunts her after the fearful, unresolved mystery of her parents' death: "She knows they are dead. She knows what dead means. She has seen dead gophers, run over by cars

or shot, their guts redly squashed out on the road. . . . of course, Morag does not know how much of [her parents'] guts lie coiled like scarlet snakes across the sheets" (pp. 13 - 14). Forever after, like Christie recalling the Battle of Bourlon Wood where "the air all around me is filled with . . . bleeding bits of a man. Blown to smithereens. A leg. A hand. Guts, which was that red and wet you would not credit it at all" (p. 74), Morag associates blood with violent death of which she is afraid. When Jules offers to show her how he skins a gopher, "Morag shudders. No--please. Not a gopher. He will do it and she will throw up" (p. 60). When she contemplates the swinging bridge, she feels nauseous, fearing "the plunge down into the shallow water and the stones" (p. 102). As Jules walks across from the other side, swinging it violently, "Morag looks away, expecting to hear his dying body go splat on the rocks below" (p. 103). The bridge which Skinner crosses so easily links this side and the other--that unconscious world of death which Morag now fears and avoids. It is only later that Morag comes to recognize blood as the river of life. Her parents are not now merely dead but "inside me, flowing unknown in my blood and moving unrecognized in my skull" (p. 15). And finally, after recognizing Pique as "continuer of my life" (p. 239), she comes to accept, not

without a shudder but with understanding, Jules's knife which, although it has been wiped clean, is still suggestive of a conscious decision to accept and to hasten the passing to the other side.

A third symbol bearing the power of the unconscious is the horse: "For the prairie men, always the horses" (p. 133). In Christie's, Lazarus's, and Jules's stories, the horses are associated with battle and are remembered as frightened and dying. As Morag explains, horses are "the mythical beast. Signifying what? Many would say potency, male ego, but it seemed that a kind of freedom might be a better guess" (p. 334). As mythical beast of a transcendent freedom, the horse unites the three mythologies of Cree, Metis, and Celt, because the power of the symbol stems from the collective unconscious to which all men respond. Morag associates it with freedom because it would seem to suggest the ability to live at ease in the unconscious world, unhampered by ego fear or its responsibilities. Naturally, Morag sees the free men in her life as being like horses, with hair like manes. Thus when she says of horses "the god, living, dying" (p. 133), she is unconsciously seeing the men for whom horses retain magic as gods also, living and dying. In the sacred symbol is found another link to the other side.

Understandably then, Morag is a collector, treasuring

objects which connect her to her Undiscovered Self. She refers to her treasures as "talismans" or sacred objects which "something in me doesn't want to lose . . . or perhaps doesn't dare" (p. 5). The objects seem sacred to her because, as she says of the snapshots, "perhaps they're my totems, or contain a portion of my spirit" (p. 5). She keeps them, she says, "not for what they show but for what is hidden in them" (p. 6). The talismans which Christie brings back from that "happy hunting ground" where he works also continue to keep the past and the spirits of the ancestors alive in the present. Even Brooke, who wishes to escape the past, furnishes his apartment with his parents' Indian rug and Benares ashtrays. He unconsciously clings to an inheritance which he both denigrates and denies. McRaith who understands the importance of spirit, and how spirit resides in place, brings with him to London "a bowl full of oddly shaped and oddly coloured pieces of rock, from Crombruach. Perhaps they are necessary to remind McRaith of those shapes and textures," muses Morag. "Or possibly they are his talismans" (p. 306). In "Rites of Passage," Morag and Jules finally exchange the talismans which link their personal pasts and the past of their place. Jules reclaims Lazarus' old knife which had passed through John Shipley and Christie to Morag. Morag claims the Scottish plaid pin whose motto,

"My Hope Is Constant In Thee," speaks to Morag "like a voice from the past. Whose voice, though? Does it matter? It does not matter. What matters is that the voice is there, and that she has heard these words which have been given to her. And will not deny what has been given" (p. 353). Pique inherits Jules's knife when he dies and is promised the pin when Morag is "gathered to her ancestors" which, she now insists, is not a euphemism. Pique also inherits Jules's songs and Morag's shelf of books, all objects in which the spirits of her dead ancestors live. Pique, the young diviner, is aware of the significance of "the voices that in me [will] never die" (p. 381).

Words and the use of words in storytelling and writing provide Morag with another method of finding her Self in the collective unconscious. Morag acknowledges that words have always seemed like magic to her (p. 4). It seems that words, like names, contain the spirit or essence of the object or idea being described. With words one can conjure other realities, from the other side of the frontier of consciousness. Even when the words are lost, as is the Gaelic for Christie and Morag, the French and Cree for Jules, something remains in the echoes of the lost languages. The something which remains of the lost languages "forever lurking somewhere inside the

ventricles of the hearts of those who had lost them" is itself racial memory--"the ghosts of those who had never been and yet would always be" (p. 200). The words to articulate the lost consciousness are often gone, but the spirit remains and can sometimes be depicted by other techniques, as in Dan's painting of Morag's eyes or in the anger and pain and pride exposed in Jules's "Song of Lazarus."

Words patterned into myths can thus bring "original revelations of the pre-conscious psyche."<sup>16</sup> But in the first section, Morag expresses suspicion about the use of words in her storyteller's art. "A daft profession. Wordsmith. Liar, more likely. Weaving fabrications. Yet, with typical ambiguity, convinced that fiction was more true than fact. Or that fact was in fact fiction" (p. 21). "That fact was in fact fiction" is an implicit definition of the mythic method which Morag has learned from Christie. For Christie has realized that the truth is more important than what really happened, that the truth is different for different individuals, and that although different, it usually contains similar elements of heroic virtue in the face of adversity, strength in the face of hardship and death. The mythic method portrays for the listener the triumph of the spirit in those characters who may never have lived but who always will be

because they inhabit the unconscious.

As a writer, Morag thus comes to recognize that voices from "beyond" speak through her art: "She had been working through the day, the words not having to be dredged up out of the caves of the mind, but rushing out in a spate so that her hand could not keep up with them. Odd feeling. Someone else dictating the words. Untrue, of course, but that was how it felt, the characters speaking. Where was the character, and who? Never mind. Not Morag's concern. Possession or self-hypnosis--it made no difference. Just let it keep on coming" (p. 330). Later, from Royland, she learns that her gift of divination, like the gift of life, is given only to be taken away, to be passed on to others: "The inheritors. Was this, finally and at last, what Morag had always sensed she had to learn from the old man? She had known it all along but not really known. The gift, or portion of grace, or whatever it was, was finally withdrawn, to be given to someone else" (p. 369). Morag thinks about the difficulty of knowing whether her own divining ever really works for other people. But she realizes that "In a sense, it did not matter. The necessary doing of the thing--that mattered" (p. 369).

Morag's divining for connection with the "wholly other" is nowhere more vitally achieved than in sex. As

Eliade has commented, "sexuality, for desacralized, urban populations, represents the last source of the 'numinous': it is mystery, sacredness, all in one."<sup>17</sup> Morag's sexual encounters with Jules return her to that remembered unity with the "other side." Even their first encounter as teenagers takes Morag "somewhere in someplace beyond language" (p. 112). When Jules visits her in Toronto, she touches his hand: "She does not know herself why she has done this. She is not making a play. She wants only to touch him, someone from a long long way back, someone related to her in ways she cannot define and feels no need of defining" (p. 218). This suggests the necessity of connecting herself with that past she has been rejecting, but a later description makes it clear she is referring to something farther back than simply her Manawaka past. When they do make love the second time, it is "as though this joining is being done for other reasons, some debt or answer to the past, some severing of inner chains which have kept her bound and separated from part of herself" (p. 222). Jules says that she is using him as a shaman--"you were doing magic, to get away [from Brooke]" (p. 223)--but it would seem more true to say that she is using sex as magic to get back to a remembered unity of Self and cosmos from which Brooke's denial of all but ego kept her disconnected. As Morag explains later to

Pique, "I felt--feel--that he was related to me in some way" (p. 192). Thus for Morag, Jules is the soulmate or "bridegroom of the soul" of whom Jung speaks, "who celebrates the sacred incest that symbolizes the union of opposites and equals."<sup>18</sup> He is related to her because their ancestors inhabited the same place and, to use Chief Luther Standing Bear's image,<sup>19</sup> the dust from the bones of the ancestors of each is mingled in the bodies of both. The earlier satisfying sexual relationship Morag describes with Brooke might suggest that the numinous can be experienced without awareness of it, even by those who deny its existence. But Morag also recalls how the deterioration of the marriage into a battle of wills destroyed the sex which became instead a frightful game of dominating father rewarding or punishing an obedient or disobedient child (p. 200)--like the father Brooke swore he would never become (p. 178). Evidently, a lack of awareness of the significance of the past and a denial of any other than rational realities can have tragic consequences. When Morag does seek to come to terms with Brooke later on, she says, "May we forgive one another for what neither of us could help" (p. 275). The summation, like the marriage, is an ironic reversal of grace.

Real grace Morag finds in the mystery of the generations, a mystery which she purports not to understand.

Following the pattern which she has observed in nature, she comes to recognize that those people alive in the present carry within them the spirits of those who were alive in the past. Of her own parents she says, "they're inside me, flowing unknown in my blood and moving unrecognized in my skull" (p. 15); of her daughter she says, "Pique, harbinger of my death, continuer of my life" (p. 239). Morag's understanding of the mystery of the generations comes in time for her to acknowledge her debt to Christie. His response, "Well--I'm blessed," to Morag's "you've been my father to me" (p. 323) reveals that both characters are aware of the grace their relationship has brought them. In her recognition of the voices that speak to her through nature, through her talismans, through her art, Morag recognizes that the ancestors are there to guide anyone who is willing to listen through the experiences of life which are forever new and yet forever the same (p. 44). Once she comes to recognize that these spirits reside in place, she can adopt the Indian, whose place her Sutherland ancestors usurped, as her ancestors too.<sup>20</sup> By coming to terms with the role of the ancestors in the continuation of the spirit, Morag has integrated her ego with her Self--the collective past of both blood and place. The symbol of this integrated Self, Pique, is the Metis child in whose blood flows the

the blood of the Indian, French, and Scots who inhabited the Wachakwa Valley.

The Diviners is itself dedicated to a place and the book's epigraph speaks of people who "had their being once / And left a place to stand on." Morag learns indeed that "you have to go home again" (p. 248), even if the journey is made inside your skull. The next generation of diviners now can sing songs "for individuals, people with names, places of belonging" (p. 199) and of "the valley and the mountain [that] hold my name" (p. 382). The place of which Morag sings is Canada, her ancestral home, and the process which she goes through both presages and patterns the birth of a Canadian identity. The process of identity includes acknowledging the existence of a sacred Wholly Other and recognizing the connections which the individual has through his place to that Other. For Laurence, the quest for identity is the process of identifying the Self with the spirits of the place.

It is now possible to see how the three other native prairie authors have used intuitively Laurence's "techniques of connection." In Gone Indian, Jeremy Sadness overcomes his initial negative reaction to the landscape by listening to the guiding voices of the birds, animals, cowboy, Indians, winter king, and Grey Owl who inhabit the land, and then overcomes his "modern"

schizophrenia by uniting in sex and perhaps in death with the earth goddess Bea. Carlyle Sinclair learns from a sacred place in nature, from Coyote who watches him, from Archie who refuses to leave the place of his ancestors, and from Victoria who insists on the naturalness of bearing a child, to return to the intuition of cosmic connection that he knew as a child himself. And Rudy Wiebe discovers through his "unearthing" of Big Bear that the land dictates a life lived with nature in communication with the sacred through talismans, creatures, symbols, sex, generation, and creative vision. Although Wiebe diminishes the archetype by subsuming it to the Christian signature, Big Bear's process of identity from and with the spirit of Great Parent of Bear, derived from his lived understanding of the land, is the more beguiling prospect and has, in the end, lasted much longer than steel.

Developing a Canadian identity is furthered through a respect for our own land and for all nature based on a respect for the numinous spirit which is contained within it; through an understanding of unconscious symbols and sacred objects and of the language which they speak; through a mythic consciousness which can sift truth from prosaic fact; through a respect for the simple truths of generation which say that every child is divine, every man a hero, and every dead ancestor a god; and through an

awareness of the fact that the only reason we are here is to fulfil the promise of the past by passing on its spirit to the future. It is the necessary doing of the thing which matters.

Notes - Chapter Four

<sup>1</sup> Otto, p. 26.

<sup>2</sup> Kroetsch, cited by Peter Thomas, "Keeping Mum,"  
p. 55.

<sup>3</sup> Margaret Laurence, The Diviners (Toronto: McClelland  
and Stewart, 1974), p. 11. All further references to this  
work will be included in parentheses in the text.

<sup>4</sup> Otto, p. 144.

<sup>5</sup> Jung, "The Special Phenomenology of the Child  
Archetype," in Psyche and Symbol, p. 143.

<sup>6</sup> Jung, p. 144.

<sup>7</sup> Jung, p. 135.

<sup>8</sup> Jung, "The Psychology of the Child Archetype," in  
Psyche and Symbol, p. 125.

<sup>9</sup> Fiedler, pp. 316 - 19.

<sup>10</sup> Jung, "Aion," in Psyche and Symbol, pp. 35 - 60.

<sup>11</sup> Eliade, No Souvenirs, p. 182.

<sup>12</sup> Margaret Laurence, "Where the World Began," in  
Heart of a Stranger (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart,  
1976), p. 213.

<sup>13</sup> Henighan, p. 607.

<sup>14</sup> The Book of Common Prayer and Administration of  
the Sacraments (Toronto: Church of England in Canada, n.d.),  
p. 327.

<sup>15</sup> Nancy Bailey, "Margaret Laurence, Carl Jung, and the Manawaka Women," SCL, 1(Winter 1977), p. 316.

<sup>16</sup> Jung, "The Psychology of the Child Archetype," in Psyche and Symbol, p. 117.

<sup>17</sup> Eliade, No Souvenirs, p. 315.

<sup>18</sup> Jung, "The Phenomenology of the Spirit in Fairy Tales," in Psyche and Symbol, p. 85.

<sup>19</sup> Cited by Deloria, p. 73.

<sup>20</sup> Laurence cited in Margaret Laurence, ed. William New (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1977), p. 30. See also David Williams, "The Indian Our Ancestor," pp. 309 - 28.

## Conclusion

Literature has an important role to fulfil in a nation's quest for identity. The four writers studied in this thesis are each concerned with telling the stories of the land and of the heroes who inhabit the Canadian prairie. On a mythic level, the stories of a place, as revealed through the consciousness of the artists calling them up, are revelations from the unconscious, revelations from the numinous spirit, the "wholly other"--that power greater than man, who inhabited this place before anything else was. In Gone Indian, Robert Kroetsch presents an abstract map of this unknown territory. In a fantastic journey to the frontiers of consciousness, Jeremy Bentham Sadness learns to overcome the rationalism which limits and distorts man's perceptions of reality. He learns, with the help of many guides, to cross the frontier into the unconscious, although his return--renewed, re-created, as a Whole Self in whom consciousness and unconscious are integrated--is only implied by Kroetsch. W. O. Mitchell brings his protagonist, Carlyle Sinclair, back from the frontier/horizon of the unconscious. Out of this vanishing point of self modern man begins to recover his archaic self among people who live in a state of nature. Here he finally surrenders his negative assent to death-in-life and his defensive clinging to ego in order to

participate fully in that balanced natural life of the Living Whole that he "remembers" from childhood. Conversely, when Rudy Wiebe tries to present the psychic health of man in a state of nature, he does so to incorporate the Cree into the typological framework of Christian history. Wiebe laments the lost state of nature but his purpose is to explain the divine plan of redemption. His rational Christian education modifies the revelations of the numinous as lived by his hero in The Temptations of Big Bear; the ultimate effect of that education is to make this place conform to the "real" places mentioned in scripture. Margaret Laurence would not agree that the "spirit" or myth of any other place can be our reality. Her heroine, Morag Gunn, discovers that the only real place is the one that lives in the unconscious of each of us--the place where our world began. Finally and conclusively in The Diviners Laurence articulates the indigenous connections to the "wholly other" which she has inherited and intuited but, until the writing of the novel, has not fully understood. In so doing she shows that not facts and history but rather that which lives in the unconscious is true experience--that myth is reality. If myth is reality, then the unconscious (the source of myth) must also be the source of man's real identity--identification with that sacred power which is

both without and within. Each of the four prairie authors suggests, with varying degrees of success, that the Indian characters who have retained their connections to the "Wholly Other" are the "others" who can show modern man how to find the other side of himself, the undiscovered self, from which he has become estranged.

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