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A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF
FREDERICK MANFRED'S LORD GRIZZLY
AND
A. B. GUTHRIE JR.'S THE BIG SKY

BY
CAROL DORNBERGER-JACKSON

A thesis submitted
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree Master of Arts
Major in English
South Dakota State University
1984

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A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF
FREDERICK MANFRED'S LORD GRIZZLY
AND
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This thesis is approved as a creditable and independent investigation by a candidate for the degree, Master of Arts, and is acceptable for meeting the thesis requirements for this degree. Acceptance of this thesis does not imply that the conclusions reached by the candidate are necessarily the conclusions of the major department.

_____ Charles Woodard Thesis Adviser	_____ Date
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_____ Ruth Alexander Head, English Department	_____ Date
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I want to thank my parents for their support and praise. To Tara, my daughter, I want to say I love you for being there when I most needed you.

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CD-J

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Across the Wide Missouri

Oh, Shennydore, I long to hear you.
Away, you rolling river!
Oh, Shennydore, I can't get near you.
Away, away, I'm bound away.
Across the wide Missouri.

'Tis seven long years since first I seed 'ee.
Away, you rolling river!
'Tis seven long years since first I seed 'ee.
Away, away, I'm bound away.
Across the wide Missouri.

Oh, Shennydore, I love your daughter.
Away, you rolling river!
I'll take her across the yellow water.
Away, away, I'm bound away.
Across the wide Missouri.

- North American Folk Song

Across the wide Missouri, men ventured. Across overpowering landscapes, a courageous few endured physical and spiritual ordeals. They relied heavily upon their instincts and intuitive powers to survive numerous dangers. It was a time of romance, wonder, brutality and hardship. These weathered individuals went on quests into little known regions inhabited by various Indian tribes, some friendly, others warlike and dangerous. These were the mountain men: American explorers, hunters, and sometimes heroes. The West became better understood by America because of these early adventurers. Don Walker has said:

The mountain men could be called by some a hero of physical courage, primitive ingenuity and self-reliance. Removed hundreds of miles into the wilderness, he pitted himself not only against the small practical problems of nature such as the freezing wetness of beaver streams and the heavy toughness of buffalo hides, but also against the killing forces of hunger, thirst, blizzards, bears and attacking Indians. Naturally out of the raw stuff of his history come some great examples of historic survival.¹

The purpose of this thesis is to do a comparative study of two books by two men who are interested in the mountain man and his period in American history. Frederick Manfred and A. B. Guthrie Jr., authors of Lord Grizzly and The Big Sky, have a deep love for the American West. Their books are about America's frontier and the dreams of the mountain men who first explored it. The mountain men's dreams were of freedom from civilization, excitement in discovery, and love for the vast sea of plains and soaring grandeur of mountains. The spirit of

the wild is captured in the books of these two writers. Manfred's style of writing is circular. It has a continuation in it. Guthrie's writing style, on the other hand, is more linear. It is straightforward, direct. The main characters are also different. Hugh Glass is a seasoned veteran of many years in the mountains. Boone Caudill is younger, and inexperienced. He is a greenhorn compared to Hugh.

This chapter provides a brief history of the fur trade and the importance of the Missouri River in relation to it. The second chapter is an examination of the lives of Manfred and Guthrie. These writers grew up in the West, which helps them to record the happenings of the region and the feelings of her people. In addition, this chapter includes their common beliefs and at the same time their differences as writers of the Western novel.

Chapter Three is an investigation of Manfred's writing style in Lord Grizzly. A summary of the story of Hugh Glass and his metamorphosis in character is also included.

Chapter Four is an investigation of Guthrie's writing style in The Big Sky. Chapter Four mirrors Chapter Three, retelling The Big Sky and the course taken by the main character in the story. Chapter Four also compares and contrasts the writing styles of Guthrie and Manfred.

Chapter Five is the conclusion of the thesis.

Historical backdrop, "LeRoy Hafen has this to say about America's early explorers":

Fur traders and trappers were the trailblazers of the American frontier. Through long years, wild animals and Indians had beaten paths to watering places and river crossings and mountain passes. The fur hunters widened and extended those trails and pushed others into remote regions. In as much as virgin territory yielded the largest returns in pelts, there was a monetary reward for trailblazing. So, the trapper's persistent search for beaver and the trader's urge to barter with distant redmen unlocked the geographical secrets of the Western wilds. The training these men received equipped them to become scouts and guides for official explorers and for settlement pioneers. The packhorse trails of the fur men became rutted wagon roads and these ultimately developed into the ribboned boulevards of today.²

Interest in the fur trade, however, began in the earliest times. In the Middle Ages, stylish men and women wore furs. As the popularity of sable, ermine, and fox grew, the search for these animals likewise grew. When America was discovered, so were her numerous resources, including the abundant fur-bearing animals.

As early as 1500, Europeans were trading with the natives of Newfoundland. The first Frenchmen in New France, the first Englishmen in New England, and the first Dutchmen in New Netherlands were active in procuring furs. The vanguards of each nation were the pelt hunters, lured ever westward into unknown lands.³

The French were the first to push vigorously and rapidly from the east into the far interior. Theirs was a more consuming passion for furs than exhibited by other nations. From their capital of

Quebec, established in 1608, Frenchmen quickly pushed up the Saint Lawrence and into the Great Lakes. The Jesuits also came, carrying Christianity to the Indians and helping ease the way for the barter in furs. Missions and trading posts soon dotted the vast interior land.⁴

The English began fur trading in America early in the 17th Century, working along the New England coast where there was an abundance of beaver, otter and deer. Captain John Smith reported getting "for trifles neer 100 Bever skinnes, 100 Martins, and neer as many Otters."⁵ English traders soon were in competition with the French fur gatherers.

In the meantime, the Dutch established themselves on Manhattan Island. In 1614, they traded with the Indians in their post near today's Albany, New York. In 1624, the Dutch traders shipped 7,246 beaver skins, 850 otters and numerous other pelts.⁶ The Dutch established good relations with the Iroquois, and penetrated into the Great Lakes area. However, with the conquest of New Netherlands by England twenty years later, the Dutch fur trade stopped.

The rivalry over furs became one between the French and British. The French extended their trading throughout the Mississippi Valley, and even as far as the Missouri River. In the Ohio region, the French and English confronted each other at the "Gateway of the West," or the forks of the Ohio. Their outposts, Fort Duquesne and Fort Pitt, were the first scenes of the French and Indian War. France lost this war and in the process ceded all her American land possessions to Spain. France was therefore pushed out of North America.

North America was now divided between England and Spain, the boundary being the Mississippi River.

During the American Revolution, the French in Canada were loyal to Britain because they were allowed a fur monopoly in a large area around the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers. In drafting the Declaration of Independence, this fact was mentioned. Because it caused protest among the colonies, it is safe to say it was one reason for the Revolutionary War. It is interesting to note that the Indians generally took the side of the British because of their long established fur trade. Nevertheless, the American side gained much from the campaign of George Clark in the Northwest territory. Clark claimed the territory south of the Great Lakes and westward to the Mississippi. However, it wasn't until 1816, after many years of skirmishes between the U.S. and Britain, that an act was passed excluding foreigners from the fur trade in the United States.⁷ With the Articles of Confederation, the new nation made some efforts to control the fur trade with the Indians in a peaceful manner. Trading posts were set up and agents were hired. The new nation was on its way to becoming a powerful fur trade area. As a result, this became a time of expansion. The Lewis and Clark expedition, headed by Meriwether Lewis and William Clark, was one of the most important historical events in United States history. Thomas Jefferson's instructions were: "the object of your mission is to explore the Missouri River and such principal streams of it, as by its course and communication with the water of the Pacific Ocean may offer the most

direct and practicable water communication across the continent for the purpose of commerce."⁸

As a result of these lengthy commands, the Missouri River became the means of travel, exploration and adventure to many soldiers of fortune. The increase of our cultural heritage, and the beginning of the knowledge of the American West, must be accounted the most important results of the Lewis and Clark expedition.⁹

With the opening of the region, the mountain men came. Men such as Manuel Lisa, one of the most important men on the Missouri; quiet, preacher-like Jedediah Smith; clever, young Jim Bridger; old, tough Bill Williams; and many others too numerous to mention, became famous for their exploits. Some will go down in history as decent, others as ruthless. Various fur trading companies were born during this adventure boom. Later on, the government withdrew from the fur trade business and allowed it to become a private enterprise. The American Fur Company, the Rocky Mountain Fur Company, and the Hudson Bay Company were establishing themselves along the upper Missouri.

Men from Kentucky, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Virginia left their comfortable and safe green hills to seek the expansive and untamed West.

A few of these men, one of whom was Hugh Glass, answered this advertisement in the Missouri Republican of St. Louis:

To Enterprising Young Men:

The subscriber wishes to engage one hundred young men to ascend the Missouri River to its source, there to be employed for one, two, or three years. For particulars enquire of Major

Andrew Henry, near the lead mines in the County of Washington, who will ascend with and command the party; or of the subscriber near St. Louis.

(Signed)
William H. Ashley¹⁰

During the fur era of the American West, roughly a 40-year span between 1805-1845, the Missouri River was the major route into the north country, and many trading posts were built on its banks in South Dakota. The effect of trapping and trading was both good and bad. As with all change, those who resisted often became victims of it. For example, the Native American found the ever-increasing numbers of white trappers a problem, not only in the area of present-day South Dakota, but throughout the whole of western America. This was a tragedy for a whole way of life for the tribes along the route of white progress. This St. Louis Republican ad was answered by men seeking fame, fortune, and adventure. It is this great but short-lived epic in American history that Manfred and Guthrie wrote about in Lord Grizzly and The Big Sky.

Bernard DeVoto, the late historian, put it best when he said:

... but the loveliest myth of all America was the far West....a lost impossible province....where men were not dwarfs and where adventure truly was. For the brief season, consider, this myth so generously begotten became fact. For a few years Odysseus Jed Smith and Siegfried Carson and the wing-shod Fitzpatrick actually drew breath in this province of fable. Then, suddenly it was all myth again. Wagons were moving down trails, and nowhere remained any trace of the demigods who had passed this way.¹¹

These were the men of valor, hard times and violence. These were the knights of the west who saw their Camelot come to an abrupt ending. Like the knights of old, these adventurous men suffered the tests of nature and learned her cruel lessons, and some became legends or heroes. The bearded dreamers took journeys into unknown parts. Often these episodes proved either tragic or rewarding for the mountain men. Manfred and Guthrie both saw the fable, the lost breed of American adventurer. Lord Grizzly and The Big Sky are books that become messages on the final hours of the legendary mountain man of the American frontier.

The primitive innocence, brute savagery and untamed temperament found in Manfred's and Guthrie's books have contributed greatly to the literature of the American West. The world of the white savage, filled with colorful myths and dreams that die hard, unfolds in Lord Grizzly and The Big Sky. With a blend of history, legend, and imagination, Manfred and Guthrie take a period out of the American past and bring it back for the reader. Mari Sandoz wrote:

The fur-capped, tangle-bearded hunter watched the sky, peering along the edge of the open hand held over the sun, peering as close to the blazing rim as possible, for there lay the secret of the weather of the next moon.¹²

The fur hunter can still be seen far off in the distance, forever waiting for the new season, for a better one to return again. And life will be free, wild and flooding with the excitement of the wilderness.

Footnotes

¹Don D. Walker, "The Mountain Man as Literary Hero," Western American Literature. In 1, No. 1, (1966), page 16.

²LeRoy R. Hafen, The Mountain Men and the Fur Trade of the Far West. Volume 1: The Arthur H. Clark Company, Glendale, California 1965, page 24.

³Hafen, page 22.

⁴Hafen, page 23.

⁵Hafen, page 25.

⁶Hafen, page 26.

⁷Hafen, page 28.

⁸Bernard DeVoto, The Journals of Lewis and Clark. Cambridge, Mass: The Riverside Press, 1953, p. iii.

⁹DeVoto, p. xxxvii.

¹⁰John G. Neihardt, The Song of Three Friends and the Song of Hugh Glass. New York: The Macmillan Co., 1924, xxi.

¹¹Vardis Fisher, Mountain Man. New York: William Morrow and Company, 1965, ix.

¹²Mari Sandoz, The Beaver Men. New York: Hastings House, 1964, page 277.

CHAPTER 2
THE BACKGROUNDS OF THE AUTHORS

The winter when I was born
a snowbank as big as a mountain
swept level with the eaves of the house.
Pa had to clip the barbwire fence
and cross the fields in his bobsled
to get the doctor from Doon.
The doctor came after I was born.
He told Gramma she made a good midwife
Pa thought I was a champ,
and wanted to give me some beer,
which the doctor took instead.
Gramma, consulting her memories said
she was afraid I took after both my grandfathers
Gramma didn't like that much. They were giants...¹

- Frederick Manfred

The farm boy from Doon grew up to be a six foot nine inch giant, and is still growing in stature as a writer of the West.

Frederick Manfred was born in 1912 into a farm family. Manfred is half Frisian and half Saxon. "It was great for me to learn that I was first of all not only an American, as my grandfather and father always tried to tell me, but that I also had a lot of Old English blood in me."² The Saxon line comes through his mother's family the Van Engens, who were originally from the Netherlands. The Frisian line comes from the Feikemas of West Friesland. West Friesland is an island off the north coast of the Netherlands. Frederick's paternal grandfather was Feike Fiekas Feikema V, who after settling in America changed his name to Frank.

The family finally decided to live in the farm community of Doon, Iowa, in northwest Iowa. There Frank worked as a stonemason. Manfred's parents Frank Feikema (Feike Feikes Feikema VI) and Alice (Aaltze), farmed the rich soil around Doon.

Frederick Feikema was born the eldest of six brothers, all of whom are over six feet two inches. Many relatives called him Feike (Fy'Kah), and that was his nickname throughout his school days. However, his mother insisted upon calling him Frederick. When it was time to publish his first book, his publishers suggested the pen name of Feike Feikema, though he preferred a more American name. He took the step of changing his name years later, in 1954, with the publication of his most successful novel, Lord Grizzly.

Manfred was educated in Calvinistic parochial schools and received a B.A. in English from Calvin College in Michigan. During the 1930's he wandered about the country working as a harvest-hand, a salesman, a factory worker, a professional basketball player and a newspaper reporter.

He devoted himself to writing after being ill with tuberculosis. In 1945, with two fellowships and two more novels, he began to receive national recognition.³ His third novel, This Is The Year, 1947, which was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize, was rewritten six times. Sinclair Lewis liked the book, and his approval led to a \$1,000 grant-in-aid from the American Academy of Arts and Letters. Lord Grizzly was nominated for the National Book Award in 1954. Manfred lost to William Faulkner, who won the award for A Fable.

In novels such as The Green Earth, This Is The Year, The Wind Blows Free, and in the long poem Winter Count, Manfred paints a picture of his life for the reader. Manfred's earlier life was filled with hard farm work and the feeling of being in a minority group.

There is a Frisian saying that the Frisian is never on the side of the majority. Their land has been traditionally a refuge for persecuted minorities, from Huguenots, to Anabaptists, to Mennonites. Manfred confesses that as a youth he had a strong sense of belonging to a minority. "You've got one strike against you as a clodhopper, then in addition, I was a Frisian." The Frisians were a minority among the Hollanders, who were a minority in America.⁴

Manfred also felt out of place because of his size. He was even nicknamed "Dinny" for dinosaur at Calvin College. He felt awkward, and was somewhat of a misfit. "I was kind of a weird sight. I was slender, thin and at twelve as tall as the seniors."⁵

Manfred may have been as painfully embarrassed by his humble farm origins as by his lofty size. To him, Calvin College and the city of Grand Rapids, Michigan, appeared cultured and sophisticated, an environment which may also have made him feel awkward, and isolated from his classmates.

From his earliest days, Manfred has had a strong sense of independence. His mother and his Aunt Kathryn encouraged him to become a writer, and share his talent with others. Even before he started grammar school, Kathryn taught him poetry and writing. One day she asked him what he was going to be when he grew up.

"What's the hardest thing to become?" he asked.

"Become a poet," she said.

"Well that's what I am going to be," the five year old replied.

The family had very few books for Fred to read. He concentrated on the Dutch and English Bible, and anything else he could get his hand on. His parents didn't want him to read westerns:

My folks were rather religious people; they were Calvinists. It was all right if I read the school books, the textbooks, and if I read the Bible. But for me to be monkeying with modern things like westerns--that was a bad thing. In my case, I read westerns whenever I could sneak away from the house. I got my chance to read westerns when I went to the barber shop, or on Saturday nights when the

folks went to town to bring in the eggs and get groceries. I'd sneak into the poolroom or the produce house and so on, and try to find all the mangled up westerns, in back of the counters or behind stores....

Even with his love for westerns, it is his Calvinistic rearing on the Bible that so many of his books reflect. His Old Testament style can be traced back to his days of studying the Bible.

In his young days, his father and mother and his Aunt Kathryn were the main figures in his life. Through the two women he learned sensitivity to the beauty in life, and through his father he learned joy in physical labor and in play. His mother influenced him greatly, but it was his father who influenced him most. He has said, "I thank God for that. It's wrong when a son lets his mother put the final stamp on him."⁸

Manfred wrote poems and love letters in high school, but he didn't write seriously until he started college. After spending two years on the farm near Doon following high school, he came to Calvin in the fall of 1930.

The Primitive, the first volume of the trilogy Wanderlust, gives psychological and spiritual insights into Manfred's school days. Manfred decided early that he would major in English, eventually taking nine courses. He also took eight courses in philosophy, five in history, four in German, and the required five courses in religion. He followed the teacher preparation program, including practice teaching. Manfred also played basketball, becoming a star player. He felt more inclined to study literature, though, than to be an athlete.

He had his poetry, sketches and stories published in the school magazine Chimes. He became its president. He also became the editor of the college newspaper. One rather traumatic episode at the time was his flunking of Freshman English, but he has since seen that as an advantage. It let him know he had to be different. "Something goes wrong in the critical atmosphere of the classroom which discourages the tiny little bud of writing,"⁹ Manfred has said. His happiest moments were not in English class, but in the Plato Club, the philosophy club. Manfred liked his professor William Jellema so much that Jellema is one of two people that The Primitive is dedicated to. In Manfred's words, "Jellema is the truest Christian he (Thurs) had ever known."¹⁰

With his college years came a new self-awareness, springing from Manfred's feelings of isolation. Manfred tried to develop his individuality at college. He felt that the Puritanical Calvinism he faced at school was not for him. Calvinism emphasized man's guilt and that salvation would be for only a select few. Manfred struggled with his religion. He felt that Calvinism looked upon everything as a sin. These feelings made him feel resentful and alienated. Manfred's love of the land and her people was more important to him than the strict structure of Calvinism. However, Manfred has refused to criticize the school in later years, and in 1963 he wrote in the Reformed Journal: "She was a dear Mother, I didn't always agree with her, but I loved her."¹¹ Professor John Timmerman, a fellow student of Manfred's and a veteran of more than thirty years' teaching in the Calvin English

Department has said: "I never met a student or faculty member who did not admire and like him, though not all were in agreement with his esthetic or philosophic convictions."¹²

The crucial and questioning years at Calvin have been put to rest by Manfred. His attitude has mellowed considerably. His remarks have changed and his bitterness has gone since he wrote Wanderlust, and the years he spent at Calvin have contributed largely to his writing.

When asked how he got started as a writer Manfred said:

In my boyhood I didn't have a single friend interested in writing. I didn't study creative writing in college. And I didn't meet a well known author until sometime after I was published...What really put the heart into my private burning bush was a hitch-hiking trip I took in August of 1934, a few months after graduation from Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan. I went to see the Shining Mountains of the Far West. That trip released my soul.¹³

At a party in 1937, Manfred discovered he could tell a tale in his own way and people would listen. At this party a friend of his insisted he tell about the trip he took through the Dakotas during the dirty thirties. Noticing he had everybody's attention, Manfred embellished details and made the story more dramatic than it was. With new confidence in his storytelling ability, he began writing. His writing became his own style, the style of the storyteller.

Manfred worked hard for years on his first novel, The Golden Bowl. While working on this book, he damaged his health.

While he was hospitalized in a sanatorium in Minnesota, he met his future wife, Maryanna. They were married on October 31, 1942. Maryanna has said of Manfred: "He never cared about making a lot of money. He just wanted to create a literature of this area. The rest of us were just swept along with his dream."¹⁴

Maryanna and Fred had three children, Freya, Marya, and Frederick Jr. Life was not easy for the family. They were poor and at times barely got by. The family's life revolved around Manfred's writing and career.

Manfred and his wife of more than thirty years of marriage are now divorced. He lives by himself in a hilltop retreat he calls "Roundwind" near Luyerne, Minnesota.

Manfred writes in his "shack," a cabin close to his home. He gets up around 6:30 a.m., eats breakfast, and then sits down to write with his 1939 Remington typewriter, which is well-worn with use. He taught an advanced writing course at the University of South Dakota for 15 years, and is now teaching at Augustana College in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. When asked about getting rich and famous in a recent interview, Manfred said:

If I live 20 years I probably could be, but I'm not looking forward to it and I don't need it, either. I don't mind paying my bills but I don't need it for ego. I know I've done very good work. It's incomparable in my own eyes. That means that no one else can do anything like it. It's singular.¹⁵

Most of Manfred's books have been published in the East. Manfred considers eastern publishers "close-knit" and "gossipy." "If

you haven't become a best seller or made a great name for yourself; and you send work into them, it always winds up in the hands of people who want to remake you for their own purposes, so they can help you sell. That's where the cussing comes in my life. I keep telling them, 'What do you know about where I come from?!'"¹⁶

Manfred has proven himself a successful writer without moving East. He is unique and independent on his hill overlooking the area he named "Siouxland." He writes about the pioneer, the immigrant, and the mountain man in his own way, far from the confusion of big city life. He not only looms in height but in the spirit of the Western frontier. He is one of western literature's most outstanding novelists.

My earliest memory is of crawling under a bed and drinking a full bottle of Castoria. I can't recall the consequences. That must have been in 1905 or 1906. We had migrated, in 1901, from Indiana to Montana and more particularly to the raw little town of Choteau, where my father was to be the first principal of the Teton Free High School. There were four of us then, my parents, my older sister and I.¹⁷

- A. B. Guthrie, Jr.

Guthrie's father fell in love with their new home in Montana. Although Guthrie's parents were better educated and more refined than the people of Choteau (his father was a graduate of Indiana University and his mother was a graduate of the Quaker school, Earlham College in Richmond, Indiana) the thrill of living in such beautiful surroundings kept the Guthries from moving away from this wild and uncivilized land. The social atmosphere was alien to the Guthries: There were more bars than churches in Choteau. At first the locals were suspicious of the scholarly couple. Nevertheless, the family was eventually accepted and respected.

A. B. Guthrie, Sr., showed himself to be a man of knowledge and discipline through the manner in which he ran his school, and he was a successful teacher. Although he was a bookish, small man, he also was courageous and stubborn. He was virtually impossible to push around. His son recalls:

Teaching was a sissy occupation, or so some thought when he arrived in town. He wrenched a quirt from one of them after a slash across the face, and put the run on him. He once walked into the eye of a revolver, first pointed at a friend of his, and won possession of it. No big-boy rowdies in his school intimidated him. An old-time master, he didn't hesitate to clobber them. Be it said for them, they came to like him as a consequence. In later years more than one has thanked me for his discipline and wished he were on hand to thank.¹⁸

A. B. Guthrie, Jr., learned not only Latin, English, mathematics, history, and science from his father, but also the secrets of

nature. Mr. Guthrie also taught his son an undying love for the American West:

The stimulus and guidance that I got from him I got at home. I'm grateful for it. But for his interest in literature, but for his profound attachment to nature and the West, which took me into books and carried me afield to buffalo wallows, bird's nests, landmarks and sites of old excitement and made his¹⁹ loves my own, I doubt I would be writing now.

Unfortunately, Guthrie's father had a quick and fiery temper, with a cruel sense of justice to accompany it:

We had a one-eyed bird dog Jimps. When I was old enough to ask, Father explained that as a pup she had been prone to range too far while hunting and, to teach her better, he'd dusted her with birdshot. One of the pellets, he said mildly, had chanced to strike her eyes. Then I took his word for it. Now I know that his fury pulled the trigger. Later on, Jimps came in heat, and male dogs hung around the house. The sight of them filled Father with fierce embarrassment. In his mind, I'm sure, there was an association here with evil. Sex on his doorstep! One night during her season old Jimps clawed out of the screened in back porch and "got stuck" in the garden. Father seized my boy's ball bat, marched out and clubbed her²⁰ on the head. The blow burst her seeing eye.

Later on his father had to kill Jimps. Guthrie's short story, Ebbie, is a painful memory of this episode.

The impact of Guthrie's father was overwhelming. Much of his writing on the West and its characters can be traced to his childhood with his father. One such example is in his description of the first time his father experienced the big sky of Montana:

He breathed the air. He looked. He heard the ring of silence. He felt somehow afloat in space. A shudder shook him, the shudder of delight. He stretched his arms wide and said aloud, "By George I'm free!"²¹

The dialogue in Guthrie's The Big Sky echoes the happiness Guthrie Sr. felt the first morning after the family arrived in Choteau. In the story, Boone felt free, wild, and happy as he floated down the Missouri, getting closer to the country that held so much beauty, far from civilization:

...heading up from the deep woods and the closed hills and the scrub grass of the down country to country that kept getting freer and bigger until sometimes looking out over it from a rise, Boone felt he was everywhere on it, like the air or the light.

"Goddam Jim!" he said
 "What?!"
 "It's slick ain't it?"²²

The older Guthrie was not physically violent with his children or his wife. However, they all had to tip-toe around him. Mrs. Guthrie would reason with him, but she had a gentle nature and felt little inclination to quarrel because of the children. Guthrie himself did not know the reasons for his father's outbursts, but whatever resentment he felt is gone:

Whatever hate I had for him I loved is gone. I feel sorrow; and when I cast back to him without casting father, I see him smile and feel his hand kind on my shoulder and hear his cheerful voice, and we have a chaw of licorice and catch a trout or find an arrowhead and speculate about the men who lived before us.²³

Guthrie learned from life and never has been at a loss in explaining it to others. He places a great value on where he came from:

I may not know who I am, but I know where I am from. I can say to myself that a good part of my private and social character, the kinds of scenery and weather and people and humor I respond to, the prejudices I wear like dishonorable scars, the affections that sometimes waken me from middleaged sleep with a rush of undiminished love, the virtues I respect and the weaknesses I condemn, the code I try to live by, the special ways I fail at it and kinds of shame I feel when I do, the models and heroes I follow, the colors and shapes that evoke my deepest pleasures, the way I adjudicate between personal desire and personal responsibility, have been in good part scored into me by that little womb-like village and the lovely, lonely, exposed prairie of the homestead.²⁴

Guthrie's early religious and moral training was Calvinism masquerading under another name, the frontier Methodist Church. The family joined the Methodist Church because of the simple fact that it was the only one to join:

Any word resembling a swear word was forbidden, as was liquor, sex and whatever references made to the animal urge. Although Guthrie later abandoned formal belief in the creeds of his childhood, he acknowledged that the psychic scars and a sense of guilt remained as "a kind of residual Methodism that makes me feel that I have to justify my occupation of space on the globe."²⁵

In The Big Sky, Guthrie's character Jim becomes obsessed with God. He meditates constantly on the subject. Jim sounds like he was brought up in the same household as Guthrie. Jim says of his father: "When God got to him, he was mean to live with."²⁶

Strict Calvinism with a hard-hearted God became a theme in many of Guthrie's books. Recollections of his boyhood became important in his writing. A childhood of conflicts with God and a strict father figure would later be incorporated successfully into his writing.

Guthrie was a good student in high school and for some time wanted to become a writer. He enrolled in the fall of 1919 at the University of Washington in Seattle, but was not happy there. He felt the need to be back in Montana's vast space. Seattle was too gloomy for Guthrie, and the following year he transferred to the University of Montana at Missoula. There Guthrie flourished. He wrote for the college literary magazine The Frontier, majored in Journalism, and was greatly influenced by Walt Whitman. Like Whitman, Guthrie loved nature and found his faith in it. In his senior year, Guthrie fell victim to a neurosis, one that still haunts him. When called on to read or speak, he becomes upset. When he was younger he would be terrified and hysterical. His face would work and his knees would shake. He read all the Freud and Jung he could find trying to understand why he reacted this way. He now blames the problem on "fundamentalist Christianity, and having been a good boy whose thoughts and dreams and nightmare vice proved he was unlike the righteous lot, a sinner born in sin."²⁷

When Guthrie graduated from college with honors in 1923, the country was headed for a depression. Guthrie traveled with a friend around the country seeking employment. Thomas Ford writes:

He was a ranch hand in Montana, and Mexico, a laborer and grocery clerk in California, a Forest Service employee in Montana and a salesman and part-time office manager in a New York feed company. Finally, he got a job with the Lexington Kentucky Leader as a cub reporter. He would remain with the Leader for 21 years, and become its executive editor.²⁸

Guthrie won a Nieman Fellowship in 1944 to study a year at Harvard. This was an important moment in Guthrie's life, for at Harvard he would begin his successful career as a writer. Writing was a slow, hard process for Guthrie. "I spent a full day on one line of dialogue and knocked off satisfied."²⁹ With his first book The Big Sky, in 1947, came success. Guthrie was finished with newspaper work, and at age 46, he started a new profession, that of an author.

While writing The Big Sky, Guthrie lost 30 pounds, "drank a lake of coffee, smoked 400,000 Camels and wound up with a bad stomach."³⁰ Nevertheless, Guthrie was overwhelmed with praise, parties and financial success. In May of 1950 he was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for his sequel to The Big Sky, The Way West. In 1951 Howard Hawks bought the screen rights for The Big Sky, and Guthrie became a celebrity.

Guthrie returned to his Montana home after spending time in Hollywood as a screenwriter. He bought a rugged section of land called Twin Lakes, near his boyhood home of Choteau. There he could be close to his love, Montana, and all her rich history:

A long arm could reach out and grasp the not-so distant time of General Custer and the battle of the Little Big Horn, or a massacre of Piegans on the Marias River, or a gold strike on Last Chance Gulch. Any shortcomings

of the present overshadowed by the "mind-heard" echoes of old trappers on the beavered streams. The grind of prairie schooners. A buffalo skull in a wallow. The time gentled melancholy of the first homesteader, forced to leave the sunsets. An arrowhead shining³¹ in the gravel after rain. All these and more.

In June of 1931, Guthrie married Harriet Larson. He had known her nine years. She too was from Choteau, the daughter of a rancher. The Guthries had two children: A. B. Guthrie III, and a daughter, Helen. In 1962, after more than thirty years of married life, Guthrie and his wife were divorced by mutual consent. Whatever caused the erosion of the relationship, Guthrie looked back on his married life with gratitude and attributed to Harriet a large role in his success. Harriet died in 1968. At this time Guthrie drank too much and became lonely and troubled.

Guthrie remarried in 1969. It has been said that he has calmed considerably, and is not prone to the depression he felt after Harriet died.

Guthrie has not allowed the years to defeat him. However, he has never learned to enjoy public appearances, and in his later years he has made fewer of them. One such infrequent appearance almost 11 years ago was made in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, for the Western Literature Association. There he received the Distinguished Achievement Award and an Honorary Life Membership in the Association. In accepting, he spoke of the West: "All these days, these settings, these times, have been touched on, of course, but not finally--never

finally." He also expressed his deep love and respect for the West by stating: "West is another word for magic."³²

The man from Montana has shared his special kind of magic, and the Western past will remain more alive because of it.

SUMMARY

Frederick Manfred and A. B. Guthrie, Jr. have common interests and backgrounds. Even though Guthrie's parents were better educated and Guthrie's father was more strict, the two had similar experiences. They were both raised in the strict world of Calvinism. Both writers felt disgusted and angry because of Calvinism's cruel and narrow laws. Since Manfred and Guthrie share a respect and love for nature, it is only natural that they would see her laws as fundamental, and more sacred than those of Calvinism.

Another example of Manfred's and Guthrie's common ground is their use of boyhood, family and place in their writings. Manfred stated how his father "put the final stamp" on him. Guthrie has expressed what his father did for his writing and his outlook on the West. Manfred's farm background enabled him to write about nature and her forces. As a boy he watched his father worry about the weather and its effects on the crops. The seasons, the soil and the cycles of nature were intimate factors in Manfred's life. The barnyard held secrets of life, the home secrets of human relationships. The harvests, farm chores, grasshoppers and tough rural lessons all are an integral part of Frederick Manfred's ability to write about the Midwest and West. He watched the women work hard and long hours for very little reward and saw that the men were always at the mercy of the weather gods.

Likewise, Guthrie's boyhood was rural. His country was the high plains at the edge of the mountains. Here the air was always

crisp and sharp. The open spaces and the azure sky were beautiful and endless. This Montana world became the center of Guthrie's universe. It was all he needed. He lived in a small town, where the spirit of the Blackfoot Indian still lingered. Guthrie knew the ranchers, and he watched the loafing cowboys, and derelict Indians in the dusty little bars of Choteau, Montana. He heard the old tales of the frontier, and drew heavily upon his boyhood experiences in the small cowtown for his later writing. The feelings of happiness and wonder were all in Guthrie's surroundings. He knew colorful people and lived in an interesting time, when the West was still primitive. Guthrie knew what the West was made of.

In college, and after it, a new self-awareness was brought about for both writers. Wandering as Manfred and Guthrie did during the depression gave them insights into people. The roads they took, the people they met, and the hardships they endured made them aware of happiness and tragedy, evil and goodness in human nature. The two learned much from the school of hard knocks and living like gypsies. They had successes and failures. Nevertheless, both realized that their college years and later travels after college were important steps in the world of writing. They became educated in not only the scholastic world but in the harsh world outside the classroom door.

After the depression, they started their writing careers. Guthrie was very successful, more so than Manfred. However, the writing talents of both men have been praised and enjoyed by readers and critics alike.

Another comparison is that their personal lives seem to mirror one another in the fact they were both divorced after many years of marriage. Finally, they both reside in the land they grew up in. The man from Siouxland and the man from Montana never left their homes to live in more sophisticated urban surroundings. Manfred and Guthrie love their country and feel content to remain there despite the opportunities the cities provide for writers.

It becomes apparent that the two writers compare considerably in many respects. Just as their backgrounds touch in places, so the thread of the American West pulls them together. These two men are alike in many ways.

Footnotes

¹Frederick Manfred, "Winter Count," South Dakota Review, 1, No. 1 (1963), p. 21.

²Robert C. Wright, Frederick Manfred, (Boston: G. K. Hall and Co. 1979), p. 15.

³Wright, p. 16.

⁴Wright, p. 17.

⁵Wright, p. 17.

⁶Wright, p. 18.

⁷John R. Milton, Frederick Feikema Manfred, Conversations with Frederick Manfred, (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1974), pp. x/xi-xiii.

⁸Wright, p. 19.

⁹Peter Oppewall, "Manfred and Calvin College," Where the West Begins, Ed. Arthur R. Huseboe and William Geyer (Sioux Falls: Center for Western Studies Press, 1978), p. 90

¹⁰Oppewall, p. 90.

¹¹Oppewall, p. 94.

¹²Oppewall, p. 97.

¹³Frederick Manfred, The Wind Blows Free, (Sioux Falls: Center for Western Studies Press, 1979), p. 1.

¹⁴Debra O'Conner, "Siouxland Author Tells About His Country Friends," Argus-Leader, 8 March, 1983.

¹⁵O'Conner.

¹⁶Frederick Manfred, Dacotah Territory, (Moorhead: State College Press, 1975), p. 22.

¹⁷A. B. Guthrie, Jr., The Blue Hens Chick, (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1965), p. 1.

¹⁸Guthrie, pp. 34-35.

¹⁹Guthrie, pp. 35-36.

²⁰Guthrie, p. 36.

²¹Guthrie, p. 36.

²²A. B. Guthrie, Jr., The Big Sky (New York: William Sloane Associates Publishers, 1947), p. 121.

²³Guthrie, The Blue Hens Chick, p. 39.

²⁴A. B. Guthrie, Jr., "I Know Where I Am From," The Reporter, 27, No. 9 (1962), p. 52.

²⁵Thomas W. Ford, A. B. Guthrie, Jr., (Boston: G. K. Hall and Co., 1981), p. 25.

²⁶Ford, p. 79.

²⁷Guthrie, The Blue Hens Chick, pp. 54-55.

²⁸Ford, p. 31.

²⁹Guthrie, The Blue Hens Chick, p. 186.

³⁰Ford, p. 41.

³¹Guthrie, The Blue Hens Chick, p. 252.

³²Ford, pp. 52-53.

CHAPTER 3
THE RETURN OF THE OLD GHOST

It happened then that Major Henry went
With eighty trappers up the dwindling Grand,
Bound through the weird, unfriendly barren land
For where the Big Horn meets the Yellowstone;
And old Hugh Glass went with them.
Large of bone,
Deep-chested, that his great heart might have plant.

Grey-bearded, grey of eye and crowned with grey
Was Glass. It seemed he never had been young;
And, for the grudging habit of his tongue,
None knew the place or season of his birth.
Slowly he woke to anger or to mirth;
Yet none laughed louder when the rare mood fell.¹

- John Neihardt

Frederick Manfred's Lord Grizzly was written in 1954, and received great reviews. William Carlos Williams wrote, "I have never in a lifetime of reading about our West met with anything like it...It was a thrill. It held me spellbound from beginning to end as much by the skill of the writing as the intrinsic fascination of the story itself, which is phenomenal."²

Frederick Manfred chose to write Lord Grizzly for a variety of reasons. The most important reason was Manfred's belief that revealing compassion was his ultimate goal. According to Robert Wright:

Manfred said: He thought of using the story of John Colter or Jim Bridger but chose Hugh Glass because Glass had no ulterior motives. He did not go in for money, family, the military or religion but simply acted because Major Henry told him to. He saw Glass as one who lived for an idea or an ideal. At first maybe it was revenge; but then compassion - and this purpose represented for Manfred the ultimate human goal.³

Hugh Glass was said to come from Pennsylvania. Glass began life as a sailor, who was captured by the notorious pirate Lafitte around 1817. Glass was thought to be the captain of a ship that Lafitte captured near what is now Galveston, Texas. If Glass had refused to be one of Lafitte's draftees, he would have been killed. However, stubborn Hugh Glass was not likely to give up his life so easily. In time, Hugh mutinied with a comrade because of the atrocities performed by the pirates. With very little provisions, Hugh and his friend jumped ship and swam for what is now Galveston Bay. Here lived dangerous snakes and cannibals. Hugh and his friend were able to live off the country because of the abundant wildlife;

nevertheless, they ran into trouble roughly a thousand miles from Galveston, in Kansas, according to John Myers Myers:

In the course of their journey, they went through the realm of the foot and hand gnawing Tonkawas, as well as that of the "torso guzzling" Karankawas. They passed through the hunting grounds of the Osages, who prized a victim's whole head in place of a mere patch of hair. They passed through districts ranged by such avid scalp harvesters as the Comanches and Kiowas. Yet, it was a band of Pawnees that scooped them up.⁴

Hugh's friend was immediately put to death in a hideous fashion. The Pawnees, or "Wolf Pawnees," as this tribe was called, were pyromaniacs. They put their enemies to death by means of fire. Slivers of pine rich in resin were put into Hugh's friend, and then he was set on fire.

As a farewell gesture, just as he was about to be killed, Hugh gave vermilion to the chief. This both pleased and flattered the chief, and he spared Hugh and adopted him into the tribe as a foster son. Although Hugh's life was spared, he once again was forced to live in a manner and with people he did not like.

Hugh eventually escaped his captors and lived to tell these adventures. Shortly after this last escape, Hugh joined Ashley's expedition to the Rocky Mountains. Hugh the pirate, the Pawnee, was now a mountain man. This occupation was at least his own choice.

Glass was serving under General Ashley and Major Henry on the Missouri River as a hunter for the fur trapping party in 1823. Against orders, Hugh took off by himself for a few hours to hunt. He was viciously attacked by a she-grizzly and hideously mauled. The

bear was eventually shot and killed, but Hugh was wounded severely. His companions, Jim Bridger and Fitzgerald, who were asked to stay and bury him, left him in the wilderness after waiting days for him to recuperate or die. Fearing Indian attack, the two rode off with Hugh's provisions, and his horse, his rifle, and his flint.

With nothing and no one to help, Hugh began a strange and courageous odyssey. He managed to crawl approximately two hundred miles with a broken leg to Ft. Kiowa. His hatred and need for revenge motivated him. Eventually he found both men, but instead of killing them, he forgave them. This forgiveness in Manfred's opinion is what makes Hugh Glass a figure to remember in American history.

Manfred researched the Hugh Glass legend by crawling part of the route taken by Glass after the ordeal with the bear. He talked to the people of Lemmon, South Dakota, about this history of the area. He even went as far as to feel like Hugh:

He (Hugh) is 55, with such aches and pains as I have come up with so far--still great power, quickness but wary, with shortwindedness in running distances...aches in feet, shoulders, in his elbow and wrist, his gnarled hands.⁵ He himself is a grizzly bear--gray, burly....

Manfred took years working on this novel so it could be a truthful account of a very unusual figure in American history. Manfred went beyond the physical truth and into the emotional and spiritual turmoil of one man working against all odds to survive. Manfred wrote: "The thought of being completely alone in a wild savage country, miles from any white settlement anywhere, sometimes rose in him like personified

terror, like a hump-necked striking creature. He fought it, fought it, and swallowed it down."⁶ Hugh managed to defeat these fears of total isolation. He didn't allow himself to abandon hope and eventually returned home. Hugh had a robust spirit and a determined heart to lead him out of danger.

Manfred was also influenced greatly by George Frederick Ruxton's book, Life in the Far West. Ruxton's book is significant in its rendering of the mountain man. According to Richard Cracroft's article:

Ruxton's book Life in the Far West (1948) is the most likely, flavorful, and complete picture of the Mountain Man and his time that has ever been written, and that Ruxton was, as Vardis Fisher insists in his introduction to Mountain Men, "one of the sharpest and most sensitive observers of the Rocky Mountain area and its people." Bruce Sutherland, in the best single article on Ruxton, similarly praises the "life and spirit and enduring quality" of the book, and Edward W. Gaston, Jr., justly claims the book "has become a model for historians and novelists" dealing with the fur trade....

Both Manfred and A. B. Guthrie, Jr. borrowed from this book, first published in Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine in 1848 in serial form. A notable example of Ruxton's influence is seen in one of the most famous of his scenes in Life in the Far West. It is where Killbuck and LaBonte are snowbound and starving in a pass in the Rockies. After four days of starvation, the wounded Killbuck whispers to LaBonte:

"Boy", he said, "this old hoss feels like goin' under and that afore long. Your're stout yet, and if that was meat handy, you'd

come round slick. Now boy, I'll be under, as I said, afore many hours, and if you don't raise meat you'll be in the same fix. I never eat dead meat myself, and wouldn't ask no one to do it neither; but meat fair killed is meat anyway, so, boy, put your knife in this old niggur's lights, and help yourself. It's poor bull, I know, but maybe it'll do to keep life in, and along the fleece thar's meat yet, and maybe my old hump ribs has picking on 'em."

"You a good old hoss," answered LaBonte, "but this child ain't turned niggur yet."⁸

This account is very similar to Manfred's feverish Hugh when he speaks to Jim and Fitz after his confrontation with the grizzly:

"Now, boy, I'll soon be under. After many hours. And, boys, if you don't raise meat pronto you'll be in the same fix I'm in. I've never et dead meat myself Jim, and wouldn't ask you to do it neither. But meat fair killed is meat anyway. So, Jim, lad put your knife in this old niggur's lights and help yourself. It's poor bull I am, I know, but maybe it'll do to keep life in ee. There should be some pickin's on 'em in front. And there should be one roast left in my behind. Left side. Dig in, lad, and drink man's blood."⁹

LaBonte reminisced in Life in the Far West about a favorite wife, Chil- Co- The-, or Reed That Bends, Bending Reed. Manfred's character Bending Reed was an ideal wife and companion, and devoted to her Lord and Master, Hugh. The two women not only shared the same name, but were both hard workers, and loving females. The name itself implies great virtue and one who can cope, forgive, and remain true. Manfred's Bending Reed evolved from this example of Ruxton's noble mate of LaBonte.

The philosophy of the mountain men which required man to leave home, civilization, and its trappings, was also passed from Ruxton to Manfred, as well as to other Western writers. Ruxton's phrases, such as "lean and gaunt," and "bear-like mountaineers," are phrases Manfred used in Lord Grizzly. Manfred's "bear-like Hugh," and "lean and gaunt trappers" can be traced to Ruxton's book on the subject. Manfred also used phrases such as "nigger" and "child" for oneself, "forfarrow" for fancy airs, and "to go under" for dying. (See Appendix 1.)

Another influence on Manfred's book was John Neihardt, who wrote the Splendid Wayfaring, which contains the original letter that Hugh wrote to the father of a lad named Johnnie Gardner who was killed by Indians. This letter also appears in Lord Grizzly:

Dr. Sir:

My painful duty is to tell you of the death of yr son wh befell at the hands of the indians 2n june in the early morning. He lived a little while after he was shot and asked me to inform you of his sad fate. We brought him to the ship where he soon died. Mr. Smith a young man of our company made a powerful prayer wh moved us all greatly and I am persuaded John died in Peace. His body we buried with others near this camp and marked the grave with a log. His things we will send to you. The savages are greatly treacherous. We traded with them as friends but after a great storm of rain and thunder they came at us before light and many were hurt. I myself was shot in the leg. Master Ashley is bound to stay in these parts till the traitors are rightly punished.

yr, obt, svf,
Hugh Glass¹⁰

Jedediah Smith, the man who prayed like a parson over the young John Gardner, was the Mr. Smith of Hugh's company. The irony of this is that ten years later a man named Johnson Gardner took revenge on Hugh's old enemies, the Rees, who killed him in 1832 on the Yellowstone. Neihardt's book was filled with examples that Manfred later drew from. Edward Rose, the son of a white trader and half-breed black and Cherokee woman, was mentioned in The Splendid Wayfaring and Lord Grizzly. The battle on the Grand River which took place between the Rees and the trappers in the first pages of Lord Grizzly was also mentioned in Neihardt's book. It described the ominous rain storm, the horror of screaming horses as they were being killed by gunfire, and "Old Hugh" self-assured throughout the mayhem. The Splendid Wayfaring described treacherous Chief Grey Eyes, the tall slender blue-eyed William Ashley, and the panic-stricken men in the skiffs who volunteered to rescue any survivors of the Indian attack. The Splendid Wayfaring also recorded and explained what the "White Bear Game" was. In Lord Grizzly, Manfred graphically describes this atrocity also. Later on in Neihardt's book, Glass found young Jim Bridger. He kicked the boy lightly in the ribs and remarked how he wouldn't kill a "pup," meaning Jim was still just a youngster. This was also in Lord Grizzly. A final example of Neihardt's influence on Manfred was Jedediah Smith's wrestle with a grizzly bear. He, too, was alone in the wilderness, wounded, and afraid. He wondered if he would ever see anyone again, thought back on his life, and prayed to the Lord for guidance. His doubts echoed those of Hugh Glass in Lord

Grizzly. In short, John Neihardt's book was a considerable influence in the writing of Lord Grizzly.

Chittenden's impressive two volumes on the Fur Trade has excellent information about the native tribes in this area, and also influenced Manfred. The American Fur Trade of the Far West had this to say about the Aricaras on the upper Missouri River:

The principal characteristic of the Aricara Indians, so far as it relates to the fur trade, was their treacherous and warlike attitude toward the whites...they were friends today, enemies tomorrow.

The Aricaras were more dreaded by the white than any other northern tribe. Though not so continuously hostile as the Blackfeet, they were more treacherous, and outrages and loss of life suffered at their hands form a mournful chapter in the history of the Missouri Valley.¹¹

As Lord Grizzly begins, the Arikaras (or "Rees" to the trappers) were attacking the men of the fur company. In this scene they are hostile and not to be trusted. In the end it is the Rees who finally do take Hugh's life.

In The American Fur Trade of the Far West, the descriptions of various tribes gave Manfred a good idea of what the people of the Arikara tribe looked like. Here is a description of the Ree women: "The Ree women were considered the handsomest on the Missouri."¹² Manfred wrote about the relationship between Indian women and trappers in Lord Grizzly, and he wrote about the easy-going, pennyskinned, cherry-eyed Indian women that Chittenden's book mentioned. He also noted that the Arikaras were useful to the trader in their dealings.

They traded in horses and beavers. Nevertheless, it was also common knowledge that the Rees were friends one day, enemies the next. In Lord Grizzly, Manfred described the dual nature of this tribe. At the beginning of Lord Grizzly, Hugh waited impatiently for the lads to return after a long night of carousing. He thought that it would not be long before the men would pay for their one night of using the Ree women. It is obvious that Chittenden's book was very helpful to Manfred.

Chittenden's book described the adventures of Hugh Glass from sources such as Missouri Intelligence, June 1825, Scenes and Adventures in the United States Army (Cooke) and Scenes in the Rocky Mountains (Sage). With these authentic reports of Hugh Glass and mountain man life in general as background, Chittenden wrote one of the most thorough discussions ever on the subject, and Manfred had an excellent source from which to draw while writing his book.

Most of those who write most successfully of the American West still live in the country they write about, or lived there long enough to see and feel the land and to know the people.¹³

Manfred writes as a devoted lover of the land and the people who inhabit it. In the preface of Lord Grizzly he wrote: "But nowhere, so far as I know, did I go against the vision."¹⁴ This vision of his is the vision of the people who came before him in this Siouland region. This region was once the West, not the Midwest, and a land that Hugh Glass and his companyeros opened up. The storyteller in Manfred unfolds this old dream or vision for the reader. As

Manfred says in Lord Grizzly: "What could beat galloping up alone over the brow of a new bluff for that first look beyond?"¹⁵ The look beyond, the look and feel of a time gone by, unfolds in the story of Lord Grizzly. According to Max Westbrook:

The best of Western American novelists go beyond fidelity to history and find in the Westering experience a vision, a world view. What excites them most about the American West, perhaps, is experience in a nature that is not under human control.¹⁶

The natural world and a man alone in it is what Manfred's book is all about. How Hugh copes with this experience in nature is presented like a dream. Some of it seems unreal. With the story of Hugh, the reader understands this nature which is beyond any human control. Lord Grizzly examines this nature which is her own boss. Nature is not to be taken lightly, for she is in control, and she always will be.

With an artist's imagination, Manfred retells and also invests his own feelings in this history. Max Westbrook calls this "denotative authenticity." Westbrook observes that the authentic can become a bore, or that the authentic can be used as a cover-up for unrealistic adventures. "Denotative Authenticity" is a mixture of fact and magic. It uses the writer's imagination to create an exciting story.

Manfred uses this in two places. First it was known that Hugh left the group and was alone when the grizzly attacked him. Manfred emphasizes that fact in Lord Grizzly:

But Hugh still seethed inside. He was mad at Major Henry for what he thought was a womanish order...By midafternoon, right after Major

Henry had sent gaunt Allen and two men ahead to make meat for supper, Old Hugh was fit to be tied. The little paired arteries down his big bronze nose ran dark with rage. His grey eyes glittered. The party defiled through a brushy draw coming down from the left. The party leader for the day, George Yount, had to break away through the plum and bullberry brushes with a double ax. In the commotion Old Hugh saw his chance to go off hunting by himself. He was last in line and could slip away unnoticed. With a sulphurous curse and a low growled, "I don't take orders from a tyrant," Hugh turned Old Blue aside and climbed the rise to the east.¹⁷

It is historical fact that Hugh did indeed remove himself from the group. However, Manfred's description of his nose, and his rage, is purely imagination. The Major may have asked Hugh to shave off his beard, but this fact is not proven. Manfred saw Hugh as "a growling man" who wanted to "wear his face the way nature intended."¹⁸

Later on in a sleep, Hugh dreamt of his white wife Mabel and the two sons he had deserted. Mabel is described as a "she-rip of a woman," one who was hard to cope with. The fight that took place in Hugh's dream is fictional, but it allows the reader to experience the guilt or "haunt" feelings that Hugh goes through. It is unknown whether he had a wife named Mabel or two small sons back in Pennsylvania. Manfred allows fact and imagination to work together throughout the book:

...when somehow he didn't know just how, somehow it happened that he dropped a family heirloom of her mother's, a prize handpainted bowl, breaking it to a thousand smithereens. That set it off. To the sad horror¹⁹ of the lads, he and Mabel were at it again.

Likewise, Manfred, the storyteller, created a scene of domestic warfare. This denotative technique is a way of viewing the West.

Manfred goes beyond the simple retelling of history and gives a feeling of having been there with his characters. His "voice" is one important aspect of his style as a writer. It makes the events believable and human. He used the mountain man dialect in his narration. Words and phrases such as "this child," "doggone my skin," "this old hoss," "forfurraw," "dog me," "peedoodles," "old coon," "monster varmint," "tarnation," "Queersome," "bacca," and many more outlandish words helped in making Lord Grizzly a realistic novel.

Another aspect as important as the voice of the storyteller in the story is Manfred's special sense of place. This enables the reader to feel the surroundings, or where the story takes place. Max Westbrook has said:

I don't know how to define a 'quality' Western, but one characteristic seems to be that the artist creates the sense of having been there. This is an achievement that lies somewhere between fact and magic, and has its own special place....²⁰

This statement ties together Manfred's use of voice and place. Both of these elements are dominant in Manfred's writing. The magic of his imagination combined with historical fact gives the reader a chance to be in this place. This remote place in the past becomes real for the reader with the artistic weaving of fact, magic and voice.

The question of place came up during a symposium in the autumn of 1975. One question asked Manfred was "How important are roots to the artist?." He replied:

Actually, the word "roots" is not a good one. We're not trees (though sometimes I long to have been a cottonwood). I sometimes answer the question by asking another: what kind of books do you think Marcel Proust would have written had he been born in Sundance, Wyoming, and what kind of books would Mark Twain have written had he been born in Paris?²¹

In other words, his sense of place, like his storytelling voice, allows him to write honestly and sensitively about the country of the West. Having lived in this area his whole life gives him a sense of the spirit of the land. These feelings are in Lord Grizzly. The storyteller with the strong sense of place can journey back into the time of the mountain man. John Milton has remarked:

Because Manfred is an enthusiastic storyteller, his novels exude energy and promise.²²

Lord Grizzly is a novel with few factitious qualities.

Manfred's enthusiasm for grasping the truth, however, doesn't restrict his style.

Wallace Stegner has spoken of Manfred as a "natural force" for whom reality is too small, language...too arthritic for his needs...This does not mean that Manfred is an innovator in technical forms or in language. It does suggest, however, that he continually moves beyond realism toward myth and romance, and in doing so employs the grotesque, the symbolic, and the bizarre, the outrageous, and the exaggerated, all of whose effects will strike readers differently.²³

Manfred's attention to natural feelings, desires, and hopes captures the meaning of the story, and the personality of the man, Hugh Glass.

Another element of Manfred's style is "American Sacrality," a term originated by Max Westbrook. Sacrality, according to Westbrook, provides a more practical approach to the spirit. It is a faith in something other than what is seen on the surface. It is a love of nature. The white God is viewed as not equal to the elements of nature, and man is viewed only partially as an individual. He is more of a collective body, or collective self to the sacralist. These views are reflected in Lord Grizzly. Manfred is, therefore, an American Sacralist. Westbrook further explains sacrality thus:

The American West includes many traditions of course--the nostalgic romanticism of James Fenimore Cooper, the drover's ethic of Andy Adams, the historical traditions of the Indian and trapper and the mountain man, and so on--but among this number is a very basic tradition which I have called American Sacrality...Basically, sacrality is a belief in God as energy. The powers which thrive in man and in the universe--the good, the evil, the indifferent--are thought to be the original energies which founded the world. This does not mean that ethical values are lost or that intellect is depreciated. The emphasis must be placed on energy as primary, as a power more fundamental than ethics, or the intellect. Once the primary or sacred energies is granted, the way is cleared for man to bring into full play his local abilities and county values, his intellect, and his ethics. Affirmation consists primarily in the belief that a Godly energy can be touched again, tapped anew, at anytime; man does not have to lean on his dry, intellectual reading of a past time when God touched the world of ancient ancestors. The sacred man

can find his rough and realistic God of energy in the beauty of a lake, the harsh heat of a desert, the blank haunting eyes of a fresh-killed deer. This discovery, furthermore, is a literal one. The sacred man does not find a symbol of God; he finds God.²⁴

American Sacrality owes a great deal to the ancient Orient and a variety of primitive cultures, to C. G. Jung, and to the American West.

Manfred wrote about a man who crawled hundreds of miles. This was a rough man who loved the beauty of the landscape, and in the end became Godlike through his finding of God through superhuman forgiveness. Hugh's attitudes became shaped into moral feelings. His courage allowed him to be reshaped, and resurrected from his past.

Max Westbrook outlined three themes he thought typical of sacrality. They were as follows: commitment to cyclical time rather than linear, the recognition of the continuity of life in its intimate effect on the make-up of the "wise old child," and the search for the original source.²⁵

Cyclical time is a Native American way of viewing the world and the universe. It is in contrast to the more modern linear mind set. Manfred's use and understanding of a circular pattern is seen when Hugh returned from what should have been a certain death. He was reborn, fresh and new to his comrades. As Hugh saw the grave that he was meant for, he said: "Ae I see it now lads. It's this old coon's turn at last."²⁶ But it wasn't his turn to die even though it looked that way. Another example of this cyclical time was when Hugh crawled like a baby instead of walking upright like a man. "He crawled, rested, crawled,"²⁷ Like a child crawling, learning and crawling,

Hugh started all over and learned how to walk. He also could be thought of as an animal, which later on becomes more human-like. The animal in Hugh was gradually replaced by the human. Like a small animal or child, Hugh grew and regained his humanity and his values. After many brutal miles and lonely torments Hugh once again could walk on both legs:

It would have horrified young Bridger to see frustrated buzzards wheeling above a man who propelled himself by one arm and a leg, moving through thickets and tall grass with the painful doggedness of an angleworm bucking dry sand.²⁸

He limped into Ft. Kiowa no longer the same man. Cyclical time is a type of a return, like the seasons. It is a rejuvenation both of the physical and the spiritual. From one death, a new life comes forth. Like the seasons, Hugh went through changes. In the end, like spring, he found himself awakened, alive and new.

Another aspect of sacrality is the recognition of the continuity of life, and its intimate effect on what Walt Whitman called the "Wise old Child." The wise child whose innocence is born of a source which produces a hot and bestial evil.²⁹ The wise old child is Hugh Glass. In other words, Hugh grew from one ignorant to one knowledgeable:

Deserted them, that's what he'd done. What a miserable coward he was. Maybe Mabel was a rakehellion she-rip, ae, but the boys were still his boys, of his own flesh and blood, that's a fact, and good boys too, boys who deseryed to have a father.³⁰

Hugh's children became his continuation. Although he was guilt-ridden, he knew that through these deserted boys, he would live on. The "wise old child" was aware of the fate of cursed independence and the guilt it aroused.

This effect on Hugh could be seen when he came across the old Indian woman. Hugh fed her, took care of her, and visited with her. When she died he was upset. It was an emotional moment for Hugh, one that affected him intimately: "Eyes streaming, he stared down at her. 'Ae, at least ye had the luck to ha' a human around to close your eyes. But who'll close the eyes of this old hoss when he goes?'"³¹ Hugh learned what it meant to be without society and family and friends. His witnessing of the old woman's death was a lesson in humanity. Through moments of death, Hugh became a wiser person, a more caring one.

A third theme of sacrality is the search for the original source:

Journeying, journeying, journeying, always on
the go. Heading towards a Somewhere that
always and ever in the end turned out to be a
Nowhere. For what? For a God? For a Devil?
For a Man? For a Beast?³²

An all powerful force, that of God, was experienced by Hugh. Hugh began to ask, "Where am I going? Where is the source?" He went through an almost surrealistic scene later in the book, experiencing his life pass before him. This experience left Hugh shaken, but spiritually aware, and uplifted:

Tis a place where the Lord is likely to come
to a man in a visitation...Tis a church, it

is. A church to stand silent in while waiting for the Word..."I feel clean", he said, pulling on his whitening beard, "clean...."³³

As Hugh sat on a rock in the lonely Badlands, a weird, mysterious aura filled him with questions about his past and his future quest. He became clean, white, transformed from a baser animal to a man with higher instincts, and with higher motives than vengeance.

According to Mick McAllister in the article "Wolf That I am...", the nature of the bear is central to the meaning of Lord Grizzly. The bear is a solitary creature, a loner. "Old Epe" is similar to Old Hugh. The bear alone without a group is like Hugh alone without a community. McAllister points out that "Hugh could adopt the hermitage solitude of the bear, but he demands loyalty, and friendship."³⁴

The spirit of the wilderness is the grizzly bear. It too is large, sprawling, and unpredictable. A. B. Guthrie said:

The grizzly is a living, snorting incarnation of the wilderness and grandeur of America. He has been known, both in esteem and in dread, as the silvertip, the great white bear and by the mountain men of the 1830's, as Old Ephriam.³⁵

The self-reliance of Hugh Glass can be compared to that of a bear. Symbolically Hugh is the bear, but in the end, he rejected his once-loved solitude and realized his need for companionship. From the opening pages of Lord Grizzly, we are led to think of Hugh in "grizzly" terms. We are told, "There was about him too, the lonesome aggrieved mien of the touchy old grizzly bear."³⁶ He had a "grizzly leathery face," and his hair, sometimes called fur, was gray and thick

as that of an animal. He would not shave. He humped his neck and growled his replies to Major Henry. Even his voice was gruff, the result of a throat wound, so he was able to imitate a bear roar and scare off wolves and buzzards.

Hugh evolved from a cruel and crude animal/man, to an almost holy figure who could forgive his betrayers. The grizzly bear served as the tool by which this strange transformation took place. In Lord Grizzly, the mountain men discussed "Old Ephe" over a campfire. The grizzlies were the lords of the wilderness as well as unpredictable giants. "Old Ephe," to Hugh, was a curious animal, and in the end, even a jokester. Hugh's only fear of grizzlies was his fear of the she-bear. It was a she-bear who eventually tore him to pieces. However, throughout the book much of Hugh's survival depended upon the bear. He used the skin of the bear for warmth and clothing as he crawled to Ft. Kiowa. He ate her meat for strength and later on an Old Ephe cleansed his back. In the end he had an encounter with a bear who was more spirit than real. The large silver-shaped creature pursued Hugh along the White River, which made him wonder and worry if it was a phantom creature, a spiritual trickster.

The relationship Hugh had with bears was a unique one. Old Hugh was called "White Grizzly" by the Indians, and through the grizzly he learned to forgive. The licking of the wound by the bear therefore was also a cleansing of Hugh's soul. The bear who was real in the wrestle had instilled a fear and respect for nature's wilderness, and the spiritual bear had filled him with awe and awoke him to

the mysteries of the universe. The bear was central to Hugh's learning experience.

John Milton, a friend of Manfred's and a critic of his works, finds what he calls "rhythms" throughout Lord Grizzly. "The Crawl" is one of three parts that make up Lord Grizzly. "The Wrestle," "The Crawl," and "The Showdown" divide the book into time periods of Hugh's experience. In the Crawl, according to Milton, eight sections can be found, identified by the following beginning lines:

1. A cold nose woke him
2. A cold nose woke him
3. A cold touch woke him
4. A cold nose woke him
5. A cool evening breeze woke him
6. Hugh never did remember...
7. Hugh climbed steadily
8. Wild geese were flying south....³⁷

Manfred's rhythmic structure emphasizes Hugh's passage through an evolutionary change. It is the progression of man from an animal to a human level, and finally to a spiritual recognition. There is an added sense of hope which emerges in the reader's mind through Hugh's progression. The intellect detects change. Hugh used his intellect when he noted the geese flying south. He could reason that time was of the essence. Winter was not far in coming and Hugh had to act fast to secure safer quarters. On the other hand, an animal knows instinctively when it is time to move to warmer regions and prepare for the long season to pass. Hugh looked up to the sky, and noted the change about to take place by observation of the geese. In doing this, he changed a little more himself. Hugh was returning to mankind. Likewise, according to Milton, the word "breeze" has a calm refinement

to it that only a human can note. It is not wind, or a scent or a cold wet nose, but a thing much more subtle, a breeze. This gentle word denotes an awakening. Finally, Hugh's memory brought him to a human level. Humans recollect and reflect. Hugh was on his way to becoming a two-legged, not a four-legged. Milton adds:

Touch instead of nose is a stylistic variation. To be awakened by a breeze requires more sensitivity than to be disturbed by a cold nose, and so section five is that transition point at which the animal begins to emerge as a higher creature. The possibility of remembrance is a suggestion of the existence of the mind, unique to man. Steady climbing suggests the rapid progress made by man with the use of his mind. Finally, we look up to geese in a simple image³⁸ of the spiritual life which may evolve next.

Milton also notes other rhythms of Lord Grizzly. They are as follows:

The psychological rhythm, the looking inward, outward, and inward before death, (which is like Hugh's being part of the group, removed and then a part of the group again). The physical rhythm of Hugh's crawl. When the three mountain men, Dutton, Clyman and Fitzgerald return, there is a psychological rhythm also. Finally, a symbolic progression of rhythm in the three grizzlies. The bear-like Hugh, the actual bear who mauls Hugh, and the haunt bear Hugh "sees" in the end.³⁹

The rhythm is like poetry in that it too produces certain themes. The theme of fellowship with mankind (remembering), the theme of man as a higher being (looking up at the geese), the theme of man vs. nature (cold nose), and the spiritual theme, or awakening of man and his universe, all become themes in Manfred's rhythmic style of writing. Milton concludes:

We recognize a variety of themes in Manfred's writing: values of the nature-oriented Indians, endurance, the uneasy struggle toward love and forgiveness, natural love in opposition to puritanical mores, self-fulfillment, the search for identity, the attempt to throw off European influences, heroism in varying degrees, the sacrifices necessary to obtain justice and so on. The themes are placed in historical settings so that to certain extent Manfred is re-creating the Old West with its intrinsic interest and its susceptibility to mythmaking.⁴⁰

Manfred's style allows the reader to go beyond mere fact and enter the realm of the wilderness long ago. Manfred's attention to small details and particular feelings draws the reader's interest. The reader is on the same level as Hugh. The reader sees through Hugh's eyes and his mind, and through the words of the narrator. This intimacy between reader, character and narrator makes the story believable. In a brutal scene, the reader hears, sees, and feels what the beast puts Hugh through during The Wrestle:

He felt her dog teeth crunch into his skull. She shook him by the head like a dog might shake a doll. His body dangled. His neck cracked. He screamed. His scream rose into a shrill squeak. He sank away, half-conscious. She dropped him.⁴¹

The horror of this moment is real because of the attention to details and the feelings that a victim would have in the grasp of a bear. Finally, the more tranquil experiences of the Dakota countryside and the Missouri River are illustrated in this scene:

The boiling Missouri came up clear, too, below the island spread wide and immense to where its shoal waters lapped a cutbank a half-mile away. The tan river was almost wide and mighty enough to suggest a little of the

earth's curvature. Ripples raced, eddies curled and uncurled, and tiny foaming upruttled trees caught snags and riding sawyers slosed about like old skeletons in a half-submerged dinosaur boneyard. A low rousing sound rose from the wrestling waters. Far over, on a sand bar in a farther shoal, the body of a blue heron hovered above the water, its stick legs lost in the distant perspective. The sharp outbank of the far shore lifted abruptly into sleek-greased tufted tumuli. And above them rose the rolling bluffs of the endless Dakota prairie land.

The mind of the reader "sees" the wide Missouri, slowly, powerfully, moving through the land. The blue heron floating above the water and the sounds of "sloshing" water are fine details etched by Manfred. Anyone who has sat by the river knows that it is tan, wide, and ancient. The Dakota lands have a sea-like quality, never-ending. They are beautiful.

A glimpse into the darkened men's quarters allows the reader a visit with river roughnecks and leather-clad mountaineers having a rollicking good time. The sullen faces of Indian braves and the proud show of squaws in fancy skins and decorations makes this scene particularly good. It captures the "best of times":

Hugh looked in at the door of the loghouse again. With every passing second the roar of the shindig increased in tempo and volume. Whisky flowed; spirits rose; talk became shrill. A few Sioux squaws, the wives of mountaineers, strutted about through the melee proud of their display of beads and fofurraw, their deerskin dresses jingling with bells and bangles and their faces bedaubed with St. Lou paints. Against the walls stood lonely Sioux warriors, lean, wrapped in tan-black buffalo robes, too proud to sit down at the fire and fun without invitation, also sulky and uneasy

to be so close to white scalps without being
able to do anything about it.⁴³

Hugh Glass in the beginning was a man who chose to remove himself from his fellow men, and from society as a whole. After his ordeal, he realized that he was in need of society and its loyalty and friendship. He began as an independent soul, but his independence turned into dependence, his solitude into loneliness, his hatred into understanding, and his wrath into forgiveness. Hugh muttered, "Turned tame, this child has. Passed through such a passel of things he don't rightly recollect wrong from right."⁴⁴

Although Hugh is confused by his turn-around, his inner voice understands. His inner voice, or "Old Lizard," as Manfred calls it, is man's instinctive voice of primordial wisdom. This allows freedom if listened to and obeyed. Reason or intellect is not the same as the "Old Lizard." The "Old Lizard" is an intuitive knowing that we are born with but tend to ignore, according to Manfred. It is this voice which led Hugh back into the fold, back into life. Manfred's insight into human nature, his imagination, and his knowledge of the past capture the unfailing spirit of Hugh, the old ghost who returned from death.

Footnotes

¹John Gneisenau Neihardt, The Song of Hugh Glass (New York: The Macmillian Co., 1915), p.130.

²Wright, p. 65.

³Wright, pp. 54-55.

⁴John Myers Myers, Pirate, Pawnee and Mountain Man, The Sage of Hugh Glass (Boston: Little Brown, 1963), p. 46.

⁵Wright, p. 54.

⁶Frederick Manfred, Lord Grizzly (New York: McGraw-Hill Company, 1954), p. 117.

⁷Richard Cracroft, "Half Froze for Mountain Joins The Influence and Significant of George Frederick Ruxton's Life in the Far West," Western American Literature, 1, No. 1 (1975) p. 29.

⁸George Frederick Ruxton, Life In The Far West, ed. LeRoy Hafen, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1951), p. 127.

⁹Manfred, Lord Grizzly, p. 213.

¹⁰John Gneisenau Neihardt, The Spenidid Wayfaring, (New York: The Macmillian Co., 1920), p. 241.

¹¹Hiram Martin Chittenden, The American Fur Trade in the Far West, (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1935), Vol. 2., p. 848.

¹²Chittenden, p. 847.

¹³Max Westbrook, "The Authentic Western," Western American Literature, 13, No. 3 (1978), p. 216.

¹⁴Manfred, preface.

¹⁵Manfred, p. 90.

¹⁶Westbrook, p. 218.

¹⁷Manfred, p. 89.

¹⁸Manfred, p. 87.

¹⁹Manfred, p. 133.

²⁰Westbrook, p. 225.

²¹Frederick Manfred, "The Writers Sense of Place," South Dakota Review, 13, (1975), p. 5.

²²John R. Milton, Novel of the American West, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1980), p. 188.

²³Milton, Frederick Feikema Manfred, Conversations with Frederick Manfred, p. 189.

²⁴Westbrook, "The Practical Spirit, Sacrality and the West," Western American Literature, 3, No. 3 (1968), p. 198.

²⁵Westbrook, "The Practical Spirit," pp. 119-120.

²⁶Manfred, Lord Grizzly, p. 99.

²⁷Manfred, p. 117.

²⁸Myers Myers, p. 140.

²⁹Westbrook, p. 199.

³⁰Manfred, p. 134.

³¹Manfred, p. 158.

³²Manfred, p. 237.

³³Manfred, p. 239-240.

³⁴Mick McCallister, Letter to Frederick Manfred, September 1981.

³⁵A. B. Guthrie, Jr., "Requiem for Old Ephriam", Parade Magazine, 24 July 1983, p. 10.

³⁶Manfred, p. 18.

³⁷Milton, Novel of the American West, p. 172.

³⁸Milton, p. 173.

³⁹Milton, p. 174.

⁴⁰Milton, p. 188-189.

⁴¹Manfred, p. 94.

⁴²Manfred, p. 23.

⁴³Manfred, p. 177.

⁴⁴Manfred, pp. 269-270.

CHAPTER 4
ORPHAN IN THE WILDERNESS

These quaking asps are mine, I know
The courthouse record book says so.
The winds may claim them, and the snow,
But there's the deed, and it says so.

The fields above belong to me,
Though fur and feathers won't agree.
Each claims the place by prior decree,
Of generations legatee.

I say each blade of grass is mine,
Each pinch of soil, each spruce and pine.
From barbed-wire line to barbed-wire line.
"No trespass" says my gatepost sign.

The pinched-up house is warm although
The killing winds of winter blow.
I count a bird dead in the snow
And watch the way my fires go.

- A. B. Guthrie, Jr.

This poem illustrates Guthrie's love of place, his place in Twin Lakes, Montana. Guthrie's land is his to hold onto, but its wild inhabitants and the powers of nature ignore his presence. Twin Lakes is one of the last refuges in nature. It is 800 acres of rock and pine that Guthrie has managed to save from the "progress" which has enveloped so much of the land. Guthrie is a steward of this Twin Lakes wilderness area which he loves so deeply.

The Twin Lakes winters are Guthrie's to love and enjoy, but are nature's to rule. When he wrote the literary success The Big Sky in 1947, he wrote about this "last stand of nature with civilization." Guthrie feels man often destroys the things he loves best, and with this thought, Guthrie wrote The Big Sky. According to Donald Stewart:

In The Big Sky, then, Guthrie created a savage but enormously attractive paradise, corrupted in part by the mountain man himself, but made even more vulnerable to the corruption of an advancing civilization....²

Guthrie wrote about the West because he has always been interested in it. As a small boy in the West, he hunted arrowheads, discovered buffalo skulls in grassy wallows, and became in his mind magically transformed into numerous Western characters. He became a cowpuncher, an Indian, or a fur hunter. He later wrote The Big Sky because he felt that the mountain man had not been written about realistically.

After Guthrie wrote The Big Sky, he wrote four more novels on the West. They were The Way West, 1949, These Thousand Hills, 1956,

Arfve in 1971, and Fairland, Fairland in 1982. According to Wallace Stegner, The Big Sky was the best of the four novels: "What makes it special is not merely its narrative and scenic vividness, but the ways in which Boone Caudill exemplifies and modifies an enduring American type."³

The Big Sky is a story about an individual, Boone Caudill, and his companions, Jim Deakins and Dick Summers. The story begins when the seventeen-year old Boone leaves his Kentucky home after years of brutal mistreatment at the hand of his crude father. Boone runs away to St. Louis, Missouri, with the hopes of becoming a fur trapper in Indian country in the far West, a land without laws. He makes a friend of Jim Deakins, a friendly outgoing young man, a thinker. Along the way the bitter, unhappy Boone has a harsh lesson from the law, which leaves him even more convinced of society's shortcomings. The two friends are reunited eventually and sign up to become members of a fur trading company headed West. On board the keelboat Mandan, a young Indian girl named Teal Eye is being held hostage as insurance for safe passage in Blackfoot territory. Soon Indians attack the boat and kill all the members of the crew except for Boone, Jim, and a man named Dick Summers. The trio become close and survive hard weather, Indian fights, and many other turbulent moments. Boone loves his freedom, and has little or no need for outside company. Eventually Boone finds Teal Eye after many long years and marries her. However, his happiness is short-lived. Now, with the coming of new settlements, pioneers, and advancing civilization, the lifestyle of Boone,

like that of so many mountain men, is endangered. Dick Summers, who is older than Boone and Jim, goes back east to become a farmer. He feels too tired to live the rugged life of the mountain man. After he leaves, Boone kills his best friend Jim in a jealous rage, only to discover later that it was probably a mistake. Afterward, Boone is alone in the world, unable to cope with the white civilization and driven away by the Indian's society. The life of the mountain man has disappeared, and with the death of the fur era, Boone is left to wander. The Big Sky begins in 1830 and ends in 1843, a time of great change for the fur men. The trapper era ends and the westward migration begins. Boone Caudill becomes a remnant of the past.

A. B. Guthrie borrowed ideas from other writers while writing The Big Sky. Like Manfred, he borrowed from George Frederick Ruxton, who wrote the handbook on mountain men, Life in the Far West, in 1848.

Guthrie's characters Boone Caudill and Jim Deakins are counterparts to Ruxton's characters LaBonte and Killbuck. In one episode, Guthrie's Boone and Jim were trapped during a snowstorm, slowly starving to death. Jim was wounded by an Indian attack and whispered to his friend Boone that there was no use in both of them dying:

"Look Boone, I ain't got long. When my mind's right, I can see that much. I'll be under come tomorrow or next day. Ain't no use to say I'll make it. Ain't no use to try. Hear? Me and you never et dead meat, but meat fair-killed is meat to et. There's a swaller or two on my old ribs. Take your knife, Boone. Get it out. I ain't got long, nohow. Goddam your old skin, you hear? Boone?"⁴

The dialogue, and the disgust that Boone felt towards his good friend's invitation, were similar to Ruxton's episode between LaBonte and Killbuck. After suffering for days in a mountain pass, Killbuck told his companion:

'Boy,...this old hoss feels like goin' under, and that afore long. You're stout yet, and if thar was meat handy, you'd come round slick. Now, boy, I'll be under, as I said, afore many hours, and if you don't raise meat, you'll be in the same fix. I never eat dead meat myself, and wouldn't ask no one to do it neither; but meat fair-killed is meat any way; so, boy, put your knife in this old niggur's lights, and help yourself. It's poor bull I know, but maybe my old hump ribs has picking on 'em.'

'You a good old hoss,' answered LaBonte, 'but this child ain't turned niggur yet.'⁵

This is one example of where both Guthrie and Manfred drew heavily upon Ruxton. Manfred's Hugh Glass used almost the same words that Guthrie's Jim Deakins used. Such accounts were true, and Ruxton's recording of them helped the later writers of the American West.

While Guthrie was at Harvard with a Nieman Fellowship, he met the historian Bernard DeVoto. DeVoto was writing Across the Wide Missouri, a historical version of The Big Sky. Guthrie noted later that DeVoto had influenced him greatly:

...he was an authority on the early West, a student with knowledge undoubtedly far beyond mine even in application to the limited years I'd researched. Fortunately, I didn't know that in a sense I had stolen his subject, and was writing the kind of novel he had long wanted to write and perhaps would have written already but for a growing shakiness of faith in himself as a writer of fiction.⁶

DeVoto promoted The Big Sky, and respected Guthrie's book a great deal.

Guthrie, like Manfred, researched western journals, accounts, histories and documents extensively. Guthrie referred to Washington Irving's The Adventures of Captain Bonneville, Hiram Chittenden's The American Fur Trade of the Far West, Lewis and Clark, and the accounts of Father Pierre Jean DeSmet. In this next quote taken from The Big Sky, a reference to Washington Irving's The Adventures of Captain Bonnevillle can be seen.

'Things don't figure to shine so much,' answered Summers. 'Not with Bonneville back in the army and Wyeth in Boston. Be a plenty of Indians, but not so many packs and not so much money....'

'Member how the Snakes looked at Bonneville's bald head, wonderin' if the hair had been left off a purpose, so's he couldn't be scalped?' Jim chuckled.

Wyeth was a Boston ice merchant and founder of Fort Hall. Wyeth also wrote a journal about the history of Oregon.

In Irving's book about Captain Bonneville, a rendezvous is recorded:

Indeed, in the excitement of the moment, they were loud and extravagant....

It was a singular and fantastic scene...These groups of trappers, and hunters, and Indians; with their wild costumes, and wilder countenances; their boisterous gayety, and reckless air; quaffing and making merry...while beside them lay their weapons, ready to be snatched up for instant service....

Guthrie's description of a rendezvous is like that of Irving's. Summers reflects upon the good times the trappers had at this annual gathering of mountain men, hunters, trappers, and Indians:

...seeing from a distance the slow smoke of campfires rising, the men and motion, the lodges pitched around, the color that the blankets made and the horses grazing, and hearing Boone and Jim yelling and shooting their rifles while they galloped ahead....⁹

Irving's book gave the reader a picture of the mountain man's appearance:

You cannot pay a fur trapper a greater compliment, than to persuade him, you have mistaken him for an Indian brave....¹⁰

In Guthrie's book, the men look like Indians, with their hair long and braided, their skin dark and weathered, and their buckskins stained with grease and blood:

They made a sight, with feathers flying on them and ribbons and the horses' manes and tails woven and stuck with eagle plumes. A greenhorn would take them for sure-enough Indians.¹¹

However, it is Ruxton that Guthrie adopted the most from. He and Manfred both used the mountain man phrases "half frozen" for anxious, "niggur" and "child" for oneself, "possible sack," for their personal belongings, and "go under" for dying. According to Richard Cracroft:

In Ruxton's work, LaBonte tells how following his killing of Big Pete in a duel over Miss Mary Brand, he fled his native Kentucky to begin his colorful career as a trapper. Guthrie's Boone, also a native of Kentucky, must likewise flee after he 'prit near kills Mose Napier.¹²

Dick Summers closely resembles Ruxton's character, Dick Some. Both characters are older, and wiser, and regret leaving the mountains. The nostalgia both characters feel for the past is evident. In Ruxton's book, we find:

Thirty year I been knocking about these mountains...I've trapped a heap, and many a hundred pack of beaver I've traded in my time, wagh! What has become of it, and whats the dollars as ought to be in possibles? Whats the ind of this, I say? Is a man to be hunted by Injuns all his days? Manys the time I've said I'd strike for Taos, and trap a squaw, for this child's getting old, and feels like wanting a woman's face about the lodge for the balance of his days....¹³

Compare this to Dick Summers as he was deciding to leave the mountains and its harsh life:

Summers wondered whether he had done bad or good. He had saved his hair, where better men had lost theirs. He had seen things a body never would forget and done things that would stay in the mind as long as time. He had lived a man's life, and now it was at an end, and what had he to show for it? Two horses and a few fixins and a letter of credit for three hundred and forty-three dollars. That was all, unless you counted the way he had felt about living and the fun he had while time ran along unnoticed. It had been rich doings, except that he had wondered at the last, seeing¹⁴ everything behind him, and nothing ahead.

John Bradbury was a botanist who was hired by the Botanical Society of England to investigate plant life in the United States. He took many trips from St. Louis to the Missouri River region, and witnessed first-hand the Arikara Indian lifestyle. He worked hard to write good descriptions of plants, Native Americans, and the

countryside. He had considerable influence in the writing of Guthrie's and Manfred's novels. In The Big Sky, Two Elk's squaw paid a great deal of attention to the attire of Dick Summers. She worked on his moccasin, repairing it. In Manfred's Lord Grizzly, the good wife Bending Reed took care of Hugh's clothes, repairing them, or making new ones for him:

All the while Hugh ruminated about the old days with the Pawnees, Bending Reed kept on working on his new elkskin hunting shirt.¹⁵

In Bradbury's Travels in the Interior of America, 1809-1811, the botanist describes the Missouri River Valley and her people. In the following passage, Bradbury describes a scene where an Indian woman examines his clothing:

The squaw, in some instances examined my dress, and in particular my moccasins; if any repair was wanting, she brought a small leather bag, in which she kept her awls and split sinew, and put it to rights.¹⁶

A further influence may have been the journal of Henry Marie Brackenridge, who travelled with Bradbury. This scene is taken from his journal:

Seeing the chief one day in a thoughtful mood, I asked him "what was the matter--I was wondering," said he, "whether you white people have any women amongst you." I assured him in the affirmative. "Then," said he, "why is it that your people are so fond of our women, one might suppose they had never seen any before."¹⁷

Richard Cracroft noticed that there was a close similarity between this next scene taken from The Big Sky and Brackenridge's journal. Cracroft noted:

In the same scene, as the white men powwow with the Ree chief, the clamor of lovemaking between the French-Canadians and the Ree women crescendos, and the puzzled chief poses a question for his guests, which Summer translates: "Two Elks don't understand...He wants to know ain't there any squaws in the land of the Long Knives."¹⁸

Both of these scenes depict the questioning impatience of an Arikara Chief regarding the often disrespectful manner of the white trader towards the Ree women. In turn both of these scenes closely relate to the one in Lord Grizzly before the Indians attack the men after a night of frenzy between the trappers and the Ree women:

'Doggone my skin, this old hoss sure wishes the lads would show up. They've already been with them Ree squaws long enough to sprout a half-dozen family trees. Let alone pushin' their luck...I don't like it at all. The lads should've been back long ago...One of the braves might have at least had enough of renting out his woman for what little fofurraw he got for it: mirrors, ribbons, vermillion and such.'¹⁹

Therefore, it is safe to say that Brackenridge influenced not only Guthrie, but Manfred as well.

In summary, Guthrie and Manfred used many of the same sources of information on the mountain main. They fused their own talents with those of writers who had either met actual mountain men or recorded the events which took place during the era. Nevertheless, both writers have gone beyond the influences of other writers and created their own unforgettable stories. They have captured moments in time and place, beyond the purely historical, and their books carry the reader into the vanished West.

Boone and Hugh can be compared in various ways. According to Don Walker in his article, "The Mountain Man as Literary Hero":

The hero is split into two men. From Ruxton to Guthrie, a characteristic solution (to the problem of consistent and authentic depiction of the hero) has been a splitting of the hero into two men: one the old mountain man, whose civilized background is obscure, whose mountain knowledge is unsurpassed, who takes no romantic notions, and who whatever the final disposal of the other characters, remains committed to his wilderness way; the other a young man whose civilized connections are clear, who is still being initiated into the ways of the trapper, who has some romantic involvement with women, and whose final attitude is rarely a simple affirmation of the mountain way.²⁰

This description fits Hugh Glass and Boone Caudill, for the most part, although Boone's civilized connections are debatable, considering the disreputable father he left behind in Kentucky. Boone was the newcomer to mountain ways. He was an example of the man/child.

Dick Summers helped Boone through Indian fights, venereal disease, trapping beaver, and killing buffalo. Boone was a child ready and quick to learn, but with the vengeful heart of a man. Summers took Boone in hand, and tutored him in the mountain ways. However, after he fled from civilization he never did learn to cope successfully with other people. Boone was an insecure child in a man's body.

In "The American West and the Archetypal Orphan," Louie Atterbery stated:

The archetypal orphan, a central figure in traditional mythologies and literary art the world over, appeared early in American

literature and has continued to play a starring role. Nowhere is this figure presented more clearly than in Western Americana....²¹

Boone can be compared to this character type. He was isolated from his homeplace and had "lost" his parents.

Atterbery describes how Eden-like the country was to Boone. It was a pure, pretty country without men, and filled with animals and birds, an archetype of paradise. Boone was an archetypal Adam character to Atterbery, and alone in this paradise. Boone was young, inexperienced and curious. He found a father figure in the archetype of the wise old man, Dick Summers.

Guthrie's novel contains these three archetypes: the orphan, the eden or paradise archetype, and the wise old man, in this case Dick Summers. It was the unpredictable Boone Caudill who followed the pattern of an orphan. Boone Caudill was a loner. He was quite young when he escaped his overbearing, cruel father. He was isolated from his original home in Kentucky, and later found a new home in the mountains and a father figure in Dick Summers. In the beginning of the story, Boone was innocent of the world. Afterward, he had not only lost his innocence but the innocent beauty of the open-spaced freedom of The Big Sky. Boone was also a melancholy young man and, according to Dayton Kohler:

A moody, secretive boy, he feels himself cut off from the only society he knows when he is chased, robbed, beaten and given a taste of frontier justice....²²

The rough life suited Boone, who was as empty of warm human impulses as the land itself.

Hugh Glass was likewise difficult to get to know. He too liked to be alone:

Hugh didn't take easily to other men, nor they to him. He had a look about him that kept others from confiding in him...He²³ liked hunting and scouting better, alone....

And yet, he realized that being alone in the world was not what he truly wanted. Boone, on the other hand, never did feel that way. He was a sad outcast, an orphan to the end. Boone and Hugh were both mountain men, but the burly old Hugh went through varied emotions throughout the novel. Hugh needed other people. After he was mauled by the grizzly, he thought about his friends and missed them. For example:

'What in tarnation...?' he muttered again. 'Where's the lads? They must be around somewhere.' He called out, hoarse voice more like a bear's growl than a human call.

'Jim, Fitz! Hey! Where be ye?'
No answer. Not even an echo.
'Jim! Fitz! Hey!'
No answer.
'Lads! Where be ye? Jim? Fitz?'

Later on Hugh thought of Bending Reed: "Good old Reed. What a fine mate she'd made him all these years in the fur country."²⁵ He also reflected again on his companions: "Where were the lads: He recalled all their good points. They were fine laddies, they were...."²⁶ Throughout the crawl and the showdown, Hugh thought hard about the men who deserted him. The desertion proved to him that men need one another.

This attitude differs considerable from that of Boone. Boone Caudill was not only much younger, but cold; he seldom thought about anything but his own needs. He relied upon cunning, instinct and ruthlessness to survive.

Boone became more savage as the years went by, unlike Hugh, who became more compassionate in time. Boone becomes a white "Injun," without any of their ideals.

Boone was often morose, and fiercely independent. Hugh Glass was independent too, but he went beyond the simple needs of Boone, the needs of whiskey, beavers, and a gun. Boone became more vicious as he grew older. Consequently, his alienation became his destruction. He was not able to return home as Dick Summers had, and as old Hugh eventually did. The mountains were symbols of loneliness, and Boone Caudill found happiness in the solitude. "This here suits me," Boone answered Jim. It has suited him for a long time now, this life along the streams and hills--so long it seemed like forever.²⁷

Boone was happy as long as he didn't have to be in the company of men. The country was all he needed, or so he thought throughout the book:

A body got so's he felt everything was kin to him, the earth and sky and buffalo and beaver and the yellow moon at night. It was better than being walled in by a house, better than breathing in spoiled air and feeling caged like a varmint, better than running after the law as having the law running after you and looking to rules all the time until you wondered could ya even take down your pants without somebody's say-so. Here a man lived natural.²⁸

Boone felt this untamed region would remain free of intruders. He was unrealistic and foolishly trusting in his belief. The open-spaced country would eventually fill up with strangers looking for new homes and new chances to make good for themselves and their families. Boone did not listen to his Uncle Zeb or Dick Summers when they saw the changes coming. Summers said: "Ahh! The beavers night gone now. Bufflers next. Won't be even a goddam poor bull fifty years ahead. You'll see the plows comin' across the plains, and people settin' out to farm."²⁹ But, Boone took refuge in his own icy nature. He believed only what he wanted to believe. As Summers thought: "Boone thought simple and acted straight and quick. He didn't know how to get around a thing, how to talk his way out or to laugh trouble off."³⁰

In contrast, Hugh Glass had been the man to talk his way out of a gruesome death, laugh at Bending Reed's many whims, and listen to Jim and Fitz's story instead of killing them as Boone did Jim Deakins. Hugh thought things through and worked out his problems. Boone did not. Boone acted first, thought afterwards. Furthermore, the coldness of Boone even towards his closest friend was apparent in the scene when they were starving. Boone managed to kill some game and save Jim. When Jim reached out to thank Boone, to show him affection, Boone reacted strangely:

Jim's hand came up as if to touch Boone's arm. Boone backed away and turned from the shelter.³¹ It made a man unnatural to see Jim crying.

Boone's moodiness was hard on everyone he lived with. His best friend could not understand it, and his wife Teal Eye suffered because of it. Boone was not pleasant company. He did not respond to warmth. It was as if he was a trapped animal himself. He trapped himself in his own world of mistrust, and anger: "Boone never was one to let out what was in him, being a silent man, mostly, and too proud to show himself."³² It is as if Boone struggled to hold off his good side, as if he were afraid to feel. He could not allow himself to give in, even to simple compassions.

Boone was a sad and lonely figure. Not only did he not feel remorse in leaving his mother and brother, he felt relief. He lived for each day, without regrets, as if he had no emotions except his hatred and moodiness. His gratification came in the guise of violence. Boone left a reader cold.

Hugh was more philosophical than Boone. Hugh's brooding allowed him to go beyond mere existing, and he became a better person for his suffering. Boone Caudill never grew, and he became stunted in his beliefs and lost in his thoughts.

Teal Eye was in part an obsession to Boone. She represented the wilderness and the sense of freedom that Boone so craved. Yet, not even having Teal Eye for a wife kept Boone from his constant brooding for long. Boone was a narrow, self-centered man. His suffering made him an emotional cripple. Boone had only one strong emotional tie, one true love--the open-spaced countryside--and it

captured Boone's heart. It was the one thing in life that made him happy.

In The Big Sky there were many tragedies. The paradise that Boone lived for was ruined by exploitation, and became a Paradise Lost. According to Levi Peterson:

The Big Sky is a successful tragedy and one central to the Western mind. It has the ring of tough-minded realism that the twentieth century has come to relish. It has, as well, the flavor of full authenticity in its reconstruction of the life of the mountain man between 1830 and 1843...If it is good, Western tragedy will produce the effects that draw us to any good tragedy. Tragedy depends upon the valuation we place upon the things we lose. In literature as in life, tragedy arises from the perishing of values so intensely meaningful that their loss cannot be tolerated....³⁹

Boone lost everything, and therefore his life was a tragedy.

Some of the tragic elements in The Big Sky are the paradise lost by the encroaching civilization and the eventual development of the wilderness (something that A. B. Guthrie Jr. himself fears even today in America), the loss of innocence and the loss of values, the blind child which parallels the "blinded" Boone, the tragic murder of Jim Deakins, and the tragic outcome of Boone Caudill.

Guthrie's novel is set at the time of the exploitation of the beaver and fur-bearing animals and the swift disappearance of most of them. The loss of the paradise was due chiefly to the exterminators like Boone, who lived from day to day, not thinking or worrying about tomorrow. Although Boone would revere the mountain way of life, he

did nothing to protect or cherish it. The majority of mountain men were social outcasts or rejects. According to Mick McCallister:

The worst of them were the degenerate castoffs of white civilization. Many of them adopted the content of Indian culture, but most allowed the forms of those cultures, the violence of Plains Indian life, to license and excuse their own willful, unbridled immorality.³⁴

So, with this callous attitude, Boone too added to the destruction of a paradise:

The loss of innocence in Boone becomes one of the biggest tragedies in the book. He became hardened and compassionless, eventually committing crimes against the landscape and his friend Jim. Innocence is not a place, it is a state of mind, and once it has given way to experience, its songs can be ours no longer.³⁵

Boone was no longer the greenhorn, but a man who could not recapture the idyllic illusions he once had. The world he found so beautiful turned ugly and tainted. For example, the disease and pestilence the white men gave to the Indians added to the loss of innocence. Boone's blind child was a symbol which paralleled his own "blindness" about the destruction of a way of life. Boone's child was born both blind and with red hair, the color of the hair of his best friend, Jim. Although the blind baby darkened Boone's mood, the red hair became the larger problem. It allowed Boone to mistrust his wife and best friend. He believed the child was really Jim's. He became blinded to the truth, and embittered by his own ignorance and mistrust. Boone's blindness about Jim was also a kind of lost innocence. He mistrusted Jim, and that precipitated the outcome.

Boone's "blindness" carried into all aspects of his life. He refused to believe in the eventual destruction which was forthcoming to the wilderness. He was a blinded child; his simple nature only believed what he wanted and ignored the truth. Boone was cloaked in darkness, and never able to allow the light to penetrate.

Guthrie's structure, as mentioned in Chapter Three, is linear. In The Big Sky, time is measured in white man terms. Guthrie's writing style is to the point, direct and unadorned, compared to Frederick Manfred's style. He does not use the symbolic writing techniques used by Manfred in Lord Grizzly. It is more simple. Nevertheless, according to Thomas W. Ford:

Guthrie's high visual orientation is well served by his style, enabling him to convey vividly both close-up details as well as distant objects...Guthrie's style also accommodates descriptions of the anger, force, movement and violence of nature....³⁶

His style is also authentic, using the mountain-man speech. He has great control of language. In Guthrie's words:

Every word must bear its weight. Not for rhythm, not for roll, not out of love of your effusion, can you afford weak words, which is not to say that you cannot manage rhythm and accent. It is to say that you must work, that you must discard much that you have liked and find through agony the necessary muscle...Seldom is the passive voice as good as the active...Remember how important is figurative language, imagery if you wish. A strong wind is not so strong as a wind-like hand in your face...Use with care loose descriptions, abstractions, words of large embrace. What does "beauty" mean or "beautiful" or "terrible" or "tragedy" or "ecstasy" or "magnificent"? Something, to be sure and much sometimes. But illustrations and specifics

are surer aids to ends. Leave something to the reader. He has perception and imagination, more than you may think. Don't restrain him in your nest of adjectives and adverbs. Let him fly, remembering that nouns and verbs are the guts of language.³⁷

Guthrie pays close attention to details. Guthrie's details and descriptions become to the reader a large colorful portrait. His descriptions are as big as the country he writes about. His writing is like a brush sweeping across a canvas, smooth, swift, exciting. In this scene, Boone ponders the countryside:

From the top Boone could see forever and ever, nearly any way he looked. It was open country, bold and open without an end. It spread away, flat now and then rolling, going on clear to the sky. A man wouldn't think the whole world was so much.³⁸

Guthrie's descriptions of the Missouri River varies from that of Manfred's. Manfred's were more relaxed, slow, undulating. In Lord Grizzly he states:

...Majestic, sweeping wide, the tan sheet of seething water flowed eternally into the south. Anon and anon and anon. With occasional running whirlpools and sawyer eddies breaking its surface. With shore trees - majestic cottonwoods and umbrella elms and gnarled fierce oaks and slender ash and delicate maple - surfboating along and bobbing up and down in the water like gigantic sea serpents armed like octopuses....³⁹

Guthrie's Missouri is wilder, more treacherous, unfriendly:

The Missouri was boiling. It overran its bed, clucking among the willow and the cottonwood. It gouged at the bluffs, undercutting the shore...Trees came down when the banks gave...The water moved up against the dams, climbing as it felt for weaknesses, and turned and raced around, breaking white as it found

its course again. Out in the channel the current ran like the back of a snake. The Missouri was a devil of a river....⁴⁰

One of Guthrie's best descriptions is that of the beaver that Boone kills. The suffering of the animal arouses sympathy and horror in many readers:

She crouched down when he had yanked her into the clear, not trying to run, but just crouching, looking at him while her nose trembled and a little shivering went over her.

"Got ye," he said...He saw now that she had been at work on her leg. A little bit more and she would have chewed herself free. There were just the tendons holding, and a ragged flap of skin. The broken bone stuck out of the jaws of the trap, white and clean as a peeled root. Around her mouth he could see blood. She looked at him, still not moving, still only with the little shaking, out of the eyes that were dark and fluid and fearful, out of big eyes that liquid seemed to run in, out of eyes like a wounded bird's, they made him a little uneasy, stirring something that lay just beyond the edge of his mind and wouldn't come out where he could see it.

She let out a soft whimper as he raised the stick, and then the stick fell, and the eye that had been looking at him bulged out crazily, not looking at anything, not something alive and liquid any more, not something that spoke, but only a bloody eyeball knocked from its socket. It was only a beaver's eye all the time.⁴¹

With this one description, the reader senses the animal's great fear and Boone's hideous lack of compassion and basic human understanding. For a moment it seems that Boone felt sadness, and regret for the animal, but it soon vanished. His violent, crude nature took over, and the beaver's deadened eye became a symbol of the

deadened heart of Boone. Guthrie's attention to details in this passage makes it one of the more moving and unforgettable descriptions in The Big Sky. It is a haunting and unrelenting picture of the brutality that the mountains and wildlife suffered at the hands of the Boone Caudills.

Guthrie's style is also regional. The best regional writing is honest, down-to-earth writing about a place the writer has real first hand knowledge of, and the day to day experiences common to everyone in a certain region or place. The word "regional" conjures up images of places one never forgets. These are the places we are born to, forever in many respects tied to, and often want to return.

According to John R. Milton:

All good writing is regional in the sense that it evokes a place, comes out of experience (personal or observed first-hand), and touches on a spirit which is common to all men and therefore universal.⁴²

Guthrie writes about his home in Montana before civilization's advancement into the mountains. His voice, the voice of one familiar with the mountains and her long-lost explorers, can be heard within each line. Guthrie's place is Montana. This is where he grew up, and the place to which he will always be tied:

I knew the Montana sky, the wide, deep and azure sky, seldom gray, where the sun came up in a burst of glory and sailed serene and nestled at dusk in the arms of the Western Rockies. There was freedom. There the spirit reached up and out, liberated an unlimited.⁴³

With Guthrie's first-hand knowledge of place, and his experiences with mountain folk, he incorporated himself into the writing of

The Big Sky. As a reporter in Lexington, Kentucky, he obtained an insight into the daily lives of the Kentucky people. He also learned about Kentucky through his elderly landlady Mary "Lizzie" Keating, who was a Kentucky historian. She helped Guthrie more than anyone else in his research of mountain history.

Guthrie became the voice of Boone, Jim, and Dick. He took on their lives, he became one of them, living off the land. Guthrie later admitted to losing his own identity while writing and researching his book. Guthrie said:

I had spent years in Kentucky and encountered that dark strain so often found in the hill folk who could claim more than one mountain man and now would provide my protagonist..I would tell of the fur hunters who followed hard on the heels of Lewis and Clark, of men in the models of Bill Williams, Hugh Glass, Joe Meek, and John Colter, Kit Carson, Provot, and the Sublettes. By boat and by horse and by foot we'd penetrate, my men and I, the surprised wilderness. We'd trap the clucking, beavered streams and bed down in the wondering parks of the almost-untouched young West, and we'd love squaws and fight Indians and spree at rendezvous and, broke and sober and satisfied, signal goodbye and ride on to untried, rich rivers, counting good beyond telling this life that our blind lives would extinguish.⁴⁴

A. B. Guthrie Jr.'s writing style reveals Montana's rustic beauty and its huge landscape. Guthrie's strong praise for his place, his home, echoes through the pages of The Big Sky. But his writing style incorporates one element far more impressive than what has been previously mentioned. Even though Guthrie is a highly skilled and talented writer, it is the element of love which makes him a great writer. He is great because of his effect on the reader. Guthrie

moves the reader to sadness, and a sense of loss for one place in American history. Perhaps his writing is sentimental, but there is nothing wrong with sentiment. Guthrie uses the themes of loneliness, despair, regret, love, hate, beauty and ugliness. With the dissipation of values comes the universal theme of failure. His writing is authentic in detail. This quality is interesting and effective. This deeprooted sadness or sentiment theme is carried throughout the book. It illustrates the feeling that Guthrie believes in, that each man destroys the thing he loves. We are what we love to a certain degree, and Boone Caudill destroyed what he loved and consequently, himself. It is with this theme in mind that Guthrie developed a great Western novel. The element of love cannot be denied as Guthrie's measure of greatness. Guthrie's love of a place, that which was lost in time, but not in one's own heart, was the strongest element in The Big Sky.

Boone Caudill from the beginning to the end was a lost and vicious child in the wilderness. He never learned to forgive as Hugh Glass did, nor did he comprehend that man was not meant to live alone forever. He could not and did not change the way he was. His gloomy disposition shut him off from others. His independence was truly a curse. His solitude was a hell, and his hatred a trap. Boone Caudill turned his back on society, and in turn shut himself off from its warmth and humanity. Nature was not to blame for his misfortune. It did not break down Boone. Boone was self destructive. Boone was a victim of his own doing, much like so many other adventure seekers who

escaped the responsibilities of white civilization in the wilderness. This period in history allowed a reckless breed of men to become legends, or outcasts. Many of these mountain men were never heard of again. Boone was one of these lonely and immature individuals.

Guthrie's sad Boone Caudill could never return home, once he departed, and his life in the mountains was never to be the same again. The dream was destroyed forever. A. B. Guthrie Jr.'s The Big Sky becomes a requiem for the mountain man and his period in American history.

Footnotes

¹A. B. Guthrie, Jr. "Twin Lakes Winter," Harpers Magazine, May 1969, p. 63.

²Donald Stewart, "A. B. Guthrie's Vanishing Paradise," Journal of the West, 15 (1976), 86.

³Wallace Stegner, Forward, Sentry Edition, The Big Sky, by A. B. Guthrie, Jr. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1965), p. ix.

⁴Guthrie, The Big Sky, p. 292.

⁵Ruxton, p. 127.

⁶Guthrie, The Blue Hens Chick, p. 189.

⁷Guthrie, The Big Sky, p. 162.

⁸Washington Irving, The Adventures of Captain Bonneville U.S.A. in the Rocky Mountains and the Far West (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1868), p. 400.

⁹Guthrie, The Big Sky, p. 185.

¹⁰Irving, p. 110.

¹¹Guthrie, The Big Sky, p. 186.

¹²Cracroft, p. 167.

¹³Ruxton, pp. 17-18.

¹⁴Guthrie, The Big Sky, p. 212.

¹⁵Manfred, Lord Grizzly, p. 45.

¹⁶John Bradbury, Travels in the Interior of America in the Years 1809, 1810 and 1811 (Liverpool: Smith and Galaway, 1966), p. 169.

¹⁷Henry Marie Brackenridge, Views of Louisiana, (Chicago: Quadrangle Books Inc., 1962), p. 256.

¹⁸Richard H. Cracroft, "The Big Sky: A. B. Guthrie's Use of Historical Sources," Western American Literature, 6, No. 3 (1971), p. 169.

¹⁹Manfred, Lord Grizzly, p. 15.

- ²⁰Walker, p. 19.
- ²¹Louie Atterbery, "The American West and the Archetypal Orphan," Western American Literature, 5, No. 3 (1970), p. 203.
- ²²Dayton Kohler, "A. B. Guthrie, Jr. and the West," College English, 12, (1950-51), p. 251.
- ²³Manfred, Lord Grizzly, p. 18.
- ²⁴Manfred, p. 105.
- ²⁵Manfred, p. 115.
- ²⁶Manfred, p. 117.
- ²⁷Guthrie, The Big Sky, p. 162.
- ²⁸Guthrie, p. 191.
- ²⁹Guthrie, p. 184.
- ³⁰Guthrie, p. 301.
- ³¹Guthrie, p. 309.
- ³²Guthrie, p. 176.
- ³³Levi Peterson, "Tragedy and the Archetypal Orphan," Western American Literature, 6, No. 4 (1972), p. 277.
- ³⁴Mick McAllister, "You Can't Go Home, Jeremiah Johnson and the Wilderness," Western American Literature, 13, No. 1 (1978), p. 47.
- ³⁵McAllister, p. 48.
- ³⁶Ford, p. 82.
- ³⁷Guthrie, The Blue Hens Chick, pp. 176, 177, 180.
- ³⁸Guthrie, The Big Sky, p. 108.
- ³⁹Manfred, Lord Grizzly, p. 172.
- ⁴⁰Guthrie, The Big Sky, p. 90.
- ⁴¹Guthrie, The Big Sky, p. 175.
- ⁴²John R. Milton, "The Writers Sense of Place," p. iv.

⁴³Guthrie, The Blue Hens Chick, p. 49.

⁴⁴Guthrie, The Blue Hens Chick, p. 148.

CHAPTER 5
CONCLUSION

Every continent has its own great spirit of place. Every people is polarized in some particular locality which is home, the homeland. Different places on the face of the earth have different vibrations, different chemical exhalation, different polarity with different stars; call it what you like. But the spirit of the place is a great reality.

- D. H. Lawrence¹

In this thesis Frederick Manfred, from the place he calls Siouland, and A. B. Guthrie Jr., from the "Big Sky" country, have been compared. Both the writers and their major book were found to be different, and yet similar in some respects. The differences can be summarized as follows:

Frederick Manfred is a multi-visionary writer. His Lord Grizzly is not only a masterpiece of storytelling, but a colorful, moving poem. The reader becomes aware of the senses of smell, touch, taste, sight and hearing. These five senses are intertwined throughout the book, thus enabling the reader to join in Hugh's adventures. Manfred's finely-tuned perception of nature brings the physical world to the reader. With intense physical effects, realistic dialogue, and easily understood language, the reader can experience the adventure. Here is an example of how Manfred brings the natural world to his reader. Hugh in this scene crawls to a stream while dehydrated after his long ordeal with the bear:

...He lay staring at the clear water directly under his nose. He saw a tiny bloodsucker waving back from a pebble. He saw a tendril of green moss waving from a stone. He saw green minnows fleeting upstream...

Throughout the book, small personal glimpses of life's largest to its smallest creatures become a part of each reader's world. Manfred selects these captivating moments to become an important aspect of his book.

Guthrie, on the other hand, does not exhibit the great narrative ability of Manfred. Guthrie is, however, a master of the English language. He has an academic style, and a philosophical side that is exceptional. He is a careful, concise stylist with an abundance of factual truths and traditional values in his writing. Guthrie's writing is flowing, tight, and exquisite. Here is one such scene in which Boone contemplates his feelings about the land:

Boone lay on his back and looked at a night sky shot with stars...By day Boone could get himself on a hill and see forever, until the sky came down and shut off his eye. There was the sky above, blue as paint and the brown earth rolling underneath, and himself between them with a free, wild feeling in his chest, as if they were the ceiling and floor of a home that was all his own.³

In short, Manfred writes more poetically, while Guthrie's style is more prosaic.

John Milton points out this difference even though he acknowledges their equal love of place:

Guthrie and Manfred are alike in that they share a love affair with the vanished wilderness of the American West. Guthrie is often charged with succumbing to nostalgia, with attempting to bring back times and places which seem -- at a distance -- to be more attractive than the contemporary world. Manfred on the other hand, has been criticized for his worshipful naivete in relation to the wilderness or the primitive life, even though he is more subjective than Guthrie.⁴

Guthrie is more of an historical writer than Manfred. Manfred uses history to develop his art. Guthrie uses his art to retell

history. But both are artists, and there are many similarities both in their writing and in their personal feelings about the land.

Manfred and Guthrie can both be considered historic writers. They both wrote about the golden age of trappers, the tragedy of the Native Americans, the privations of the homesteaders, and the cowboy and miner period of the West. In fact, Manfred and Guthrie each have five novels on the Western movement. Manfred calls his "The Buckskin Man Tales," while Guthrie calls his more simply his "panel." Guthrie and Manfred are both environmentalists, and this is reflected in their novels on the West about the desecration of the land by settlers and trappers. Guthrie and Manfred are both landscape artists. Like painters, they too paint pictures of the earth and sky. Both writers realize that the earth, sky and elements live long after man has made his mark.

Another interesting similarity is their dislike of the eastern establishment. Guthrie has made remarks over the years about the small attention reviewers from the East pay to Western writers. Manfred has voiced his feelings numerous times on this subject too. Both writers have experienced this tight, closed group's dismissals of their works. They believe that there is less respect given to writers from the West and Middle West than to those from other areas of the country.

Finally, both Manfred and Guthrie understand the land and creation. The land that old Hugh struggled to survive on and the land brutish Boone desperately clung to, is the center of the universe

to both of these writers. Their fondness for their place is immeasurable. As D. H. Lawrence pointed out, "the spirit of the place is a great reality." The greatness of these two writers is this spirit of place which permeates their works.

Manfred and Guthrie have remembered history well, and have written it down for generations to come. The harsh realities of nature, the dreadful hardships, and acts of endurance, courage, and fortitude faced by their heroes, make Manfred and Guthrie writings memorable. They are the artists of frontier legend and fact. Gone are the pastoral sentiments that the old fashioned dime-novel was famous for. Gone is the glamorous West of the six-shooter and white hat that many people have been saturated with. Instead, Manfred and Guthrie replaced this pseudo-West with a raw, timeless and beautiful West of long ago. The temperamental, tenacious old Hugh Glass, and misbegotten, malicious Boone, are forever locked in the American Frontier thanks to Frederick Manfred and A. B. Guthrie, Jr.

Footnotes

¹D. H. Lawrence, Studies in Classic American Literature (New York: Thomas Seltzer, Inc., 1923), p. 8.

²Manfred, Lord Grizzly, p. 102.

³Guthrie, The Big Sky, p. 123.

⁴Milton, Novel of the American West, p. 161.

APPENDIX

"Frontier Dialect"

Govner -- leader

Head -- very much, a lot

Peraira -- prairie

Lie wolf's meat -- be dead

Missoura -- Missouri

Trap a squaw -- take an Indian wife

Fofarrow -- decoration, anything unnecessary

Take hair -- scalp

Go under -- die

Make meat of -- kill

Throw a buffler -- kill a buffalo

Count a coup -- kill, scalp

Tickled that nigger's hump ribs -- shot an Indian

Lodge -- a fort, or a settlement

Make a raise of -- steal

If them Spanyolds wasn't for fer shootin, why was beaver made? -- term
of contempt

Sirree! -- exclamation

That the way your stick floats? -- is that what you think?

The Heely -- Gila River

Livin' on our moccasins -- eating the parfleche

Hyar's damp powder and no fire to dry it" -- poor situation

Putrefactions -- petrified trees, etc.

It won't shine -- it's no good

Keep your nose open -- stay alert

Plew -- prime beaver skin, from French plus

Certain as this gun has hindsight -- sure

Lave! -- get up, from French lever

What's the sign like? -- how do things look?

How many the lodges? -- how many of them are there?

On the peraira -- free

Kinni-kinnick -- inner bark of red willow, which, when mixed with tobacco and smoked, produced a narcotic effect

Sposa -- wife, from Spanish esposa

This hoss -- myself

This child -- myself

This nigger -- myself

Wagh! -- exclamation, end of a sentence

Rubbed out -- killed

Bacca -- tobacco

This beaver feels like chawin' -- I'd like some tobacco

Thar was grit in him, and a hair of the black b'ar at that -- he had
spunk

Put afoot -- lose a horse

Goats -- antelope

Hurraw -- hey

Greenhorn -- newcomer

Hyar's brown-skin acomin! -- Indians coming

Et -- eat

Ee -- you

Bring to medicine -- get a beaver to take the bait

Boudin -- intestines of buffalo, considered a great delicacy when
lightly toasted

Cayeute -- coyote

Long-knives -- Americans

Gut-shot -- ball passed clear through without killing

Whar's your companyeros? -- Where are your friends?

Some punkin' -- good-looking Indian girl

Ho, boys, hyar's a deck, and hyar's the beaver (rattling coins); who
dar set his hoss? -- who wants to play poker?



MAP OF THE
TRANS-MISSISSIPPI TERRITORY
OF THE
UNITED STATES
DURING THE PERIOD OF THE
AMERICAN FUR TRADE
AS CONDUCTED FROM ST. LOUIS BETWEEN THE YEARS
1807 and 1843.

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