

THE PRIMITIVE MYSTIQUE:  
ROMANCE AND REALISM IN THE DEPICTION  
OF THE NATIVE INDIAN  
IN ENGLISH-CANADIAN FICTION

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## Abstract

Although several critics since the nineteenth century have written about the variety of interpretations of the native Indian in English-Canadian literature, no one has yet devoted a full-length study to the way the Indian is depicted in fiction alone. This dissertation thus examines a large cross-section of adult long fiction and investigates the degree to which the modes of romance and realism and the genres of romance and novel have informed these depictions.

The dissertation is organized according to four major topics: love, religion, fighting, and community life. Each of these is divided into appropriate sub-topics, organized along roughly chronological lines. The chapter about love is the longest and focuses on fiction in which a white person and an Indian marry or have a love relationship, either potential or consummated. The chapter about religion focuses on fiction about the various kinds of relationships between native religions and Christianity. The chapter about fighting analyzes fiction about inter-tribal fighting, fighting along the frontier, and fighting between modern Indians and white authority. The chapter on community life focuses on fiction describing daily Indian life, from the pre-contact community to the contemporary reserve.

Several conclusions emerge. First, the basic attitude to Indians reflects prevailing social attitudes. Second, the choice and use of genre are influenced to a significant degree by literary fashion. But more specific conclusions also emerge. Most importantly, romance is the

dominant genre and romantic conventions of primitivism pervade almost all serious fiction on the subject, from variations on the Pastoral and Noble Savage conventions to a recent development approaching fertility myth. Instances of the realistic novel as such are relatively rare, but realism of a documentary sort is frequent in romances which focus on social issues and is present for verisimilitude or ornamentation in many other romances. Finally, the best romances tend to have a sound basis in observable fact, just as the good novels have the subjective psychological dimension provided by romantic convention,

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. INTRODUCTION . . . . .	1
II. RED LOVERS . . . . .	28
1. Some Social Concerns . . . . .	32
2. Proprieties and Historical Fiction in the Nineteenth Century . . . . .	57
3. Versions of the Pastoral . . . . .	77
4. Historical Fiction in the Twentieth Century . . . . .	99
5. Primitive Vitality . . . . .	120
III. GOD AND MANITOU: THE INDIAN AND RELIGION . . . . .	153
1. Damnable Darkness . . . . .	158
2. The Path to Salvation . . . . .	170
3. Doubts about Christianity . . . . .	184
4. In Praise of Old Ways . . . . .	192
IV. RED-SKINS AND RED-COATS: THE FIGHTING INDIAN . . . . .	212
1. Fighting Other Indians . . . . .	215
2. Fighting the Settlers . . . . .	220
3. Fighting Modern Red-Coats . . . . .	270

Chapter	Page
V. THE INDIAN AND THE COMMUNITY . . . . .	286
1. The Traditional Community . . . . .	290
2. Cultural Genocide . . . . .	307
3. The White Alien . . . . .	318
4. The Indian Alien . . . . .	327
5. The Modern Indian Community . . . . .	337
VI. CONCLUSION . . . . .	353
BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .	373
APPENDIX. CHRONOLOGICAL LIST OF SHORT TITLES OF CANADIAN WORKS MENTIONED, ARRANGED BY DECADE . . . . .	394

## Chapter I

### Introduction

Since the discovery of America, men have written about the native populations with whom the explorers and settlers came in contact. But it is a limitation of human beings that they must write from within their cultural context and in terms of things familiar to them. The exotic must be given a framework sufficiently comprehensible to make the writer's efforts worthwhile. For these reasons any study of writings about aboriginal peoples will in large part be a study of the cultures of the writers and their audiences. Eyes will see what they have been trained to see, evaluations will reflect what writers have been conditioned to accept as valid, and pens will write what readers can understand. Of course, the depiction of the exotic will change over the years as changing social ideas and literary fashions affect cultural assumptions. All these facts apply as well to innovative and erudite writers as to popular writers--the difference is merely of degree.

It is not surprising that critics over the years have been attracted to the subject of the Indian in Canadian literature. From time to time chapters and articles about Canadian literary Indians have appeared. As early as 1926 Lionel Stevenson devoted a chapter to "Interpreters of the Indian" in his Appraisals of Canadian Literature. Typically of such short surveys, it treats only the best known of the



nineteenth-century writers, mainly poets, and mentions only Wacousta and The Master of Life amongst fictional works. Later, in 1962, a visiting Japanese critic, Keiichi Hirano, published an article, "The Aborigene [sic] in Canadian Literature": it concerns only poet Duncan Campbell Scott (whose Indians have deservedly received frequent commentary) and prose writer Havelock Robb, and it shows a fundamental lack of understanding of some conventions of English literary practice, such as that of the Noble Savage. In 1971 Dorothy Livesay published a stimulating article based on a paper delivered a year earlier: "The Native People in Our Canadian Literature"; it focuses on the relationship between the rediscovery of the Indian in literature and the search for the Canadian identity, but it also treats mainly major works from The History of Emily Montague to recent anthologies by Indians.

Livesay's thesis is developed further and more specifically by David Williams in "The Indian Our Ancestor" (1978-79), which studies the way in which the Indian functions as the spiritual ancestor of the white man in several modern Canadian works of fiction. Margaret Atwood's well-known Survival (1972) also has a chapter on "First Peoples": predictably many of Atwood's examples are drawn from poetry, and all are selected to support the thesis of "Indians as victims."

A few theses have also been written over the years, but none approaches Canadian fiction only and all focus mainly on social attitudes and/or fidelity to fact. The earliest, "The 'Red Indian' of Literature: A Study in the Perpetuation of Error" (1941) by anthropologist Douglas Leechman, is concerned with the accuracy of details and concepts pertaining to Indians in literature generally. It offers few insights

into the literature discussed and is now quite dated. Chipman Hall's M. A. thesis "A Survey of the Indians' Role in English Canadian Literature to 1900" is the first overview of the Canadian literary Indian. As the title indicates, it is a survey of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; however, it focuses more on the writers' attitudes than on the Indians' role and touches all genres of Canadian literature. The most recent thesis, and the most thorough to date, is Leslie Monkman's "White on Red" (1975) in which Monkman takes several "perspectives" on the Indian in Canadian literature from the eighteenth century to the 1970's. His method is to comment at length on selected Canadian essays, plays, fiction, and poetry, and to link them by generalized critical bridges. While he discusses several of the works of fiction to be handled in this present study, he comes to quite different conclusions, possibly because of the variety of genres considered.

The purpose of the present dissertation is much more specifically literary than that of its forerunners: it aims to survey the various ways in which Canadian writers of fiction have depicted the native Indian and to trace the variations and consistencies in certain themes, literary conventions, characters, and attitudes in this fiction. Thus a large body of primary materials has been assembled, with a view to presenting a comprehensive overview of the subject, to articulating some pertinent questions, and to proposing some possible answers. The basic questions are: what have technologically advanced, Christian, white, English-speaking Caucasians said over the years about brown, Mongolian, pagan people barely out of the Stone Age and speaking many different languages? How far is the Indian viewed as a human being and

how far as an extension of the physical environment? How far is he viewed as a person and how far as an extension of a white man's psyche? How far is his kind viewed as a nation of people and how far as a collection of benevolent or hostile forces? And, finally, how has the depiction of the Indian been affected by the tides of taste in literature?

There are several reasons behind the decisions to restrict the study to long fiction and to survey as much fiction as possible--good, bad, and mediocre--and not just those works which contemporary taste tells us are important. First, earlier scholarship has covered the general potentials of a multi-genre survey and has revealed its limitations. Second, a broad range of materials allows the firmest foundation for conclusions about Canadian fictional Indians and the validity of current critical positions. Third, the focus of this thesis on literary elements associated with the romance and the novel logically requires a focus on prose fiction. Fourth, much of the short fiction available on the subject is of a popular, formulaic sort and offers only limited resources for critical discussion. A final limitation to fiction written mainly for adults is based on the assumption that juvenile literature constitutes a study area of its own. However, even with the restriction to long fiction, it was not possible to cover all the material available. Bibliographies of Canadian fiction are not systematically annotated, so that one must rely almost exclusively for one's primary reading list on suggestive titles, cross references, and physical examination of likely-looking material.<sup>1</sup> As well, some prolific or popular writers do not seem to warrant complete coverage, so

a selection has been made of representative works of their canon or type.

Obviously, with a broad range of materials, it is not possible, nor desirable, to explicate or analyze every work and every aspect in detail. Instead, the concentration has been on gathering, labeling, and describing primary works of fiction. All this is a necessary step between pure bibliography and pure criticism. Some suggestions, both descriptive and evaluative, will be made about the way in which Indians are depicted, with anthropological, historical, and social features mentioned where consideration of these is deemed appropriate. The basic aim is to uncover the most durable themes and conventions in Indian depiction and to trace modifications where they occur. It is to be hoped that the issues covered in this dissertation will provide basic material for further, closer studies of the many Indian characters in Canadian literature.

Basically, the primary material for this thesis is the long fiction which was written between 1769 and 1976, from the publication of The

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<sup>1</sup> For example, Julia Hart's Tonnewonte (1825) looked promising enough to warrant an inter-library loan, but proved to have only six pages of very minor Indians; de la Roche's Possession (1923) was discovered only through cross reference (one rather assumes all de la Roche's work will be white Jalna-esque fare); the half-breed sisters Jessie and Janet in Nature and Human Nature (1855) were discovered only through examination of the collected works of Haliburton; much of the historical fiction was found simply through long hours in the stacks of university libraries in Toronto, Montreal, and Sherbrooke; the short fiction was unearthed through a search of tables of contents in such journals as The Canadian Magazine. The earlier the period, the more intensive the search for suitable material, because of the comparative rarity.

History of Emily Montague to the time at which the writing of this thesis began.<sup>2</sup> The focus is explicitly on the Indian. The half-breed character will not be systematically surveyed, but will be discussed only when his white blood is unimportant to the narrative or his Indian blood is emphasized (e.g. Haliburton's *Jessie* or Laurence's *Tonnerres*). This restriction will be particularly noticeable during discussion of fiction about the North-West Rebellion: there are so many books about the distinctive struggles of the full-blood Indians of this period that the struggles of the Métis seem somewhat pale and redundant--at least as far as this study is concerned. Most serious writers about the troubles of 1885 depict little connection between the grievances of Riel's Métis and the grievances of the Indians.

As for the organization, it is always tempting in a survey thesis to start at the beginning and plod systematically through to the end. Fortunately, the fiction itself suggests a more interesting possibility since it falls quite easily into four broad topics: love, religion, war, and community life. With such topical divisions the relationship between theme and form should emerge more clearly than were a purely historical organization to be followed. Nevertheless, each of these broad topics will be narrowed to more specific sub-topics, some of literary focus, some of social focus, and some of historical focus. At

<sup>2</sup> There are a few exceptions: short fiction which appears in unified single-author volumes, short fiction written by authors of first importance, and short fiction written by authors of long fiction. As well, one book published after 1976 is included: W. P. Kinsella's *Dance Me Outside* (1977) is a unified collection of stories which originally appeared a year or two earlier--the book presented a more convenient format for discussion.

this level a chronological organization has been used in order to add an historical perspective to the question of form and theme. Obviously some books will be discussed in more than one chapter. But since most of these are complex and important works (e.g. Wacousta, The Champlain Trail, and The Temptations of Big Bear), they can bear scrutiny from several angles. Normally plot summaries have been avoided; but where the rarer works are concerned, it seemed necessary to acquaint the reader with the basic conflict and characters in the fiction. The discussion of better known and more available fiction is more allusive. In any case, all the works to be discussed are distinguished by the presence of at least one native Indian character, whether formulaically or innovatively, romantically or realistically depicted.

The first chapter will examine those works of fiction in which a love alliance of some sort occurs between a white person and an Indian. These alliances will be examined, first as to their social acceptability and, second, as to their position in a complex of literary conventions involving primitive characters. The second chapter will look at native religious practices, principally in their relationship with Christian religious practices--from the most antagonistic to the most harmonious. The third chapter will focus on the Indian character in conflict with armed white authority and will be organized according to the major periods of Indian involvement in Canadian history. The final chapter will examine the literary depiction of the Indian community, both before and after the arrival of the white man, and the literary depiction of the Indian within the white community.

In all four chapters, the intention is to show that literary con-

vention plays as important a role as observation of fact in the depiction of the Indian character and that it is unfair to evaluate a writer's depiction of the Indian solely on the basis of modern prejudices and scholarship. An awareness of the values and influences at the time of a work's creation may modify one's appreciation of that work. Douglas Leechman, for example, is quite scathing about what he sees as factual errors in The History of Emily Montague (1769),<sup>3</sup> a book which contains several ideas new to the late eighteenth century.

Similarly, a large number of critics fallaciously imply that Indians would do a better job writing about themselves. Margaret Atwood writes on the subject thus:

Until very recently, Indians and Eskimos made their only appearances in Canadian literature in books written by white writers. . . . an imported white man looks at a form of natural or native life alien to himself and appropriates it for symbolic purposes. The Indians and Eskimos have rarely been considered in and for themselves; they are usually made into projections of something in the white Canadian psyche, a fear or a wish.<sup>4</sup>

While on the surface there is nothing in this statement to argue with, the implications are unnecessarily negative and ignore two vital issues: first, the lack of Indian literacy until recent times and, second, the literary conventions of the language in which the work was written. For example, the Indian composing in Cree or Tlingit may be creating something rich and fascinating within his own cultural assumptions, but

<sup>3</sup> Douglas Leechman, "The 'Red Indian' of Literature: A Study in the Perpetuation of Error," Diss. Ottawa 1941, pp. 120-21; 215-18.

<sup>4</sup> Margaret Atwood, Survival (Toronto: Anansi, 1972), p. 91.

his audience is restricted to those who understand Cree or Tlingit. On the other hand, the Indian writing in English is bound to have absorbed, however unconsciously, many of the conventions of English literary practice even though his factual understanding of his subject may have more authority.

Another critical problem is the frequent discrepancy between a popular image of the Indian and an intelligent observation of fact. In spite of reading close to two hundred exceedingly varied books about Indians, when I think of an Indian I still tend to picture a horde of painted Apaches whooping around a fort and being chased off by the cavalry, an image which reflects the conditioning of years of slick American movies. These Indians bear no resemblance to the hard-working Saanich Indians whose skill in the berry fields I used to envy as a teen-ager, nor to the shy Mohawks who attend my English classes. Over the years professional writers have also noted the discrepancy. Susanna Moodie, for example, found little resemblance between the romantic Noble Savage of her English literary upbringing and the stolid, kindly Mississaugans who lived near her in Lakefield. Edward McCourt also reports of Sir William Butler "that to the end of his life when he thought of the Indian his imagination conjured up a picture not of the red men whom he had actually met, talked and worked with on the western plains, but of Fenimore Cooper's idealized braves."<sup>5</sup>

Also imaginatively influenced by Fenimore Cooper was Wallace

<sup>5</sup> Edward McCourt, Remember Butler (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1967), p. 67.



Stegner, an American writer who grew up in the Cypress Hills, near the sites of some of Canada's most dramatic Indian history. What he has to say about literary influence is worth quoting at length:

Indians were a part of our boyhood fantasy, but our image of them was as mixed as our image of most things. Our Indians certainly did not come from life, and we were a little early to get them from the movies. We got them from books. . . . the Indians we played came mainly out of novels written eighty years before and two thousand miles away, out of the French and Indian wars, out of the darkness of the deep deciduous forests, out of the Noble Savage sentimentalities of Chateaubriand and Thomas Campbell. They came more or less from where our unnaturalized history came from, where our poetry and geography came from--where even our prejudices came from, including the prejudices against real Indians that lay so unconformably upon our literary and sentimental attitudes.

Real Indians we saw perhaps once a year. . . . We responded to them as to an invasion or a gypsy visitation. . . . Most of the townspeople were immigrants from sections of the United States and Canada where Indians were part of a lurid past; they had had hardly more personal contact with them than had the Scandinavians and the Englishmen among us, but they brought fully developed prejudices with them which we inherited without question or thought. . . .

Our inherited, irrelevant, ineradicable Indian lore was not modified in the slightest, any more than our humanity was aroused, by these contacts with the real demoralized Cree. . . . Even the elements of our reading which might have tended to correct or amplify or bring distinctions into our view of Indian life remained separate and encysted. Somehow, when we read Zane Grey, it was The Spirit of the Border, with skulking and bloody war in the hardwood forests of Pennsylvania and Ohio, that took our imaginations. That book reinforced our prefabricated notions. . . .<sup>6</sup>

This passage by Stegner makes it clear that literary traditions and popular prejudice can be extremely persistent, even when they have been formed in distant places under different conditions.

The persistence of this kind of prejudice also indicates the in-

<sup>6</sup> Wallace Stegner, Wolf Willow (New York: Viking, 1962), pp. 49-51.

fluence of fashionable and popular writers as well as of cultural assumptions. For example, as early as 1838, the erudite Anna Jameson noted the permanent effect on readers of the attitudes and depictions found in popular and successful literature. In discussing Joseph Brant and the Grand River Iroquois, she denounces the portrait of Brant found in Campbell's Gertrude of Wyoming, in spite of the author's disclaimer that it was all fiction:

. . . but the name stands in the text . . . as the "accursed Brandt," the "monster Brandt;" and is not this most unfair, to be hitched into elegant and popular rhyme as an assassin by wholesale, and justice done in a little fag-end of prose?<sup>7</sup>

Likewise, critics have commented on the unfairly negative picture of Indians found in the works of R. M. Ballantyne, whose nonfictional Hudson's Bay (1848) and juvenile romance The Young Fur Traders (1856) feature Indian characters and were widely read in Victorian England. It is evident that Ballantyne was almost wholly without sympathy for Indians; yet being a more skillful writer than most of his more sympathetic contemporaries, he could impart a persuasive vividness to his imperial assumptions, basic racism, and melodramatic episodes.<sup>8</sup>

But persistent racial generalities are not the only difficulties confronting the commentator on the native Indian: he must cope as well with critical generalities. In the early stages of this research, one

<sup>7</sup> Anna Jameson, Winter Studies and Summer Rambles in Canada, (London: 1838; rpt. Toronto: Coles, 1972), II, 106.

<sup>8</sup> See George Woodcock, Introd., Hudson's Bay, by Robert M. Ballantyne (Edmonton: Hurtig, 1972), pp. xv-xvi.

of the most irritating features of much Canadian criticism was the widespread lack of scholarly precision in the use of critical terminology. Fortunately, other critics seem to have observed the same weakness, for during the past several years a number of books and articles have appeared which present more systematic and useful discussions of various critical terms and which provide the foundation for the definitions to follow.

One term, however, has received no clarification and continues to be misconstrued and misused--the word savage. A large number of modern commentators interpret all uses of this word in the same pejorative way they themselves use it. However, this pejorative meaning was clearly not intended by earlier writers, who use savage more in the way the French use sauvage in une fleur sauvage (one hardly has a sense of a fierce, cruel, ferocious flower).

The word savage is derived not from the Latin saevio (to rage, to be fierce, ferocious), but from the Latin silva (wood, forest), a root which is more visible in the Renaissance spelling of the word, salvage. Its primary adjectival meaning, according to the Oxford English Dictionary, is: "in a state of nature, wild," and as applied to persons: "uncivilized; existing in the lowest state of culture." Its primary substantive meaning applied to human beings is: "a person living in the lowest state of development or cultivation; an uncivilized, wild person."<sup>9</sup> The 1975 edition of Webster's Dictionary retains this primary

<sup>9</sup> Compact Edition. Before passing value judgments on the definitions, one is reminded that the word civilized derives from the Latin word for law. One should also remember that this portion of the Oxford

meaning. However, there is a secondary meaning more in keeping with current popular thinking: "fierce, ferocious, cruel," and "a cruel or fierce person. Also, one who is destitute of culture, or who is ignorant or neglectful of the rules of good behaviour."<sup>10</sup>

The widespread contemporary use of this second meaning is to be regretted, for an appreciation of the primary meaning of the word savage is essential to an understanding of the Noble Savage, a term which in no way implies ferocious or barbaric behaviour. Rather, it concerns an idealized primitive figure which has existed for centuries but which assumed many of its most familiar features during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. H. N. Fairchild shows the development of the Noble Savage figure from the late seventeenth-century exotic figure found mainly in heroic drama, through the early eighteenth century satiric figure aggressively despising Europeans, to the more sentimental late eighteenth-century noble figure.<sup>11</sup> Although the Noble Savage of heroic drama basically does not concern the present study, both the satiric and sentimental versions of this conventional figure are important.

The tradition of the satiric Noble Savage is one which developed

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Dictionary was published in 1914, when ideas of the white man's burden and Victorian progress infused anthropological thinking. Thus a defining word like low might today be rendered early or primitive, a descriptive rather than an evaluative adjective.

<sup>10</sup> OED

<sup>11</sup> Hoxie Neale Fairchild, The Noble Savage (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1928), pp. 30-52.

vigorously during the age of reason; the principle on which it was based "tended to derive the qualities of goodness and sagacity in the savage from the unobstructed operation of the 'light of reason.'"<sup>12</sup> Essential to this view is the belief that reason can function best in a person whose mind is uncluttered by luxuries and other degenerative excesses. When such a simple character appears, he reveals the hollowness and basic triviality of civilization and of cultural refinement.

Closely related is the position of J.-J. Rousseau, whose second discourse on the Origins of Inequality (1754) extolled the virtues of the natural man. In this work Rousseau tried to explain that the development of self-interest and the idea of personal property were fundamental to human inequality and that the earlier cultural stages of communal sharing were worthy of emulation. However, as Fairchild points out, Rousseau's ideas were constantly misinterpreted:

. . . the sentimental primitivists of the Age of Johnson seized upon and distorted Rousseau's conception of natural man in the primitive state. Having ideas of their own about the savage, they were quite sure that they understood what Rousseau meant. He was the man who wanted people to live like bears--but like Arcadian bears of sensibility. The real Rousseau's Indian is a high, dry, somewhat grim abstraction, resembling the satirical Noble Savage rather more closely than the romantic Noble Savage. . . . In a word, though Rousseau was in some respects a sentimentalist, his attitude toward the savage is almost completely unsentimental. He admires the savage for being strong, healthy, contented, and unpedantically intelligent, and that is all. (p. 137)

This kind of primitivism is often called hard primitivism because of

<sup>12</sup> Lois Whitney, Primitivism and the Idea of Progress (1934; rpt. New York: Octagon Books, 1965), p. 69

its emphasis on a rather austere way of life. Since most Canadian writers are aware of the frequently harsh realities of Indian life, it is to be expected that an expression of hard primitivism will be common in Canadian literature.

But the Noble Savage which is probably closest to most people's thinking is the sentimental Noble Savage, a product of what is often called soft primitivism. He is the kind of figure created by the English writer Henry MacKenzie: "they are endowed with that stateliness, that quiet fortitude, that intense passion controlled by innate goodness, which belong to the Indian of legend."<sup>13</sup> This figure grows out of what Whitney calls "the doctrine of natural benevolence" (p. 84), which is dependent on feeling rather than reason. At the same time, though, this Noble Savage continually serves as a "conscious repudiation of the ideals of rationalism and of urban civilization."<sup>14</sup>

Nevertheless, not all eighteenth-century critics and commentators praised the Noble Savage. Dr. Johnson's famous remark, "Don't cant in defense of savages," is based on the firm belief that primitive life was barbaric and brutal, with nothing to recommend it. When confronted with an example of fine behaviour in a savage, Dr. Johnson "ascribed it to the civilizing influence of genteel company."<sup>15</sup> Many a bearer of the white man's burden came to the New World with this harsh assumption in mind, only to find people of a developed culture who had their own

<sup>13</sup> Fairchild, p. 92.

<sup>14</sup> Fairchild, p. 363.

<sup>15</sup> Fairchild, p. 335.

type of sensibility.

The Noble Savage that Dr. Johnson refused to believe in is essentially only the idealized side of a broader figure known as the wild man.<sup>16</sup> The wild man is a complex psychological figure with dual roots in Christian-Jewish and Classical thinking; in both traditions the figure is ambiguous in that he may alternately represent a wish or a fear. Whether outside the pale of Jewish orthodoxy or outside the Greek city enclave, the wild man is considered both as a threat, capable of loosing the powers of chaos on fragile rational or religious structures, and as an object of envy, free of the strictures of the law and society.<sup>17</sup>

Northrop Frye's concept of the garrison mentality as a pattern in Canadian literature immediately makes obvious the relevance of this ambiguity to Canadian studies, for both the primitive culture outside and civilized culture inside the garrison walls are subject to ambiguous treatment: will the wild man be viewed as unbridled bestiality, like the Cyclops or the Minotaur, an object of terror inhabiting the caves and labyrinths of the vast Canadian forests, conquerable only by wit or love? Will he be viewed merely as spiritually illegitimate, unfavoured of God, like Ishmael, outside the orthodox culture? Or will he be envied and idealized as a figure untrammelled by conventions and laws, spontaneously responding, like a nymph or faun, to the natural world

<sup>16</sup> Edward Dudley and Maximillian E. Novak, Introd., The Wild Man Within (Pittsburgh: Univ. of Pittsburgh Press, 1972), pp. ix-xi.

<sup>17</sup> Hayden White, "The Forms of Wildness: Archaeology of an Idea," in The Wild Man Within, pp. 3-36.

around him? Conversely, is it not important to the garrison's survival to repel all assaults on its integrity? Or, is it not more dangerous to adhere rigidly to the dictates of orthodoxy and reason and to neglect the innovative and natural? To answer any of these questions effectively, an author usually takes a firm stand one way or the other, with the result that stylized opposing figures--Noble or Ignoble Savages--are created. The degree to which certain themes and topics generate positive or negative treatment will be dealt with at some length in the body of this thesis.

Closely connected with the primitive ideal of the Noble Savage is the ideal of the Pastoral. Both are part of the general Western archetypal pattern known as primitivism, which is broadly defined as "the nostalgia of civilized man for a return to a primitive or pre-civilized condition."<sup>18</sup> The Pastoral convention has existed since the time of Theocritus as an exceedingly formal literary convention. It concerns an idyllic rural land known as Arcadia, which is peopled by shepherds and shepherdesses leading a simple life full of love, music and poetry. It is pure convention and has no basis in reality. However, since the

<sup>18</sup> Michael Bell, Primitivism, The Critical Idiom, 20, ed. John D. Jump (London: Methuen, 1972), p. 1. I emphasize Western because of certain remarks made a few years ago by a visiting Japanese critic: "it seems hard for a Westerner to escape from this 'noble savage' illusion. Though the Japanese have experienced a long struggle with the Japanese aborigenes . . . there is not one example of the 'noble savage' concept in Japanese literature. It is surprising, but it shows how European the 'noble savage' idea is. (Likewise, Japanese literature lacks the pastoral tradition, another product of European sentimentalism)." (Keiichi Hirano, "The Aborigene [sic] in Canadian Literature: Notes by a Japanese," Canadian Literature, No. 14 (1962), p. 52.



late eighteenth century, other simple figures--farmers, fishermen, children, and Indians--have replaced, usually rather sentimentally, the conventional shepherd. But whatever the figure, the idealization always concerns a relatively inactive, contemplative, usually rural life, a life in contrast to both the terrors and chaos of the wilds and the rational sophistication of the city.<sup>19</sup>

For us it has come to mean any literature which deals with the complexities of human life against a background of simplicity. All that is necessary is that memory and imagination should conspire to render a not too distant past of comparative innocence as more pleasurable than a harsh present, overwhelmed either by the growth of technology or the shadows of advancing age.<sup>20</sup>

This is a broad definition, but it is useful for the range of idealization which takes place in a rural setting, where the Indian is no longer completely wild, as opposed to the frontier setting, where he may still be so.

The idealization and psychological effects of the primitive figure are important elements in romance as a genre. However, romance is an extremely complex term. In the Anatomy of Criticism Frye uses the word in three different contexts: as a mode, in which the hero is a human being capable of marvelous acts; as the archetype of summer, in which the ascendant culture projects its own wish-fulfillment dreams; and finally as a genre of prose fiction, opposed to the novel.<sup>21</sup> Con-

<sup>19</sup> Peter V. Marinelli, Pastoral, The Critical Idiom, 15, ed. John D. Jump (London: Methuen, 1971), passim.

<sup>20</sup> Marinelli, p. 3.

<sup>21</sup> Northrop Frye, Anatomy of Criticism (1957; rpt. New York:

ventionally, the word romance refers to a genre of fiction which possesses features of romance as mode and romance as archetype and which is somewhat distinct from the novel. It is in this last sense that the term will be used here. When it is specifically used as a mode or archetype the distinction will be made at the time.

According to Frye, the romance as a genre possesses certain characteristics: it is often a love story, frequently contains sex and violence, and usually has a happy or comic ending, with the matching of the right man with the right woman. Romance polarizes what we want and do not want: the patterns are "anti-representational," stylized, and contain an "and then" elliptical sense of movement; the characters are polarized, simplified, contain few ambiguities, and frequently embody symbolic contrasts; the world it presents is created and self-contained. The plots are full of ritual and of conventions (or formulae) commonly developed along a quest pattern, involving a descent into a nightmare or demonic world and a return to the normal world purged of its disruptive elements and reconciled with nature.<sup>22</sup>

Some of the conventions in the downward part of this two-way movement are versions of motifs such as the bungling of a stupid parent, kidnapping by pirates, the presence of a faithful dog or companion; or versions of ancient literary formulae such as metamorphosis (loss of identity, false accusation), isolation, alienation, bestial sex,

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Atheneum, 1966), pp. 33, 186-206, 303-314 (hereafter noted as AC).

<sup>22</sup> Northrop Frye, The Secular Scripture (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1976), pp. 13, 26-58; 149-54; 172-73 (hereafter noted as SS).

threatened rape or death, and cannibalism. There is always a sense of bad luck, fatality, or chance involved, with some or many people falling victim.<sup>23</sup> The happy resolution, or upward movement, sees the conventional success of the hero or heroine, an escape through wit or skill, an assertion of the strength of goodness, a recognition and recovery of real identity (often noble parentage or human form), the importance of an emblem or talisman, the separation from an evil double, the protection of virginity or marriage to the right person, the renunciation of all magic by magicians, the return to original awareness and to an Eden-like world "in which a humanity greatly reduced in numbers has become reconciled to nature."<sup>24</sup> Obviously there is a wide range of roles that an Indian character may assume in romance.

American critic Richard Chase finds the romance element dominant in American fiction, and one must certainly consider the possibility that the same holds true of Canadian fiction. Chase writes that romance contains:

. . . the more obvious qualities of the picturesque and the heroic, an assumed freedom from the ordinary novelistic requirements of verisimilitude, development, and continuity; a tendency towards melodrama and idyl; a more or less formal abstractness and, on the other hand, a tendency to plunge into the underside of consciousness; a willingness to abandon moral questions or to ignore the spectacle of man in society, or to consider these things only indirectly or abstractly.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Frye, SS, pp. 97-106.

<sup>24</sup> Frye, SS, pp. 172; 133-54.

<sup>25</sup> Richard Chase, The American Novel and Its Traditions (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1957), p. ix.

The emphasis is certainly on the subjective and abstract nature of romance.

Several critics point out the affinities of the romance with the realms of wish and fear.<sup>26</sup> Thus the association with the world of dreams is probably a strong factor in the elitism or social snobbery one finds in romance.<sup>27</sup> We normally do not wish to be lower or less than we already are. Aristotle said the tragic hero must be better than ourselves in order to elicit the responses of pity and fear; similarly, the romance hero must be better than average in order for us to admire and identify with him. As well we do not fear evils pettier than those we can create ourselves, but we do fear colossal ills brought about by unchecked bestiality, by perverted genius, or by nature gone amok, ills which the average man cannot overcome, but which the hero can.

We rarely feel we know the hero of a romance as a person. He is a projection of our ideals and far above our ordinary skills; he seems to lead an almost charmed life; he is not faced with the daily ambiguities and petty tribulations which confront us ordinary folk; he seems born to lead and to achieve success. His particular skills are, of course, adapted to the setting and in accord with the dreams and values of the prevailing social order. The Canadian equivalents of the chivalrous knights of romance, of beautiful princesses, brave cavalrymen, shrewd detectives, clear-sighted and single-minded doctors, are brave garrison

<sup>26</sup> Gillian Beer, The Romance, The Critical Idiom, 10, ed. John D. Jump (London: Methuen, 1970), pp. 9, 12, et passim. Frye, SS, passim.

<sup>27</sup> Frye, SS, p. 161.

officers, successful settlers, intrepid Mounties, fearless missionaries, beautiful Indian maidens, and handsome young Indian chiefs, among others.

If romance concerns the world of dreams, the novel concerns the waking world with its matter-of-factness, ambiguities, and frequent parodying of romance conventions. It is a slower-moving genre which records rather than creates its world and which relies on logic, causality, and factual detail.<sup>28</sup> It must be based on a recognizable, established social order and describes the world as it is--"low mimetic decorum," as Spettigue summarizes<sup>29</sup>--not the world as we would like it to be. As Frye says, the novel's "chief interest is in human character as it manifests itself in society."<sup>30</sup>

From the nineteenth century to the present, critics have commented on the differences between the romance and novel. Traditionally, the novel is a fictional prose narrative, based on everyday experience, which is commonly called "realistic" experience. The romance is, for the most part, based on idealized and conventional plot structures and events. Nathaniel Hawthorne's preface to The House of the Seven Gables is a well-known discussion of the distinctions:

The latter form of composition [the novel] is presumed to aim at a very minute fidelity, not merely to the possible, but to the probable and ordinary course of man's experience. The former--while, as a work of art, it must rigidly subject itself to laws, and while it sins unpardonably, so far as it

<sup>28</sup> Frye, SS, pp. 46-48; 59-60.

<sup>29</sup> Douglas Odell Spettigue, "The English-Canadian Novel: Some Attitudes and Themes in Relation to Form," Diss. Toronto 1966, p. 66.

<sup>30</sup> Frye, AC, p. 308.

may swerve aside from the truth of the human heart--has fairly a right to present the truth under circumstances, to a great extent, of the writer's own choosing or creation. If he thinks fit, also, he may so manage his atmospherical medium as to bring out or mellow the lights and deepen and enrich the shadows of the picture. He will be wise, no doubt, to make a very moderate use of the privileges here stated, and, especially, mingle the Marvellous rather as a slight, delicate, and evanescent flavor, than as any portion of the actual substance of the dish offered to the Public. He can hardly be said, however, to commit a literary crime, even if he disregard this caution.<sup>31</sup>

Another perspective may be seen in Frye's linking of the novel with the traditions of the comic epic and comedy of manners, and the romance with those of the ballad and tale (AC, p. 304).

Similarly, the type of character found in the two genres may be distinguished: the protagonist of a realistic novel, unlike that of romance, is usually someone whom we feel we know or might encounter in our daily lives. George Eliot describes such people thus:

These fellow-mortals, every one, must be accepted as they are; you can neither straighten their noses, nor brighten their wit; nor rectify their dispositions; and it is these people--amongst whom your life is passed--that it is needful you should tolerate, pity and love. . . . There are few prophets in the world; few sublimely beautiful women; few heroes. I can't afford to give all my love and reverence to such rarities. . . .<sup>32</sup>

A position more favourable to romance is taken by Northrop Frye:

The romancer does not attempt to create "real people" so much

<sup>31</sup> Nathaniel Hawthorne, Pref., The House of the Seven Gables, Centenary Edition, Vol. II (Columbus: Ohio State Univ. Press, 1965), p. 1.

<sup>32</sup> George Eliot, "On Realism," in George J. Becker, ed. Documents of Modern Literary Realism (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1963), pp. 114, 116.

as stylized figures which expand into psychological archetypes. It is in the romance that we find Jung's libido, anima, and shadow reflected in the hero, heroine, and villain respectively. That is why the romance so often radiates a glow of subjective intensity that the novel lacks, and why a suggestion of allegory is constantly creeping in around its fringes. . . . The novelist deals with personality, with characters wearing their personae or social masks. He needs the framework of a stable society. . . . (AC, pp. 304-05)

It is quite clear that the step from the genres of romance and novel to the modes of romance and realism is a short one. Frye describes the two tendencies thus: "the realistic tendency moves in the direction of the representational and the displaced [i.e. formulaic structures adjusted to a roughly credible context], the romantic tendency in the opposite direction, concentrating on the formulaic units of myth and metaphor" (SS, p. 37). Romance as mode, then, is fundamental to romance as genre. Thus when Frederick Philip Grove writes of "realistic" characters, he is writing against the stylization of romance and echoing George Eliot:

There are writers who paint devils and angels, cowards and heroes. But in a long and observant life I have found none of these. In a long and critical life as a reader I have found men in devils and men in angels; that is, alloys of both devils and angels.<sup>33</sup>

For Grove life is conflict and conflict always has more than one side (pp. 67-68). Thus one might conclude that he equates objectivity, ambiguity, and relativism with realism, just as other critics equate subjectivity, idealism, and partisan feelings with romance. For Ian

<sup>33</sup> Frederick Philip Grove, "Realism in Literature," in It Needs to Be Said (Toronto: Macmillan, 1929), p. 66.

Watt, and others, realism followed the development of a large, middle-class, literate audience that looked for its "own standards of form and content" in what it read.<sup>34</sup> For Auerbach realism involves a rejection of some classical rules in favour of the graphic and palpable.<sup>35</sup>

The relationship between factual detail and realism poses another problem. Grove denies that "a surface likeness to reality," constructed from "minute bits of actual truths" is realism (p. 60), for "art is not a matter of facts and figures" (pp. 70-71). Auerbach, on the other hand, in his classic study Mimesis (1946), sees realism in a much broader way. For example, he points out that even in that most unrealistic of literary forms, the medieval courtly romance, the setting, usually a remote and self-contained world, is realistically described: dress, regalia, domestic trappings, etc. (p. 114). Auerbach's definition is extremely useful for coping with the minute chronicling of historical and anthropological detail which seems an inevitable result of the widely observed Canadian obsession with documentaries. In this dissertation, therefore, the kind of realism which involves fact and graphic detail will be accompanied by a specific modifier, such as historical realism, documentary realism, decorative realism, etc. The author may use them for the verisimilitude he seeks, even in the most unrealistic of fictions.

It is clear, then, that the genres of romance and novel may possess

<sup>34</sup> Ian Watt, The Rise of the Novel (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1963), p. 65.

<sup>35</sup> Erich Auerbach, Mimesis, trans. Willard Trask (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1957), p. 76.



both romantic and realistic elements in varying degrees, but one mode will normally predominate and indicate the genre. And it is in terms of that genre that a work should be discussed and evaluated, not in terms of the other. Such a caution is especially necessary in a field of criticism as new as that of Canadian literature. One short-coming of the Literary History of Canada, for example, is a strong tendency for the critics represented therein to evaluate prose fiction according to the criteria of the realistic novel. As T. D. MacLulich notes: "critics have equated realistic with 'serious' fiction and non-realistic with less serious, more 'popular' fiction. Realism and non-realism have been turned into value-judgments rather than simply being used as descriptive categories."<sup>36</sup> In equating true art with realism and in saying that only the truly great writers were realists, Grove contributes to this twentieth-century contempt for the stylized conflict which is characteristic of romance (p. 70).

Frye's comments on the matter are illuminating and perhaps provide a key to understanding why the romance met with so much hostility:

This contrast of the romantic and the realistic, the latter having a moral dignity that the former lacks, reflects [a] social and conceptual approach to literature. . . . Literature . . . is conscious mythology: it creates an autonomous world that gives us an imaginative perspective on the actual one. But there is another kind of mythology, one produced by society itself, the object of which is to persuade us to accept existing social values. "Popular" literature, the kind that is read for relaxation and the quieting of the

<sup>36</sup> T. D. MacLulich, "Novel and Romance," Canadian Literature, No. 70 (1976), p. 42.

mind, expresses this social mythology.<sup>37</sup>

Popular literature is almost always formulaic--formulae themselves are soothing when they are predictable. But these are not the "formulaic units of myth and metaphor" which constitute the imaginative depth of romance at its best. All the same, there is no clear demarcation between the two sorts, and the stylization necessary for all romance can lead to the abuse of formulae and to the creation of "unrealistic" characters and situations--hence the pejorative application of the terms romantic and unrealistic. In this dissertation the terms romance and realism (and their derivatives) will be used as descriptively as possible; negative evaluations will be expressed only by means of negative modifiers, such as unimaginative, decadent, slick, simple-minded, etc. and should be clear in context.

These, then, are the basic critical terms which will be used in this thesis and the ways in which they will be applied. In each of the major topics of love, religion, war, and community life the fiction therein will be examined for the degree to which it embodies realistic or stylized elements and the degree to which it conforms to the criteria of the romance or the novel. The conclusions should thus indicate the relative pressures of literary convention and factual observation on the depiction of the native Indian in English-Canadian fiction. The stage is large, the cast is enormous, the depictions are various.

<sup>37</sup> Northrop Frye, Conclusion, Literary History of Canada, ed. Carl F. Klinck (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1965), pp. 837-38.

## Chapter II

### Red Lovers

From the earliest Canadian novel to the most recent, the love relations between Indians and whites, whether potential or consummated, have constituted an absorbing field for literary treatment. Frequently they are depicted almost documentarily as the author focuses on the cultural differences between the two races, but more often these relations are used metaphorically as the author focuses on the conflict between nature and civilization, between the irrational and the rational, or between spontaneity and manners. Such a conflict may be resolved happily or unhappily, it may be treated realistically or conventionally, or it may try to present a realistic struggle within a conventional framework. Herein lies one of the basic features--and frequently problems--of this theme in Canadian fiction.

Most people, both Indian and white, live quiet, contented lives within the values of the culture which nurtured them; but often the sensitive protagonist of fiction feels an urge to move beyond the limitations of his upbringing and to form a liaison with an outsider; in so doing he risks losing the protection of his community or "garrison." The conflict thus becomes in many cases one between the personal commitment to the lover and the social commitment to the community. And the setting for a good many of these fictions is neither the ordered city of the white man nor the chaotic wilderness of the Indian, but a

sort of middle ground: a farm, a small village, a reserve, or a trading post. Such settings provide, logically and appropriately, a neutral ground for the meeting of disparate cultural groups and frequently lead to a kind of pastoral situation.

Just how these pastoral fictions will resolve themselves depends mainly on the social beliefs of the writer and the literary fashions of his day. In the Renaissance pastoral, for example, the civilized man (or artificial in the sense of possessing many arts of living) escapes from a corrupted or stifling urban environment to the country or forest, where he undergoes an illuminating experience. He ultimately returns to his proper sphere, the city, presumably to renew it by his experience. Logically, the natural man does the reverse, learns from his observation of civilized values and returns to his natural sphere: "for the shepherd to return to Arcadia is for him to find a milieu which is wholly appropriate to him."<sup>1</sup>

However, even though these logical opposite movements do sometimes occur in Canadian fiction, more often they do not: either the white chooses never to return to the city or the Indian cannot return to the woods. This resolution is essentially romantic, but it is also traceable to the Western archetypes of Eden or the Golden Age, since the natural world is romantically viewed as more innocent than the civilized world. Consequently, the civilized man finds this simpler, more

<sup>1</sup> Peter V. Marinelli, Pastoral, The Critical Idiom, 15, ed. John D. Jump (London: Methuen, 1971), p. 61. Marinelli also notes in this type of pastoral that there is nothing intrinsically bad about the city nor good about the country.

innocent life so attractive that he decides to remain; but the natural man who becomes involved with the civilized world is more like the innocent who tastes of the fruit of experience and is unable to return to his former state of happy innocence. Since the rational is traditionally linked with the male and the intuitive with the female, the usual conflict, at least until recently, involves a male white and a female Indian. This situation is, of course, given authority by the facts of history.

The first part of this chapter looks at fiction in which the author seems primarily interested in exposing or investigating some social issue or problem involved in white-Indian love relations, in settings frequently contemporary with the time of writing and usually located in a neutral middle ground. Some of these conflicts resolve themselves happily, others unhappily. Unfortunately, the comic resolutions usually imply the death of one culture in the union: the culture which dominates is the one which is preferred by the individual writer or the society for which he writes.

The second part of the chapter investigates the historical fiction of the nineteenth century, in which a white-Indian union is avoided, in spite of the author's fundamental sympathy towards Indians. In these works the authors appear unwilling to challenge some popular social notion of propriety and yet do not actually say so explicitly. The question of miscegeny is rarely raised either. Instead, the struggle is often depicted as one between love and social obligation (or honour), with hints of primitive archetypes. These fictions are almost exclusively designed as romances, and many writers seem unwilling to confuse

the idealization of the romantic characters by introducing the ambiguities of a mixed relationship.

The third part of the chapter looks at a small group of fictions, all but one written in the twentieth century and set in rural areas contemporary with the time of writing. The one nineteenth-century work embodies both the social concerns of the first section and the stylization of the second and establishes the prototype for a kind of pastoral fiction. In all the remaining works in the section some convention of the pastoral or Noble Savage is parodied, some with an aim of greater realism and others with an aim of pure humour. Like the pastoral itself, these works provide a kind of middle ground between the explicit or implicit social concerns of the first two sections and the predominantly personal concerns of the last two sections.

The fourth and fifth sections of the chapter turn to a large and important body of twentieth-century fiction which treats the spiritual implications of the white-Indian sexual relationship. In his own version of primitivism, D. H. Lawrence consistently pointed out that spiritual vitality depended on natural and sexual vitality and that once modern man suppressed his natural urges, he became sterile, both physically and spiritually. The fourth section of this chapter, then, treats historical fiction in which the Indian-white liaison is viewed as spiritually beneficial or necessary in some way to the survival of the protagonist. A short sub-section at the end discusses briefly the few historical works which treat the obverse theme--the danger and potential for death in the primitive side of life.

The fifth, and final, part of the chapter examines a substantial

body of recent fiction which emphasizes the white man's rejection of the over-civilized wasteland and his acquisition of natural vitality through a sexual encounter with an Indian. Although related to the pastoral romances of earlier times, these works seem more Dionysian in their resolutions, closer to fertility myths than to the pastoral archetype. Of special interest here are the works in which a white woman forms a liaison with an Indian man and carries new vitality back to a wasted civilization, those works in which the Indian is associated with the potential in the animal world, and those works which depart radically from the conventions of fictional realism.

#### 1. Some Social Concerns

In the earliest Canadian novel, Frances Brooke's The History of Emily Montague (1769) three views of the Indian as lover or mate are presented, but the conclusion rests firmly with an assertion of the social values of the Quebec garrison. Early in the novel, E. Rivers receives from his friend in England a letter suggesting a possible relationship with an Indian woman:

This, I suppose, will find you trying the force of your destructive charms on the savage dames of America; chasing females wild as the winds thro' woods as wild as themselves: I see you pursuing the stately relict of some renown'd Indian chief, some plump squaw arriv'd at the age of sentiment, some war-like queen dowager of the Ottawas or Tuscaroras.

And pray, comment trouvez vous les dames sauvages? all pure and genuine nature, I suppose; none of the affected coyness of Europe.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Frances Brooke, The History of Emily Montague, introd. Carl F.

This totally unrealistic picture typifies the soft or sentimental type of primitivism which was widely cultivated in late eighteenth-century England and is not at all typical of the Canadian writer's response. However, it does present an early expression of one of the most important themes in the consideration of white-Indian love relations--the conventional contrast between nature and civilization; the few instances of this degree of stylization will be handled in other contexts.

Fortunately, Frances Brooke did not have to rely on the conventions of the imagination in depicting Indians; she had an opportunity rare among writers of her time, the chance to observe the New World first hand as a resident. Within the framework of a fairly ordinary epistolary novel about the romantic problems of three young couples, Mrs. Brooke has integrated a sort of travelogue of early Quebec, in which she presents a balanced discussion of many features of the new land, including the Indian population. One of her vehicles for conveying this information is the lively and intelligent "coquette," Arabella Fermor.

It is Arabella who further develops the idea of forming a liaison with an Indian. One day after sharing a picnic meal with a party of Indian women and children travelling some distance to meet the men, Arabella writes enthusiastically to her friend in England: "Absolutely, Lucy, I will marry a savage, and turn squaw (a pretty soft name for an Indian princess!): never was any thing delightful as their lives; they

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talk of French husbands, but commend me to an Indian one, who lets his wife ramble five hundred miles, without asking where she is going" (p. 50). Obviously the nomadic life of the Indians with its apparent lack of restriction would appeal to the English gentlewoman of the times with her physically restricted life; and Arabella responds to it as she might have to the lives of gypsies in England (p. 51). Here, in spite of the flippant tone of the passage, Mrs. Brooke shows a kind of romantic idealization which is not totally conventional but which is based on an actual observation of fact.

But Arabella does not remain in her initial state of envy. After attending an Indian wedding, she writes again to Lucy, in quite a different mood:

I declare off at once; I will not be a squaw; I admire their talking of the liberty of savages; in the most essential point, they are slaves: the mothers marry their children without ever consulting their inclinations, and they are obliged to submit to this foolish tyranny. Dear England! where liberty appears, not as here among these odious savages, wild and ferocious like themselves, but lovely, smiling, led by the hand of the Graces. There is no true freedom any where else. They may talk of the privilege of chusing a chief; but what is that to the dear English privilege of chusing a husband?

I have been at an Indian wedding, and have no patience. Never did I see so vile an assortment. (p. 55)

Echoes of Dr. Johnson! The romantic veil has lifted, revealing some of the social aspects of Indian life that repel the English gentlewoman; but at least Mrs. Brooke bases her opinion on actual observation, even if she rejects what she sees. In her novel she has clearly balanced the European convention, the idealization, and the negative observation--all of which figure in fiction on the theme of the Indian lover.

It is clear that where Indian-white love relations are concerned two factors control the outcome of the action: personal inclination and social requisites. The archetypal responses of Noble Savage, pastoral, and Golden Age are most clearly associated with the subjective adjustment of man to his environment, like Arabella's wish to be free to roam at will. But Arabella is a young woman of the Quebec garrison and basically content to remain within the comfortable bonds of British civilization. It is fitting that her final judgment about marrying an Indian should be based on social criteria. It is also appropriate to the tone of realistic fiction.

The question of social propriety dominates Canadian fiction of the nineteenth century in which there is any question of whites and Indians marrying, probably because nineteenth-century society was extremely concerned with the idea of suitable marriages. An early clue to the way Indians figured in social thinking of the time may be found in the writing of David Thompson, whose own wife, Charlotte, was a frontier half-breed.<sup>3</sup> In his Travels Thompson emphasizes that Indians should be compared with Europeans of equal education and that so long as they lack Christianity they will always be at a disadvantage.<sup>4</sup> The conclusion here is that social antagonism to mixed marriages was as much simple social snobbery as racism, as if the master of the house were to marry a servant girl. Certainly Susanna Moodie has a good deal to say

<sup>3</sup> A fictionalized biography of Charlotte Thompson may be found in Elizabeth Clutton-Brock, Woman of the Paddle Song (Toronto: Copp Clark, 1972).

<sup>4</sup> David Thompson, Travels in Western North America, 1784-1812, ed. Victor G. Hopwood (Toronto: Macmillan, 1971), p. 121.

on the subject of class distinctions in the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>5</sup>

The question of social inequality is very important in the anonymous Bellegarde, the Adopted Indian Boy (1832). Bellegarde is not really a boy at all, but a young man, a true patrician of an Indian: handsome, brave, intelligent, educated, and thoroughly devoted to Matilda, whose personal servant he is. It is obvious that Bellegarde loves Matilda, but she is the daughter of the Baron d'Argenteuil and consequently far above him socially, in spite of his good Christian education. He will do anything for her, but he is very proud and will not demean himself to wait on anyone else: "he deemed that order derogatory to his rank, of which he was more tenacious than if he held a position less dependant."<sup>6</sup>

In spite of many attributes normally seen in a conventional romantic Noble Savage, Bellegarde is far more complicated, and his character is somewhat realistically modified: he is not the least bit sentimental, he is prone to jealousy, and he commits premeditated murder (the villain deserved what he got). However, he does behave conventionally when he immediately recognizes the superior claim of the young Irish officer who seeks the hand of Matilda and when he overcomes his jealousy to become the young officer's loyal friend. Then, once he has successfully discharged his obligations to the dying Baron, Bellegarde reaches the maturity to recognize the inferior position he has been allotted in

<sup>5</sup> Susanna Moodie, Roughing It in the Bush (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1923), e.g. pp. 235-37.

<sup>6</sup> Bellegarde, the Adopted Indian Boy (London: Saunders and Otley, 1832), I, 176.

white society, and he resolves to return to his people. Both his language and character at this point are redolent of Noble Savagery, but he appears as well as a renouncing hero:

To be the well-fed lacquey, and servilely eat the bread of a new master, when the remnant of the Ontario would hail me for its chief, and under my auspices recover its former dignity! No, by heaven, this lot can never be that of Bellegarde!--I will sacrifice a puerile attachment to a higher duty and more noble object. I will wait awhile, and discharge, if I may be yet useful, my last debt to the house of Argenteuil; then join my degraded and unhappy people; and with the advantages which a better education has endowed me, call them to life and independence. Why should the colour of my skin be a diploma of slavery, and give to every pale, cold-blooded mortal, who calls himself the child of civilization, a title to hold himself my superior in my native forests, where I may walk abroad in the dignity of my nature, and receive that homage and fealty that I must here pay to others, merely that I may eat my dole in sorrow and abasement, and sleep on a soft bed, until effeminate and degraded, I lose my energy, and sink into the condition of a caitiff slave, unworthy of my own respect, and deprived of that of my red brethren. (III, 202-04)

Bellegarde is a rare Indian character who is able to escape from the demoralizing effects of white civilization before being destroyed by them.

In spite of the clear message of imperial white supremacy to be found in Capt. Marryat's rather improbable successful-settler romance The Settlers in Canada (1844),<sup>7</sup> there is a suitable marriage made between an Indian girl and a white man. The Indian, a sweet young thing named The Strawberry, is an orphan who has been raised since the age of two by the white hunter Malachi Bone. She is altogether a model

<sup>7</sup> For a full discussion of the imperialism of the book, see Kenneth J. Hughes, "Marryat's Settlers in Canada and the White Commonwealth," Journal of Canadian Fiction, 3, No. 4 (1975), 69-73.

of self-effacing, domestically skillful Indian maidenhood and she eagerly accepts Christian instruction. The man whom she marries at the end is a trapper, so from the point of view of social position and religion there is nothing to deter the marriage. It is quite in keeping with David Thompson's observations and also reflects a social reality of the time, even though the fiction itself is the most improbable and formulaic sort of romance.

Likewise, Catherine Parr Traill's juvenile romance The Canadian Crusoes (1852) features an eventual marriage between Hector Maxwell (who wanders lost in the woods for two years with his sister and cousin) and Indiana, a young Mohawk girl whom they discover during this period. Since the young white frontiersmen adapt well to life in the woods and the young Indian girl gladly accepts Christian conversion, once again there is nothing against the mixed marriage, either social or religious. Again the romantic resolution is based firmly in a social reality of the time, although this juvenile work as a whole contains the heightened adventure elements and simplification of issues which are found in the crudest sort of adult romantic fiction.

A more penetrating look at the social problems confronting a mixed marriage occurs in Volume I of Nature and Human Nature (1955) by Thomas Chandler Haliburton. In this book the common sense and "human nature" lectures of Sam Slick manage to overcome the pride and bitterness of Jessie, a Scottish half-breed girl, so that she accepts the offer of marriage to "the Doctor," a recluse naturalist. As in the two books discussed above, the emphasis is on the personal similarities of the two people and on their social equality. There is never any question

of their wanting to live in white society.

One might assume that a satirist would place the social realities of the situation in primary position and write a work in the manner of Jane Austen. However, Jessie and "the Doctor" are too ideally suited, in the manner of conventional romance. She is no common girl, but a superb blend of the best of both races: tall, beautifully proportioned, natural and graceful, with "an air about her, that nothing but the native ease of a child of the forest, or high-bred elegance of fashionable life can ever impart. . . . She was a perfect model of a woman."<sup>8</sup> Jessie, then, is firmly established as a romance ideal. She speaks fluent Indian, French, Gaelic, and English with her father and sister Janet. As well, she can paddle a canoe and sew Indian fashion, both skillfully.

But this "crittur with a thousand virtues" has one vice--a stubborn pride. Her western Indian mother had a loveless, drudging marriage of convenience to her father and had bitterly taught the girl "never to trust a white man" (p. 351). Upon her death, the father moved with his girls to St. John, where they received some ill-treatment because of their colour. Jessie is often homesick and frequently bitter, even on the subject of the good "Doctor":

He thinks he loves me now, but he may not think so always.  
He don't see the red blood now, he don't think of my Indian  
mother; when he comes nearer perhaps he will see plainer.  
No, no, half-cast and out-cast, I belong to no race. Shall

<sup>8</sup> Thomas Chandler Haliburton, Nature and Human Nature (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1855), I, 108.

I go back to my tribe and give up my father and his people? they will not receive me, and I must fall asleep with my mother. Shall I stay here and cling to him and his race, that race that scorns the half-savage? never! never! when he dies I shall die too. I shall have no home then but the home of the spirits of the dead. (p.345)

It takes all of Slick's verbal skill to convince Jessie that inter-marriage happens all the time between Europeans, many of whom (like Italians and Turks) are darker-skinned than Indians (p. 350). He emphasizes their similar tastes and habits, and the Doctor's great love for her, which she reservedly reciprocates; but he gets the common sense notion into her, that: "the Doctor aint quite tame, and you aint quite wild. You are both six of one, and half-a-dozen of the other, and just about as like as two peas" (p. 348).

She had no answer for that. She had been reasoning without knowing it, as if in fact she had in reality been an Indian. She had imbibed in childhood the feelings of her mother, who had taken the first step and repented it--of one who had deserted, but not been adopted--who became an exile and remained an alien--who had bartered her birthright, for degradation and death. (p. 349)

This passage echoes the theme of the degraded Maritimes Indians which occurs in other romances of the period. Haliburton seems unaware that among the traders of the Northwest Company at that time mixed marriages were the norm, taken for granted.<sup>9</sup> Thus the social point he is trying

<sup>9</sup> I know of only one insignificant prairie story in which racial antagonism of this sort is fundamental: Robert Watson's When Christmas Came to Fort Garry (1935). This simple-minded little racist book is based on the rejection of a young man simply and only because people believe him to be a half-breed. Although the author seems to question the validity of denying Daido job advancement on racial grounds, he never challenges the assumption that marriage between a nice white girl

to make is unfortunately based on questionable premises.

Haliburton is certainly trying to point out the folly of racial prejudice, and to do so he takes a clear-cut case. The Doctor is a mild, affectionate man who loves life in the woods; Jessie is a paragon. Of course they must come together. But Jessie has a sister:

. . . who was a common-looking person, and resembled the ordinary females to be found in savage life. Stout, strong, and rather stolid, accustomed to drudge and to obey, rather than to be petted and rule; to receive, and not to give orders, and to submit from habit and choice. The one [Jessie] seemed far above, and the other [Janet] as much below, the station of their father. Jessie, though reserved, would converse if addressed; the other shunned conversation as much as possible. (p. 109)

However realistic the social problems of ignorance and prejudice are, the love story of Jessie is romance. Had it been written about Janet, an ordinary person, we might well have had a piece of early realistic fiction, as well as a story which really tried to cope with a social problem. Instead, Haliburton chose the easy conventional ideals, not the difficult realities.

Although romance dominates fiction in this category, writers after Confederation seem to concern themselves increasingly with a kind of realistic documentation. Historian Alexander Begg wrote such a novel about the Red River colony on the eve of the first rebellion. He seems to have two purposes in the novel: to extol the Red River as an area

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and a "mongrel" is out of the question, in spite of the young man's obviously superior qualities. The revelation that Daido is really all white seems to justify everything, especially the love of the Factor's daughter.



for settlement and to present an apologia for the character and causes of the Red River half-breeds,<sup>10</sup> through a satirical portrait of the Canada Movement and Charles Mair, the model for the character "Dot."

Superficially, "Dot It Down" (1871) is a conventional successful-settler romance. What is unconventional is that the nice young bachelor, George, marries the Ontario settler's daughter, Grace, only on her deathbed and soon afterward marries Nina Stone. Nina is a half-breed girl, "and, contrary to what 'Dot' in his letters to Canada tried to show regarding her country-women, she was a perfect lady in every respect."<sup>11</sup> Her family "was a fair specimen of the better class of settlers in Red River at the time of our story. They were what are called half breeds; their forefathers having intermarried with Indians. They had grown up with the country" (p. 335). George takes her back to England, where she is charming, gracious, and altogether acceptable.

On the whole, Begg is not depicting literary characters so much as he is describing political-historical entities. As Edward McCourt says of the book: "it is really an extended pamphlet which sets forth in fictional form the realities of pioneer life in the Red River Valley."<sup>12</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Dick Harrison concludes that "Dot It Down" is an example of the sympathetic attitude to native peoples found among more realistic writers of the late nineteenth century. While Begg does treat the half-breed with more than sympathy, he treats the full-blood Indians rather shabbily on the whole (see below, Chapter V, pp. 328-29). Begg's is an early work in which the characters and causes of Métis and Indian are differentiated. See Dick Harrison, Unnamed Country (Edmonton: Univ. of Alberta Press, 1977), p. 63.

<sup>11</sup> Alexander Begg, "Dot It Down" (1871; rpt. Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1973), p. 333.

<sup>12</sup> Edward McCourt, The Canadian West in Fiction, rev. ed. (Toronto:

Begg's worthy half-breeds are culturally white people with Indian ancestry, portrayed in such a way as to underline his own support of half-breed rights. The novel may document realistically the situation in the Red River Valley of the time, but its very stylized structure undercuts its value as a social document.

Social commentary is second only to religious commentary in The Warden of the Plains (1896), a collection of short stories by the well-known Alberta missionary John MacLean, and is second only to entertainment formulae in Northern Lights (1909), a collection of stories by the popular and prolific writer Gilbert Parker. Both writers depict aspects of white-Indian marriages, with MacLean primarily interested in showing the superiority of a Christian marriage over a pagan one. This he does by illustrating the degraded status of the divorced or abandoned Indian woman within the polygamous culture of the Plains Indians. The lovely, idealized girl in "Asakoa, the Chief's Daughter" suffers degradation after choosing a young lover instead of the old man arranged for her-- a familiar enough plot line--while the beautiful Napiake of "The White Man's Bride" endures virtual slave status in a polygamous wigwam after Brown, her white husband, abandons her and the children to return to England and conventional social success. Only in "Akspine" does MacLean show a happy marriage, in which the genial and humane Yorkshireman of the title marries the chief's daughter and thereafter leads his adopted people. However, in choosing this marriage, Akspine realizes

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that it would "sever him forever from his kindred and unite him forever with the Indians of the plains. He felt compelled to listen to the eloquence of his heart, and after a short struggle he decided to obey its dictates."<sup>13</sup> It is a loving and happy marriage which ends only in the death of the white chief.

Gilbert Parker varies the pace with a story of how Mitiahwe in "A Lodge in the Wilderness" plots with her mother to use charms of all sorts, both white and native, to get pregnant and thus ensure the return of her white husband who is planning a business trip--a rather slick and entertaining antidote to MacLean's gloomy tales. Parker also features a young half-breed in "Qu'Appelle" arguing with her Black-foot mother about the rights of half-breeds to claim their white heritage as well as their Indian heritage. Although the story is enriched by some valid discussion about racial problems, it is basically a piece of pure entertainment with a sentimental ending.

As in most short stories there is little room for character development, so that plot and message take precedence in these two volumes by MacLean and Parker. MacLean's are basically conventional in structure, but the realistic details and situations which he depicts--derived from extensive first-hand experience--give the Indians a real character that they lack in many nineteenth-century romances, including those of Parker. For although Parker inserts a certain amount of realistic detail, his stories are typical of popular turn-of-the-century

<sup>13</sup> John MacLean, The Warden of the Plains (Toronto: Briggs, 1896), p. 187.

short fiction, with its formulaic-romantic situations and sentimental or melodramatic resolutions.

But Parker does make a fuller and more explicit statement about white-Indian marriage in his Translation of a Savage (1898), a full-length romance in which the Indian girl Lali, because of all her natural virtues, is transformed, through marriage and understanding in-laws, into an English country gentlewoman. It depicts a resounding victory for the values of white civilization, and at all times Parker paints the white supremacist ideal in positive terms, in spite of a few weak and shallow-minded characters put in for contrast and plot development. Frank Armour in The Translation of a Savage is basically not a sympathetic young man and he does not love the Indian girl whom he cynically and selfishly marries in revenge for his family's interference in his love life in England and whom he sends home to be cared for in the bosom of his family. In spite of their initial horror, the family rallies around; and four years later Frank returns to find that his vengeance has back-fired and that Lali is an accepted part of London society, indeed the talk of the season. It remains for Frank to do prolonged penance before wooing back his wife for a happy ending.

The only Indian characters in this imperial romance are the girl and her father, the wise old chief. (The number of chief's daughters that populate fiction about Indians is quite remarkable. Of course, romance is elitist by nature; thus the white man must be of good family and the Indian must also have status in order to focus the conflict on cultural rather than class differences.) Frank writes to his family a letter seething with ironic innuendo regarding Lali's breeding, intel-

ligence, and travel, all aimed at attacking his family's expectations for his future:

. . . because he knew they were anxious that he should marry "acceptably," he had married into the aristocracy, the oldest aristocracy, of America; and because he also knew they wished him to marry wealth, he sent them a wife rich in virtues--native, unspoiled virtues. He hoped that they would take her to their hearts and cherish her. He knew their firm principles of honour. . . . He had work to do in connection with his proposed colony; and a wife--even a native wife--could not well be a companion in the circumstances. Besides, Lali . . . would be better occupied in learning the peculiarities of the life in which her future would be cast. It was possible they would find her an apt pupil. Of this they could not complain, that she was untravelled; for she had ridden a horse, bare-back, half across the continent. They could not cavil at her education, for she knew several languages--aboriginal languages--of the North. She had merely to learn the dialect of English society, and how to carry with acceptable form the costumes of the race to which she was going. Her own costume was picturesque, but it still might appear unusual in London society. Still, they could use their own judgment about that.<sup>14</sup>

Frank lives with Lali about a month, long enough to make her pregnant, as they travel to Montreal, where she and the servant board the ironically named Aphrodite for England.

However, to the surprise of most readers, Lali not only survives, but brings out the best in the society she enters, mainly because like the members of this society she is aristocratic in her bearing and manner. She is an idealized portrait of the "Indian princess"--gracious, lovely and modest--and not the "common squaw, with greasy hair, and blankets, and big mouth, and black teeth, who eats with her fingers

<sup>14</sup> Gilbert Parker, The Translation of a Savage (Toronto: Copp, Clark, 1898), pp. 18-19.

and grunts" (p. 35) that her sister-in-law Marion fears she will be. Indeed, every aspect of Lali's character which Frank described ironically, is borne out in positive fact. Themselves the best kind of English gentry, the Armours soon recognize the parallel virtues in Lali. They learn "that they had to do with a nature having capacities for sensitive feeling; which, it is sometimes thought, is only the prerogative of certain well-bred civilisations" (p. 54). Generally the Armours and the best of their associates adapt to the situation as well as Lali does.

Part of Lali's adaptation involves the gradual awareness of the implications of her husband's act, an awareness which provokes her into taking revenge by withholding all information from Frank regarding her and the child.<sup>15</sup> Thus, when the guilt-ridden Frank finally returns home he is astonished at what he finds and must do penance in order to woo back his wife. However, the effort is very hard on the loving, still idealized Lali; and she is cured of her nagging regrets and homesickness only by the death of her old father and a letter from him dissuading her from ever trying to return to the old ways of her upbringing.<sup>16</sup> Thus Lali Armour, daughter of Eye-of-the-Moon, chief of

<sup>15</sup> This motif of revenge occurs also in A. J. McLeod's little romance The Notary of Grand Pré (Boston: the Author, 1901), an Acadian-Micmac legend of events following the 1755 eviction. A child of mysterious birth is raised by a kindly Micmac and is later wooed and loved by a visiting young French nobleman, who must, however, desert her because of his family honour. Of course, her estate turns out to be as impressive as his; and although they marry, she keeps him dangling for two years to get revenge.

<sup>16</sup> The opposite form of deculturization occurs in Marius Barbeau's Mountain Cloud (1944). Here a French-Canadian trader of the mid-nine-

the Bloods, has been fully translated from an Indian "chieftainess" into an English country gentlewoman.

The ramifications are interesting. Although Parker looks kindly on the native Indian society and treats sympathetically many of the conflicts poor Lali must go through, there is an underlying white supremacist assumption that this translation is a good thing. Thus Lali avoids being a conventional satiric Noble Savage by showing up the best rather than the worst qualities in most of the people she encounters. Similarly, she avoids being a sentimental Noble Savage by responding positively to her new surroundings and adapting to the new cultural context. She accepts her position and makes the most of it, encouraged and supported, not by a patronizing sort of noblesse oblige, but by the best civilized virtues of justice, honour, and loyalty. The only sadness is that she cannot go home again. The British ideal wins out, and only passing mention is made of the dispossession of the Indian.

Even though written two decades later, Ralph Connor's The Gaspards of Pine Croft (1923) has much in common with the fiction of the turn of the century in its emphasis on Christianity and its use of formulaic elements of romance. It is the only Connor fiction I have found which depicts a white-Indian marriage: that of Hugh Gaspard and Onawata, the daughter of a Chipewyan chief. This relationship is doomed from the start because Hugh Gaspard is a weak man; intelligent, artistic, and personable, he is none the less weak in his Christian morality. His

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teenth century finds he is unable to leave the Yukon and return to Montreal: through his marriage he has become too much of an Indian.

weakness has led him to contract (in spite of a loving and devout wife) an adulterous relationship with an Indian girl whom he met while recuperating from a hunting accident in the north. Onawata is a typically idealized chief's daughter, has attended a mission school, and is quite unlike any real Chipewyan woman described by the early explorers:<sup>17</sup> "at seventeen she was a sweet, clean well educated Indian maid of rare intelligence and rarer beauty, the pride of the tribe which she ruled like a queen and the centre and delight of her father's life."<sup>18</sup> When five years later, complete with new skills in English and their little son Peter, Onawata comes to be with her man, she is stunned and heart-sick to find out that he is already married. In turn, the shock of discovering her husband's infidelity drives the delicate Marion to an early grave.

Onawata's liaison with Hugh Gaspard is fundamentally not a happy one, and Onawata sacrifices a great deal to marry and live with Hugh. She also suffers extremely as she watches Hugh's moral collapse through drink and gambling. More realistically, the Gaspard's former friends have difficulty coping with Onawata's shy reserve, with her Roman Catholic training (unusual for a Connor Christian), and with the whole history of the relationship. However, her stepson Paul is devoted to her, and even the neighbours come to a reluctant acceptance of the eccentric marriage because it is a Christian marriage and Onawata is close to

<sup>17</sup> E.g. Samuel Hearne, A Journey from Prince of Wales's Fort in Hudson's Bay (London, 1795; rpt. Amsterdam: N. Israel, 1968), pp. 102-08.

<sup>18</sup> Ralph Connor [pseud. Charles William Gordon], The Gaspards of Pine Croft (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1923), p. 51.



being an ideal Connor woman: devoted wife, mother, and Christian. Nevertheless, in spite of some unusual ingredients, The Gaspards of Pine Croft does not go beyond the formulae of Connor's later Christian romances.

With the 1940's and 1950's writers with a social interest in Indian-white marriages seem to find new fascination in the figure of the abandoned or rejected Indian wife or sweetheart.<sup>19</sup> Brown, the deserting Englishman in MacLean's "The White Man's Bride," may have gone back home to success without regrets, but not so Angus Munro of Niven's The Flying Years (1942). This book is an early and good example of a realistic historical novel, in which none of the potential romance situations fulfills itself in a conventional manner. The white wife and the Indian wife never know about each other; the Indian wife, Minota, dies in a measles epidemic well before Angus marries the white wife, Fiona, and he never has the courage to tell Fiona of her predecessor. The half-breed son, All-Alone, accidentally discovered because of a ring which Angus had given Minota, is never told that he has a white father, lest it "might make him ashamed."<sup>20</sup> So although the white-Indian marriage theme dominates the novel, there are no romantic turns of plot.

<sup>19</sup> Frederick Niven's Mine Inheritance (London: Collins, 1940) is an exception. Set at the time of the Selkirk settlers, it depicts the love and marriage of the narrator and a half-breed girl (his cousin, he later learns); she unfortunately dies in childbirth the day of the Seven Oaks Massacre.

<sup>20</sup> Frederick Niven, The Flying Years, introd. Jan de Bruyn (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974), p. 125.

The focus is instead on the internal struggles of a generous-spirited, humane, kindly man, who has a "kink" for Indians, yet who never resolves this "kink" with external social pressures. Even at the beginning he is unsure of himself:

What was the depth of his love? What was the depth of hers? Her eyes had clouded when, her promise to be his woman given, he had said that they had better have it written down at the Fort; but she had not asked, instead, for a prayer-book ceremony. Minota would have gone with him even without that.  
(p. 41)

And consequently he tells no one about Minota or All-Along in spite of his long concern with the career and family of his half-breed son.

The marriage of a white man to an Indian in The Flying Years is not a symbolic statement, but instead a device for making possible the revelation of many Plains Indian customs and many social attitudes.<sup>21</sup> The novel takes place against a sketched historical background which includes such events as the signing of Treaty No. 7 in 1877, the disappearance of the buffalo, the two Riel Rebellions, the coming of the railroad and settlers, and the Great War. But the attitude is as objective and non-romantic as is possible in historical fiction, where hindsight tempts a writer to simplify the forces of good and bad. There are no "good guys" and "bad guys" in The Flying Years, merely

<sup>21</sup> Niven's friendship with the Blackfoot people is discussed in his article "Amerindian," Dalhousie Review, 19 (1939), 143-46. Nan Shipley also uses her (probably) juvenile romance The Scarlet Lily (1959) to document the life of the plains Indians of the late nineteenth century. As well, she uses the novel to make a strong statement about the injustice of race prejudice through the exceptional Indian characters, David and Tanis Hunter, a wealthy and educated Cree brother and sister. Romantic formulae abound in spite of the superficial realism.

a group of people with normal human reactions and a protagonist with a developed conscience. Minota is beautiful, loyal, and in love, and she teaches Munro much that is worthwhile; but she is no coy, dusky maiden expiring of a broken heart in a lonely tepee. All-Alone is intelligent and quite ambitious, but no Noble Savage. And Angus Munro's guilt is not a grand or crippling passion, only a nagging presence which he never really copes with. Niven has written a chronicle novel in which there are no heroes, no villains, and no romantic resolutions. It is a rare example in Canadian fiction about Indians, a story in which romance elements have been assiduously circumvented.

Grace Campbell treats the theme of the deserted Indian wife in a sub-plot to her Thorn-Apple Tree (1942). Set in Ontario's Glengarry County in the late eighteenth century, the narrative concerns the domestic life of Michael and Fairlie Ross and the trading life of Michael. The pastoral setting is quite conventional; but in the story of Red Hugh McDonnell and Lowanna the Cree, Campbell shows the influence of the trend to realism of the period and focuses on many of the purely social aspects of the relationship.

Red Hugh McDonnell is an irresponsible and selfish man, a neighbour to Michael and Fairlie and a sometime trading colleague of Michael's. Typically of many traders, Hugh has "married" a lovely Indian girl whom he met out West and whom he left there when he returned East. And like many Indian girls in fiction, Lowanna loves Hugh enough to come in search of him. But Campbell refrains from sentimentalizing the affair: although Lowanna is pretty, she seems a bit flashy or vulgar beside the prim Scottish wives of the settlement. The Ross's

servant Janet (like one of Susanna Moodie's servants) will not remain in the same house as a wild Indian and demands that Lowanna be put out.<sup>22</sup> In the manner of the polygamous Plains Indians, Lowanna sees no impediment to sharing a household with Hugh's white wife Nora; but Nora is understandably appalled at the idea, which is contrary to all her ideas of marriage. We also learn later that Kinochas, Lowanna's one-time Indian suitor, does not pine away over Lowanna, but happily marries another pretty Indian girl and is hardly interested in the news of Lowanna's death.

Some romantic overtones of the Noble Savage do remain, however. For example, when Fairlie asks Lowanna to move out, the Indian girl regards her with contempt, and Fairlie had to admit that "there was a certain dark nobility about Lowanna" (p. 107). But it did not make the Indian girl's presence any less of a nuisance and disruption. The most melodramatic event occurs when Hugh himself tells Lowanna to leave-- that she can drown herself for all he cares (p. 120). Obedient in her naive and devoted way, Lowanna does precisely that. Many members of the community are left with a feeling of guilty responsibility for the fate of the young Indian woman.

Only in this theme of the deserted woman do archetypal overtones contend with the more obvious social facts. The archetype is here that in which the lover (and helper) is sacrificed to the cultural imperatives of the hero. In Greek myth the rational Athenian Theseus success-

<sup>22</sup> Grace Campbell, Thorn-Apple Tree (Toronto: Collins, 1942), p. 102.

fully dares the bestial depths of the labyrinth with the help of the king's daughter, who loves him and whom he later deserts. Ariadne becomes the archetype of nearly every abandoned Indian wife or sweetheart in Canadian fiction; indeed she is the archetype of a vast sisterhood, as any quick glance at Fairchild will indicate.<sup>23</sup>

A much more mechanical blending of the elements of romance and realism occurs in Fred Bodsworth's The Strange One (1959), a fiction structured on three "mixed marriages": the incompatible marriage of Mary Cameron, a jilted Glasgow English teacher, with Sammy MacDonald, an illiterate Hebridean crofter; the accidental mating of a Hebridean barnacle goose with a Canada goose; and the courtship of Rory MacDonald, son of Mary and Sammy, and Kanina Beaverskin, a beautiful young Swampy Cree school teacher. Some years ago in a television interview, Fred Bodsworth said the book began as a bird study and that the people took it over. Certainly it is a rather improbable contrivance to have a white male Barnacle goose and a white man, both from Barra, find a way through storm and by chance to the same part of Northern Canada to court brown females--the Canada goose and the Indian girl respectively. It comes as no surprise that the young couple see the geese as symbols of themselves: will the mating instinct prevail over traditional migratory patterns for the birds? will love triumph over social pressures? The reader hopes for a positive answer and the narrative is romance enough to provide it. The marriage of Rory's parents serves as a

<sup>23</sup> Fairchild in The Noble Savage (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1928) summarizes many romances, mostly English, in which a native woman is deserted by a white man.

comment on what really makes a disastrous marriage: a lack of equality in education and of shared interests. Race, Bodsworth implies, is not a deterrent to a successful marriage.

From an Indian point of view the book has been praised for its accurate depiction of Indian life.<sup>24</sup> From a literary point of view Elliott Gose criticizes the romantic-realistic mixture in the book:

. . . isn't the situation falsified by the author's giving the girl superior intelligence and striking beauty, by white standards? These attributes are fit trappings for romance but not for creating "real" problems, as the author seems to wish to do. To give Mr. Bodsworth credit, however, he does put the girl in many realistic situations, most of them having to do with her relation to the tribe and its environment (the conflicts in civilization of both protagonists tend to be over-simplified and melodramatic).<sup>25</sup>

I quarrel with Gose's denunciation of the romance trappings. If Kanina were not pretty, she would not have attracted Rory; and if one bears in mind Alexander MacKenzie's observation of the superior beauty of the Swampy Cree (Knistenaux) women, the detail may be considered realistic.<sup>26</sup> If Kanina were not of superior intelligence, she would not have achieved sufficiently in white society to become a teacher and thus come into a position of professional conflict. Besides, Bodsworth may well mean that if this beautiful, intelligent girl cannot gain acceptance in the

<sup>24</sup> By an Indian reviewer, Indian Magazine, C.B.C. Radio, 23 Jan. 1971.

<sup>25</sup> Elliott Gose, "The Elements of Nature, the Atoms of Society," rev. of The Strange One, by Fred Bodsworth, Canadian Literature, No. 5 (1960), p. 79.

<sup>26</sup> Alexander MacKenzie, Voyages from Montreal on the River Saint Lawrence (London, 1801; rpt. Ann Arbor: Univ. Microfilms, 1966), p. xcv.

white community, what ordinary Indian can hope for acceptance? Prof. Gose should also bear in mind when he refers to realistic environmental situations that a killing winter such as that described (however realistically) in The Strange One is not typical and is as much a romance convention as any other aberration of nature which a hero must survive. However, one must acknowledge that Bodsworth shares the tendency, which one saw earlier in Haliburton, to focus on the most patrician of native peoples to make a point.

Actually, in all the fiction discussed in this section the Indian lovers or mates have been exceptional in their personal endowments; all have been more than usually attractive, all were intelligent (often educated), nearly all were endowed with considerable sensitivity, and most had connections with a chief. However, almost all the romances which end happily for the lovers should be considered popular romances in the sense that the authors seem to wish to reassure the reader that prevailing proprieties of religion and social equality are not incompatible with racial tolerance and that there is a place for the "right sort of Indian" in society. The few works which do not end happily for the lovers--Bellegarde, The Flying Years, and Thorn-Apple Tree--seem to be more realistic in their intent; the first reflects some of the fictional realism still present in pre-Victorian colonial literature, and the other two, particularly The Flying Years, are definitely affected by the realistic Canadian novel of the second quarter of the twentieth century.

## 2. Proprieties and Historical Fiction in the Nineteenth Century

Although nineteenth-century society was concerned with social proprieties in the realm of Indian-white relations, there are several works of historical fiction which reflect more subjective concerns, and do so in the popular form of the day--the romance. However, just as the author of the pre-Victorian Bellegarde modified the concept of the Noble Savage, so John Richardson in Wacousta (also published in 1832) adapts the conventions of romance to his own view of the realities of his subject. Although he is working within the mode of historical romance popularized by Sir Walter Scott in England and James Fenimore Cooper in the United States, Richardson virtually reverses a number of the conventions associated with the romance. Richardson does depict villainy and heroism, innocence and evil, but he rarely loses the realistic sense of life's ambiguities. His works are called romance because that was the currently popular form, but Wacousta and its successor The Canadian Brothers (1840) have, as Klinck suggests, as much affinity with revenge tragedy as with gothic romance.<sup>27</sup>

Many commentators like to suggest an influence of Cooper on Richardson,<sup>28</sup> but I agree with Casselman that "it is doubtful that

<sup>27</sup> Carl F. Klinck, introd., Wacousta (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1967), pp. v-vi. L. R. Early persuasively expands on this connection with Jacobean revenge tragedy in his article "Myth and Prejudice in Kirby, Richardson, and Parker," Canadian Literature, No. 81 (1979), pp. 24-36. This affinity with revenge tragedy probably lies behind Margot Northey's difficulty in forcing Wacousta into her Procrustean bed of gothic romance. See The Haunted Wilderness (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1976), pp. 18-26.

<sup>28</sup> Leslie Monkman argues for extensive influence of Cooper on



Richardson owes more to Cooper's work than the bare suggestion that a romance dealing with the Canadian Indian would prove both popular and successful."<sup>29</sup> The cultural mythos and the treatment of the conventional and primitive are quite different: Natty Bumppo, the bachelor and loner always lighting out for the frontier, leading a life suitable for boys' adventure stories;<sup>30</sup> and the garrison of beleaguered men and women in the middle of a hostile nature in which the natural order of birth, copulation and death is always implied, if not asserted.<sup>31</sup> Nor does miscegeny hold the horror for Richardson that it does for Cooper, whose Leatherstocking mutters incessantly about "red gifts" and "white gifts" and "not bearing a cross."

Richardson possesses a sense of the ambivalence of human behaviour which extends to some extent to his Indian characters, at least in his earlier works. Richardson knew Indians in a way Cooper never did, and

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Richardson, an argument which he bases on the 1851 preface to Wacousta, where Richardson claims to have been much influenced by the popular American writer. This influence may well apply in some degree to the Chicago romances, but evidence for extensive influence on Wacousta is much less convincing. Richardson's rather notorious opportunism, his American residence in 1851, and his desperate finances at that time would suggest that the claim is likely a publicity gesture for the reissue of the book. See Leslie Monkman, "Richardson's Indians," Canadian Literature, No. 81 (1979), p. 87.

<sup>29</sup> Alexander Clark Casselman, ed., Richardson's War of 1812, by John Richardson (Toronto: Historical Publishing, 1902), p. xix.

<sup>30</sup> See Leslie A. Fiedler, Love and Death in the American Novel, rev. ed. (New York: Stein and Day, 1966), passim.

<sup>31</sup> See D. G. Jones, Butterfly on Rock (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1970) and John Moss, Sex and Violence in the Canadian Novel (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1977).

many critics consider Richardson's delineation the more accurate.<sup>32</sup> He not only fought along side Tecumseh's Indians in the War of 1812, but his own grandmother was an Indian, possibly an Ottawa,<sup>33</sup> and his oldest uncle was married to an Indian and actively engaged in Indian affairs. His grandparents Askin were favourably disposed to Indians: he as a trader and she (the second Mrs. Askin) as a French resident in Detroit at the time of Pontiac's siege. Also, as a boy, Richardson had frequent and easy contact with the Indians of the Detroit River area.

As already mentioned, one of the important features of Wacousta is the realist's sense of ambiguity. In spite of the romance framework with virtue and villainy heightened beyond the norms of reality and with the characters given subjective dimensions, we do not weep for the innocent, hiss the villain, and cheer the hero, because it becomes difficult to decide which is which. We are not asked to sympathize with outraged innocence: Clara and the effeminate Charles de Haldimar are virtually snivelling anachronisms, and their effete friend Sir Everard Valletort is only slightly more sympathetic. And yet in conventional romance we would be asked to identify with them as the epitome of civilized virtue. The romance conflict between civilization and the wilderness is not resolved by the unambiguous triumph of civilization. The effeteness which Peter Thorslev, Jr. attributes to the refinements of

<sup>32</sup> E. g. Casselman, p. xv; cf. David R. Beasley, The Canadian Don Quixote (Erin, Ont.: Porcupine's Quill, 1977), p. 176.

<sup>33</sup> John Askin, John Askin Papers, ed. Milo M. Quaife (Detroit: Detroit Library Commission, 1928), pp. 12-15; see also Beasley, pp. 9-13.

civilization is a weakness which even a garrison cannot protect.<sup>34</sup>

Perhaps we have here a particularly Canadian type of romance, which cannot permit survival without the ability to compromise.<sup>35</sup>

But in Wacousta Richardson is, I believe, indirectly attacking a version of the sentimental Noble Savage: the child of nature, usually a girl, "who is born and grows to maturity in the heart of some wild region untouched by civilization, and who imbibes beauty, innocence and an unerring moral sense from the scenery which surrounds her."<sup>36</sup> Clara Beverley is such a girl. However, her ignorance of men's vices is matched by her ignorance of social virtues, such as loyalty, and she is easily corrupted by the smooth de Haldimar, like Eve by the serpent. She hardly deserves the idealization she receives from Wacousta as she has not the strength to survive either morally or physically and is clearly wrong when she accepts the civilized de Haldimar and rejects the natural man who becomes Wacousta.

Actually, few works of Canadian fiction illustrate more remarkably than Wacousta Frye's concept of the beleaguered garrison, Jones's theory

<sup>34</sup> Peter Thorslev, Jr., "The Wild Man's Revenge," in The Wild Man Within, ed. Edward Dudley and Maximillian E. Novak (Pittsburg: Univ. of Pittsburg Press, 1972), p. 282.

<sup>35</sup> Robin D. Mathews has explained this phenomenon most interestingly in political terms in his article "The Wacousta Factor." He sees Richardson as rejecting the extremes of romantic American individualism (Wacousta) and rigid British authoritarianism (de Haldimar) in favour of enlightened, practical Canadian community development (the Frederick de Haldimars, Oucanasta, and her brother). See Figures in a Ground, ed. Diane Bessai and David Jackel (Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1978), pp. 295-316.

<sup>36</sup> Fairchild, p. 366.

that the garrison can survive only by coming to terms with the surrounding wilderness, and Atwood's theory that survival is paramount--all related elements of a theory of the Canadian imagination.<sup>37</sup> It is even possible to see Col. de Haldimar and Wacousta as a single personality schizophrenically divided into its civilized and primitive components. Among the principal characters, only those who form a liaison with the wilderness are equipped to survive.

In this respect Richardson is closer in spirit to the primitivism of D. H. Lawrence than to the sentimental primitivism of his day, a convention which he treats with contempt not only in Wacousta, but in his last work Westbrook. Indians only pass along the periphery of this War of 1812 story, but Westbrook himself is a gothic villain of major proportions, as he vengefully throws his new-born grandson to the wolves, which rear the child rather than destroying it. However, when the child is discovered a year and a half later, his appearance and manner are contrary to all conventions of sentimental primitivism: naked, dirty, and "of idiotic expression of countenance."<sup>38</sup> This picture is not from a writer who believes in the natural goodness of man.

It is a commonplace that Indians are equated with the wilderness. Carl Ballstadt sees Richardson as "consciously or unconsciously, grappling with the white man's alien status in the North American wilder-

<sup>37</sup> Northrop Frye, Conclusion, The Literary History of Canada, ed. Carl F. Klinck (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1965), pp. 830-31; D. G. Jones, Butterfly on Rock, pp. 36-37; Margaret Atwood, Survival (Toronto: Anansi, 1972).

<sup>38</sup> John Richardson, Westbrook (Montreal: Grant Woolmer, 1973), p. 70.

ness." In so doing he sharply delineates "the conflict of European rigidity and order with North American spontaneity and personal justice."<sup>39</sup> The conflict then takes on archetypal and psychological implications; the revenge in Wacousta has all the primal drive of an Old Testament story. Herein lies its true dimension as romance.

Basically, Col. de Haldimar is not a gothic villain, but a dark tragic character whose early treachery turns on him at a moment of great familial happiness and security and military control; he is loved by his children and respected by his officers and men. (His downfall is more from the downward movement of the Elizabethan wheel of fortune than from an Aristotelian frailty or error.) But coincidentally the night the garrison defenses are betrayed, not only does Wacousta enter to terrorize the colonel, but the heroic Frederick goes out of the garrison with an Indian. The breach in the defenses allows the two-way movement of wilderness and civilization.

Wacousta is introduced as a romance antagonist. To the rest of the garrison he is an Indian, and a rather spectacular one at that. Only Col. de Haldimar recognizes him as the long-suppressed guilt figure of his past. Doubly wronged--deprived of both love and honour--Wacousta has become almost supernatural in his vengeance. Dishonoured, he has become an outlaw; unloved, he has become a monster, who turns his former passionate excitement with life into a passionate commitment to death. Huge in stature, prodigious in strength and cunning, he

<sup>39</sup> Carl Ballstadt, ed. Major John Richardson (Montreal: Lawrence M. Lande Foundation, McGill Univ., 1972), pp. 8-9.

manipulates the prevailing discontent of Pontiac's Indians to his own ends, to fan the flame of anti-British feeling already lit by the French. He becomes as one with the wilderness, the leader of its inhabitants.

Only three Indians in Wacousta are individualized: the historical Pontiac (to be discussed below, Chapter IV), the girl Oucanasta, and the young chief, her brother. Oucanasta and her brother, as fabricated characters, seem less real than the great chief Pontiac and are more in keeping with abstractions of romance: they are simple agents of good (i.e. for the whites) in a wilderness of terror. Oucanasta is Richardson's version of the legendary female who warned the garrison of the impending massacre. While her interest in Frederick de Haldimar is never made explicit, it seems to be a debt of gratitude with sexual overtones. Indeed, this underlying sexuality is the main reason for examining Richardson's work in this chapter.

There are no really villainous Indians in Wacousta, and even the villains de Haldimar and Wacousta are not clear-cut. Wacousta is sympathetic because he is righting an enormous injustice, and even de Haldimar is softened by the love of his family and the initial respect of his officers and men. However, realism is almost completely lacking in the depiction of the Indian characters in Hardscrabble (1850?) and Wau-Nan-Gee (1852), the first two of what appears to have been intended as a trilogy of short romances about the fall of Fort Dearborn and the subsequent massacre of its retreating inhabitants.

The realism of garrison life and the melodrama of the massacre will be discussed below in Chapter IV; however, there is a sexual

dimension to these two fictions that is quite unsubtle compared with what was revealed in Wacousta, in spite of some modifications of conventions. The chief Indian interest in the two later books is Wau-nan-gee, the "remarkably handsome and noble-looking" son of Winnebeg, chief of the friendly Pottowatomies and a trusted friend of the garrison. It is this young man who inspires Mrs. Elmsley to say to Maria Heywood that both Ronayne (Maria's intended) and the young Indian are so handsome it would be hard to choose between them.<sup>40</sup> One may conclude, then, that whatever the outcome of this romance, racism will not figure as such. Wau-nan-gee is clearly a model Indian youth, well-bred, brave, and very worthy--reminiscent of Bellegarde. Although he immediately falls for Maria, upon learning that she is Ronayne's squaw, he pledges her his friendship, rather in the way Oucanasta pledged hers to Frederick de Haldimar and Bellegarde to Matilda. The incidents here form the activating circumstance for the sequel. Maria has felt a kind of fatalism surrounding her meeting with Wau-nan-gee, a feeling which is enforced by a brief scene at her wedding to Ronayne: Wau-nan-gee, beautifully groomed and elegantly dressed, picks up the dropped wedding ring and tries himself to put it on Maria's finger. But when denied the privilege, he leaves with a clouded brow. Once again Richardson has modified the portrait of what otherwise would have been a clear-cut Noble Savage: Noble Savages are not supposed to be jealous.

What realistic modifications exist in Hardscrabble are completely

<sup>40</sup> John Richardson, Hardscrabble (New York: Robert M. De Witt, 1856), p. 90.

absent from the Indian portraits in Wau-Nan-Gee, where virtue and villainy are heightened to a degree not otherwise found in Richardson's American romances (apart from Westbrook). In spite of the same psychological pattern as exists in Wacousta, in which an enterprising officer breaks the garrison discipline to go to his Indian associates (he even disguises himself as an Indian to effect his egress), the overtones created by the two-way movement in the earlier work are missing here, and the texture suffers accordingly. Perhaps Richardson hoped that, by imitating the clear "good-Injun-bad-Injun" conflict that Cooper used, he would reach some of that author's success.

Winnebег and Wau-nan-gee seem to be fuller developments of Oucanasta and her brother in Wacousta; and the sexual interest of Wau-nan-gee in Maria helps reinforce the idea that sex played a role in Oucanasta's behaviour. It is Wau-nan-gee who is suspected of abducting Maria and stirring up the unrest among the Indians. At the same time, however, he is constantly described as beautiful, brave, and generous; and although he is obviously in love with Maria, he respects her as the wife of his friend Ronayne. His continued communications with the fort make it clear that he is not an enemy, even though everyone believes Maria has deserted her husband for the handsome youth. He is probably Richardson's most idealized Indian character.

The real perpetrator of the unrest is Pee-to-tum, the only Indian villain in Richardson's work and one in a line with Wacousta, Jeremiah Desborough (the American son of Wacousta and Ellen Halloway in The Canadian Brothers), and Westbrook. Like the last-named villain, Pee-to-tum has nothing but his own pride, lust, and generally evil character



to motivate his treachery. Like Wacousta, he is an outsider who uses legitimate Indian grievances for his own ends, in this case a lust for power. He is not a Pottowatomie, "but a sort of mongrel Chippewa, adopted in the tribe for his untamably fiendish disposition, connected with certain other mere animal qualities. . . ." <sup>41</sup> Later Capt. Headley confronts him: "You are of that dark and malignant race, as far below the Pottowatomie in everything that is noble and generous and good as the Evil Spirit is below the Good Spirit" (p. 80). No passage summarizes more clearly the romantic confrontation between Good and Evil that Richardson obviously intended in the characters of Wau-nan-gee and Pee-to-tum.

Pee-to-tum has not one redeeming feature. He is repulsive-looking, spits in Headley's face, grinds his Presidential medal in the dirt, demands liquor and ammunition, scalps one of the soldiers in a "half-drunken" state (p. 106), rapes Maria Ronayne because her great beauty has fired his lust, and leads the restless young warriors in rebellion against the authority of Winnebeg. In every way he is the antithesis of the idealized Wau-nan-gee. In raping Maria and cannibalizing the bodies of the victims of the massacre (see below, Chapter III) Pee-to-tum comes to personify every insult one human being can offer to the person and body of another. He is a living nightmare of all one's deepest fears.

Since Wau-Nan-Gee is based on historical fact, the tragic outcome

<sup>41</sup> John Richardson, Wau-Nan-Gee (New York: H. Long, 1852), p. 75.

of the retreat from Fort Dearborn is predetermined. However, Richardson offers no romantic resolution to the fictional story. As Ronayne dies from his wounds, he commits his beloved Maria to the love and protection of Wau-nan-gee, satisfied that he has avenged Pee-to-tum's boasted rape of his wife. However, like Ellen Halloway in Wacousta, Maria is quite unhinged by her experiences; and although she keeps Wau-nan-gee to his promise, she says: "This and more have your cursed people done, Wau-nan-gee! I shall ever hate to look upon an Indian face again!" (p. 117). Although visibly upset, the loyal, noble youth leaves with Maria the next morning. Indications are that Richardson considered a third volume on their adventures, but it was never written.<sup>42</sup> This final outburst by Maria is a unique case, I believe, of a sympathetic Richardson character making negative generalizations about Indians; but of course she is mad.

It is odd that Richardson with his own mixed blood should have painted union between white and Indian in such basically gloomy terms: Oucanasta and Wau-nan-gee, the most generous and self-sacrificing Indians, become, respectively, a friend of and tutor to the Frederick de Haldimars and guardian to a mad woman. There is a tragic implication

<sup>42</sup> Beasley suggests that the subject matter of the third book was the reason it was never published: "Love between Indian and white, when rarely written about, was glossed over with noble romantic sentiment. The inhibition about sexual intercourse in American writing became all the stronger on the subject of inter-racial sexual intercourse. . . . Richardson would have treated the relationship between the widowed Maria and the sensuous, though high-minded Wau-nan-gee . . . with realism. He knew the Indian's attitude to love, that it was practical and erotic, never sentimental" (p. 176). However, Richardson's death may be the reason for the missing third book.

that the good Indian suppresses his individuality to become a friendly servant to white people, supervising their wilderness education. It is part of the dual myth of the alien white's personal adjustment to a hostile wilderness and the white conquest of the land.

As well, there is a heart of darkness theme in Richardson's work which is not limited to the Canadian imagination. As Peter Thorslev puts it:

The Wild Man has come to stand as a symbol not only for what we have lost in becoming civilized but also for what we have repressed. . . . In the nineteenth century . . . when the civilized man looked within to discover his primitive unconscious, ever more frequently it was not the brave and open face of the Noble Savage which greeted him, but the dark face of Dionysius.<sup>43</sup>

In this respect Richardson has made an important statement in the character of Wacousta, the passionate man who is treacherously stripped of the restraints of civilized life--love and honour--and who submerges himself in the abomination. "Restraint . . . is the saving grace of civilization."<sup>44</sup> The idea of "going savage," or going "beyond the pale" into unrestrained barbarity when one is otherwise educated is a common nineteenth-century theme: the idea of the wrongness of reverting to an early stage of cultural development. But this "going savage" also involves a sexual element, which in its positive aspect forms a basis for much Canadian fiction in which native lovers occur and for which Richardson provides a prototype in Wacousta. None of Richardson's later works

<sup>43</sup> Thorslev, p. 298.

<sup>44</sup> Beasley, p. 65.

treats the theme of the white man's relation to the wilderness with the complexity found in this earlier work.

Three other romances of the mid-nineteenth century manage to avoid depicting marriage between white and Indian, but in only one are there any suggestions of racism. In Ottawah, the Last Chief of the Red Indians of Newfoundland (1847) the pending marriage of the white girl Adalie and the young Indian chief Ahtomah ends in their death in the face of a Micmac attack. In Argimou: A Legend of the Micmac (1847) there are conveniently two couples, one Indian and one white, so no question of inter-marriage arises. And in Nomades of the West (1850) the white hero wins out over the red hero, both of whom love the same white girl, by dint of the convention of prior claim.

Although Ottawah deals with the decline of the Beothuk Indians of Newfoundland, the setting is the early seventeenth century, well before the extinction of the Beothuks in the early nineteenth century. The basic situation of the romance is similar to that of The Tempest, and is contrived to be so, judging by the several quotations from the play which appear as chapter epigraphs. In a cave on an Indian holy mountain on the long arm of Newfoundland live the white man Exile, his daughter Adalie, and Shahdac, an unfairly dishonoured Beothuk. Although Caliban-like Shahdac performs the menial chores of the cavern, he is characterized, as is Adalie, by terms of childlike awe and wonder. And like most of the "good" Indians in the story, he is shown as aware of his "simplicity" and skin colour.

In a recent article on the book, E. J. Devereux emphasizes the explicit racism in the book, where the salvation of the Indians seems to

lie in the adopting of white ways by the hereditary chief:

This is shown in the nobility of the aged Ottawa, an equal to the unnamed white hero of the book; in the corresponding virtue of his son Ahtomah, who accepts white values in his love for the white exile's daughter Adalie. . . . The first signs of love between Ahtomah and Adalie lead the old white man, despite his self-assumed role as saviour of the Beothuks, to exclaim that his "blood must not mingle with a savage race," since Adalie is "doomed to become the bride of a white man" (p. 54), ignoring the fact that Ahtomah is the only eligible man his Miranda can meet.<sup>45</sup>

However, Devereux is not being altogether fair, because Ahtomah is also race-conscious. As he is falling in love with Adalie, he reflects that he has been conditioned to hate white skin and laments that "the future chiefs of the red men might be pale like thee."<sup>46</sup> The rediscovery (followed by the almost immediate death) of Ahtomah's original intended, Manamana, paves the way for the union of Adalie and Ahtomah. However, the final great battle with the Micmacs prevents the marriage: as the victorious Micmacs approach, the young couple together throw themselves over a cliff. As Devereux puts it: "and so the novel ends, in a melodrama verging on the ludicrous, with an elegy to a paternalism that might have been" (p. 358).

Concern with the doomed Indian is also very strong in Douglas Huyghue's earlier romance Argimou although this concern does not touch the two love affairs featured. This historical romance, set in 1755 at

<sup>45</sup> E. J. Devereux, "The Beothuk Indians of Newfoundland in Fact and Fiction," Dalhousie Review, 50 (1970-71), 352-53. This article provides a good summary of the rare and forgettable Ottawah.

<sup>46</sup> Ottawah (London: Appleyard, [1847]), p. 74.

the time of Monckton's conquest of Fort Beauséjour, is a comic adventure romance in which two pairs of lovers, one Indian and one white, go through a series of trials before being united. The male half of one couple is Argimou, the young chief of the Micmac, a pure, idealized Indian--intelligent, honest, and brave:

His height was rather above that of his brethren, and to proportions of faultless symmetry were joined a degree of strength and agility which excited the wonder and admiration of the warlike tribes. . . . he was never known to quail at the face of man, or to falter upon a trail . . . he walked straightforward without looking another way, and carried an open palm . . . he never let the grass grow over the memory of a good deed, but, with the unrelenting constancy of his race, an injury was never forgotten.<sup>47</sup>

A true romance hero and a perfect Noble Savage! His white counterpart, Edward Molesworth, is no less conventional; he is an adventurous young English gentleman "of good family and prospects" (p. 13), who has come out for the romance of the New World.

The female object in Argimou's life is a beautiful young Milicete, a granddaughter of the Baron St. Castin, "whose romantic residence among the aborigines, forms so novel an episode in the early history of Acadia" (p. 6).<sup>48</sup> Thus she is one quarter white and of fairer complexion than most Indian girls. She is an ideal of young maidenhood, in the Noble Savage tradition:

<sup>47</sup> Douglas S. Huyghue, Argimou, by "Eugene" [pseud.] (Halifax: Morning Courier Office, 1847), p. 4.

<sup>48</sup> For further information about St. Castin, see Gorham Munson, "St. Castin: A Legend Revised," Dalhousie Review, 45 (1965), 338-60.

This gentle creature, whose unstudied graces and unaffected delicacy would have shamed the artificial allurements of many a fashionable belle, if the symmetry of her round unshackled limbs--the surpassing beauty of the small hand and foot, did not create a sensation of mingled wonder and envy, answered to the name of Waswetchcul, by interpretation--"the flower of the wilderness." (p. 6)

In the fashion of Victorian romance, Waswetchcul is orphaned:

. . . [she is under] the care of an uncle, a proud, gloomy savage of avaricious propensities, and his wife, an aged squaw, whose withered aspect and sharp grating voice, presented a painful contrast to the fresh budding charms and musical tones of the wild flower, doomed to languish within the precincts of her cankering influence. (p. 6)

The uncle has joined with the Micmac for the sake of plunder and will marry his young ward to an aged Penobscot. Argimou has vowed to prevent this unnatural union: it is an old story.

Edward Molesworth's beloved is one Clarence Forbes, the only daughter of the widowed Capt. Forbes of the garrison, and a perfect specimen of blue-eyed goodness and grace. During her removal from Fort Cumberland to Fort Beauséjour, the group is ambushed by Indians. In the ensuing battle Clarence is abducted and happily finds herself among the Milicete, under the thoughtful care of Waswetchcul. Owing his life to Edward's intervention, Argimou volunteers to repay his debt by guiding Edward to his lost "sunbeam." The rest of the short romance involves the successful rescue of the two maidens.

Although in the two romantic liaisons there is no conflict between nature and civilization, there is considerable discussion of the matter and Huyghue relies heavily on the conventions of sentimental primitivism. Throughout the search he comments on the equality of goodness in Edward

and Argimou; he reflects on the worthlessness of civilized knowledge in the wilds and on the vitiating propensities of civilized luxuries; he also makes Edward comment on white barbarity, as shown in such incidents as the Schenectady massacre and the bounty both English and French offer for scalps (p. 42). Only Dennis, the bumbling Irish servant who accompanies them, presents a more realistic voice and some comic relief: he frequently reminds us that Nature can cause cold and misery and is not always an expression of Divine Goodness (p. 40).

Structurally more complex, Huyghue's later work, Nomades of the West, is also pure romance, but more interesting in plot and character, in spite of Fred Cogswell's dismissing both works as "stereotyped in character, rhetorical in style, and melodramatic in plot."<sup>49</sup> (It does, however, suffer from the rather turgid rhetoric of much nineteenth century fiction). Nomades of the West is a three-volume quest romance on a scale reminiscent of medieval romance or the more recent Lord of the Rings. After an initial massacre, captivity, shipwreck, and another captivity, four men set out on a western quest in the 1690's to retrieve Ellen Clayton, who has been abducted by a demented medicine man. After many adventures travelling through the Mid-West and central American Plains, Ellen is found in a hidden mountain paradise somewhere in the Rockies, where a noble remnant of the ancient Toltecs lives in secrecy. Ellen's abductor lurks Gollom-like in the background and eventually

<sup>49</sup> Fred Cogswell, "Literary Activity in the Maritime Provinces, 1815-1880," in The Literary History of Canada, p. 110. This kind of negative summary is typical of critics who do not like the romance as a form and who ignore anything beyond the formulaic aspects of the narrative.



meets his deserved end.

That Douglas Huyghue definitely believes in the Noble Savage is clear from his Preface:

Civilization has triumphed, and the New World now owns the sovereignty of the European. The tide of emigration sweeps in a continuous surge across the vast continent of North America; from sea to sea. The last barrier of the Indian's domain is riven asunder, his most sacred right violated, his latest hope crushed.

Now I have lived in the wigwam of the Red Man; I have smoked, talked, and hunted with him; I have trusted him with money; and whenever uncontaminated by intercourse with his white neighbours, I have invariably found him to be a happy and a noble man.

I have beheld him in each phase of his simple life, and discovered how many elements of good are implanted in the natural heart, independently of culture or creed; not that he is devoid of either, for to me he ever appeared less a savage than a high-souled and religious being.

I have stood by his peaceful grave where the trees he loved wept their leaves over the bones of the forest-child, and the matlock of the pioneer had not yet unearthed them to make a highway; and the spirit of the solitude has taught me to be just to my brother man.

The following tale is associated with this extraordinary people,--extraordinary as unfortunate, for they are becoming rapidly extinct. It presents them to the reader as before their ranks were thinned, or their spirit broken by aggression. May it awaken his sympathies in their behalf, and would that it might impel the spirit of philanthropy, which is the redeeming feature of the age; to devise some plan to rescue those perishing tribes.<sup>50</sup>

The four "knights" who set out on the quest for the grail known as Ellen are: Conrad Wildenstein, a German, supposedly orphaned (his mother shows up in the closing pages), living in Fort Schenectady with a family who all die in the massacre; Couteau-Croche, a middle-aged half-breed

<sup>50</sup> Douglas S. Huyghue, The Nomades of the West (London: Bentley, 1850), I, v-vi.

(a bit like Natty Bumppo), son of La Raquette Qui Vole (a seaman of Champlain's) and of Notokeel, a vain Mohawk woman (accomplice of the mad medicine man); Salexis, an Abenaki warrior of early middle age, still a model of Indian manhood, brave, generous, honest, religious, and slow to anger (I, 8-9); and last, Sewantus-walie, the youthful son of a Mohawk chief, a "pure son of the forest, noble in lineage as in instinct" (II, 253) (he has prevented his father from burning Conrad).

The bond between the two young men is strong even though both love the object of their quest. However, Conrad will win Ellen since he has prior claim (he once rescued her from drowning). This attachment is clear to Sewantus after they find Ellen. Of course he is disappointed, but as they return, they discover an orphaned Indian girl living with an alien tribe. Since she is the perfect specimen of beautiful, graceful, chaste Indian maidenhood, she is the natural mate for Sewantus.

Occasionally Huyghue comments on different skin colour (e.g., II, 253), and certainly we feel that the pairing of the lovers is inevitable; but he never says that mixed marriages are bad or that half-breeds are inferior or superior or evil. There is at work here the romantic convention of prior claim. Unless the first object of affection is proved to be unworthy, or unless death intervenes (as happened in Ottawah), then the heroine is almost invariably, in comic romance, united with the first worthy young man. Such is the case here.

The question of prior claim is translated into a classic tale of love versus honour, nature versus civilization in Mrs. Cheney's "Jacques Cartier and the Little Indian Girl," a short romance serialized in three parts in The Literary Garland of 1848. Unlike most of the

formulaic short fiction of the Garland, this story has memorable Indian characters and is based, however loosely, on an actual historical incident--Cartier's infamous abduction of Chief Donnacona. All the Indians are sentimentally depicted as natural men unable to survive the artifice of the French court. Chief Donnacona himself, a true Noble Savage in every respect, gradually pines away from lack of freedom; Maraquita, a happy, careless little imp of an Indian child, also fades away and dies in the unnatural atmosphere of the French court; and Fayawana, the title character, adopted daughter of Donnacona and a model of femininity--beautiful, gentle, intelligent, and devout--survives only somewhat longer, largely because of her conversion to Christianity.

As a child of nature, Fayawana is explicitly used as a contrast to the dazzling lady of the court, Countess Natalie, fiancée to de Roberval. Although in all respects Fayawana is the better person, de Roberval must renounce his love for the little Indian girl and honour his obligations to the Countess Natalie. However, Fayawana can seek the solace of the convent, since her intelligence and adaptability have resulted in her eager conversion to Christianity. A few years later she returns for the rest of her short life to minister to her own people. The perfection of Fayawana and the proud grace of Donnacona and his men bowing before the king of France are amongst the most explicit examples we have of an internationally recognizable Noble Savage.

### 3. Versions of the Pastoral

One nineteenth-century romance, An Algonquin Maiden (1887) by Mercer Adams and Ethelwyn Wetherald, stands apart from the other historical romances of the period, largely because it combines serious social commentary with a stylized, almost symbolic conflict. In its classic confrontation between nature and civilization and in the presence of an idealized primitive figure, it embodies many aspects associated with pastoralism. The setting is distinctly pastoral: the home of the MacLeod family on Lake Simcoe, lying at one end of Governor Simcoe's great road to Little York and on the edge of wild Indian lands. The setting is thus symbolic, and intentionally so: "Man versus nature--the successive assaults of perishing humanity upon the almost impregnable fortresses of the eternal forests--this was the struggle of Canadian civilization."<sup>51</sup> Like Joshua in Canaan, the whites batter down the fortress walls; they believe it is their God-given right to do so.

Commodore MacLeod lives on this rural property with his wife and daughter Rose and their servants, and in the early pages the son Edward returns from England to his mother's death bed. The romance is divided into two parts; the two MacLeod children marry, as romance convention stipulates, the people it is obvious they should marry: Alan Dunlop and H el ene de Berczy respectively. The romance of Rose and Alan, played out against the social and political scene of muddy Little York in the

<sup>51</sup> G. Mercer Adams and A. Ethelwyn Wetherald, An Algonquin Maiden (1887; rpt. Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1973), p. 9.

late 1820's does not concern us here; but that of Edward and H el ene has archetypal pastoral complications.

It is a classic romance of the choice confronting a young man between natural spontaneity and civilized reserve. Edward MacLeod loves nature: "where the odour of the woods is a tonic, and the air brings healing and balm. . . . This long day's journey under the giant trees of the wild, unconquered woods seems to gratify some savage instinct of my nature. . . . I am a Canadian, my mind is wearied with over-much civilization" (pp. 13-14). Here, then, is a well-brought-up young man who is susceptible to the appeal of the wilderness. The conflict between nature and civilization which he experiences is personified by two beautiful young women, one aristocratic and one Indian. For Edward there is no compromise, no sweet little country Rose.

The aristocratic H el ene De Berczy is cool, proud, and haughty, with black hair and a black dress divinely framing "a face and throat of milky whiteness" (p. 19). Although she has grown up as a close neighbour and has loved Edward for a long time, she cannot show her love. She cannot respond naturally or spontaneously to anything, even a kiss from Edward, and withdraws into a shell of haughty reserve and Huguenot pride. Nor does she respond positively to nature itself: she hates bugs, and when she visits Mrs. MacLeod's grave, she brings hot-house flowers:

The pure tender curves of the white camellias reminded him of H el ene. She herself was the rare product of choicest care and cultivation--the flower of an old and complex civilization. The fancy pleased him at first, and then woke in his mind a certain vague disdain. What place had hot-house plants, either human or otherwise, in this wild new land. . . . (p. 44)

Hélène becomes, then, like the Countess Natalie in "Jacques Cartier and the Little Indian Girl," the epitome of civilization, almost unreal in her cool reserve, impeccable breeding, and lack of colour--a kind of symbolic lifelessness. Nevertheless, Edward is attracted to her, and unlike the Countess, Hélène never has her basic morality questioned. Instead it is her over-civilized reaction to Edward that fosters the misunderstandings which separate them and throw him into the arms of the Indian maiden, Wanda.

Wanda enters the action just as Edward arrives home; she appears almost as a spirit of the woods as she flits out from the lilacs and darts through the shrubs: "a dark, lissome creature, beautiful as a young princess, but a princess in the disguise of a savage . . . [a] dusky Diana . . . a face, perfect-featured and olive-tinted, and a form robed in a brilliant and barbarous admixture of scarlet, yellow, and very dark blue" (pp. 18-19). As a friend of Rose, Wanda also brings flowers to Mrs. MacLeod's grave, immediately following the scene of Hélène and the camellias:

. . . he did not see the form of a half wild, wholly beautiful girl, emerge from the deep gloom of the woods . . . her attention was wholly bent upon the armful of forest-flowers, which she let fall upon the grave with a passionate gesture of grief. (p. 45)

Thus Edward is confronted with a highly stylized choice: that between Wanda, the beautiful wild flower, gaudily coloured, with lustrous lips, a warmly vital cheek, a supple tawny throat; and Hélène, the white hot-house flower, stiff, pure, impeccable.

There are only two Indians in the self-contained setting of this

romance: Wanda and the dignified old chief, her foster father. He is a stock figure, the wise, conservative old man; and he tutors Wanda to distrust white men, just as Jessie's mother did in Haliburton's story: "Like the poison vines of the forest it [the white race] touches all who come near it with fatal effect" (p. 49). He fires her blood with stories of the destruction of Huronia, homeland of Wanda's mother. However, Wanda is of mixed blood, Huron and Algonquin; and we are told: "invariably with the mixture of blood comes the warring of diverse emotions, the dissatisfaction with the present life, the secret yearning for something better, the impulse towards something worse" (p. 51).<sup>52</sup> Wanda, then, is as susceptible as Edward to an intrigue out of her cultural milieu. But given the prior claim of H el ene, this pastoral idyll is bound to end unhappily for Wanda.

Edward's response to nature is obviously that of the romantic sated with old customs; it is by no means a committed love. Similarly, his response to nature's personification, the innocent, child-like Wanda, is made to seem irresponsible. He cannot resist the warm proximity of the beautiful Indian girl and manages to overcome her fear of being trifled with. Her natural and generous affection, H el ene's icy rejection of his advances, and the coarse innuendoes of his male companions, all conspire to make Edward chivalrously announce his intention

<sup>52</sup> Even though Caroline de St. Castin in The Golden Dog has only about one eighth Indian blood, Kirby seems to use the fact to justify or explain her weakness in playing the loving victim to the corrupt Intendant Bigot. The idea is reiterated frequently in literature of the late nineteenth century, even in the poetry of Duncan Campbell Scott.

to marry Wanda (p. 155). Everyone is shocked and amazed; obviously a liaison with an Indian, at least more than simple flirtation, is a social catastrophe.

It does not take Edward long to realize how unsuited Wanda is to his world and expectations; and the moment he discovers the secret of H el ene's love for him, he is repelled by Wanda's coarseness. He chides H el ene for not taming his animal passions. Douglas Spettigue summarizes:

Shy, innocent, tragic, the Algonquin girl is nevertheless the temptress who would lead the young Canadian to what is seen as a self-indulgent retreat into the primitive world. The woods are lovely, dangerous and doomed. When the hero would escape with the dusky maiden a storm hurls a tree on him. For a second time she saves his life, but her own fate is to be renunciation and suicide. Her race, like the forest environment, fades. Though he experiences remorse at her death, the protagonist returns for forgiveness to the fair maiden.<sup>53</sup>

Clearly in the propriety of the late nineteenth century, the love of nature (particularly if personified as an Indian) is linked with animal passion; it is a shortcoming to be corrected by the firm guiding hand of the civilized garrison.

Wanda is an Indian and thus recognizably Canadian (or at least North American); but parallel stories occur with other types of pastoral-primitive figures. For example, John Galsworthy wrote a virtually identical story almost thirty years later about an abandoned Cornish peasant girl.<sup>54</sup> However, in An Algonquin Maiden there is that feeling

<sup>53</sup> Douglas Odell Spettigue, "The English-Canadian Novel: Some Attitudes and Themes in Relation to Form," Diss. Toronto 1966, pp. 46-47.

<sup>54</sup> John Galsworthy, "The Apple Tree," in Five Tales, Vol. 13 of



of potential allegory which Frye says is characteristic of romance. It would be easy to read the tragedy of Wanda as the tragedy of the Indian in general--innocently giving up all he has to the white man and finding himself the victim of white civilization (the old chief's commentary early in the story prepares the reader for this kind of interpretation). But the white also suffers in this situation: Edward will always bear the emotional scar to remind him of what he yearned for, gave up, and destroyed. Similarly, generations of conscientious white Canadians have felt guilty about their role in the displacement of the Indian culture.<sup>55</sup>

A pastoral romance like An Algonquin Maiden, in spite of its unhappy ending, presents a clear, stylized conflict and an inevitable resolution, given the values of the late nineteenth century; for although it was considered perfectly acceptable to enjoy nature in a polite, romantic way, any respectable young man knew that his duty lay in the society that nurtured him. Any other choice would require abandoning his background and training, as Parker's Akspine did. The romance genre of the time is in perfect accord with the conventions of the idealized Noble Savage and the extremes of the choice confronting Edward.

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The Works of John Galsworthy, Manaton Ed. (London: Heinemann, 1923), pp. 237-329.

<sup>55</sup> This idea, that man cannot keep from "civilizing" his idyllic gardens, is not an exclusively Canadian concept; it forms the thesis for Leo Marx's book on American Literature, The Machine in the Garden (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1964).

By the 1920's, however, with the widely noted rise in realism in Canadian fiction,<sup>56</sup> such stylization was bound to be either parodied or replaced by a more realistic conflict between social obligation and personal fulfillment. The first such realistic novel is Mazo de la Roche's Possession (1923). It is a realistic novel partly in the sense that it parodies the romantic conventions found in a work like An Algonquin Maiden, and partly in that romantic idealization is almost completely lacking. De la Roche takes a similar conflict, gives it a lovely pastoral setting in southern Ontario, and proceeds to show the realities of the situation. She creates, not a "romance novel," as Douglas Daymond claims,<sup>57</sup> but an ironic pastoral.

Briefly, Derek Vale, a young Halifax architect, arrives to take possession of his late uncle's farm, Grimstone. When he arrives, household affairs are being supervised by Mrs. Machin, a bossy old woman whom Derek finds instantly repellent. Next door lives the Chard family, presided over by Mr. Chard, an aggressive, mean-minded man, who tempts away Derek's Indian labourers and then works them like machines. On the other side lives William Jerrold, an amiable, but rather improvi-

<sup>56</sup> A discussion of realism and western Canadian fiction of the 1920's can be found in Nancy W. Fraser, "The Development of Realism in Canadian Literature During the 1920's," Dalhousie Review, 57 (1977-78), 287-99.

<sup>57</sup> Douglas M. Daymond, "Possession: Realism in Mazo de la Roche's First Novel," Journal of Canadian Fiction, 4, No. 3 (1975), 87-94. The term "romance novel" is used by Richard Chase in The American Novel and Its Tradition (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday Anchor, 1957). Daymond defines the term thus: "the strict realism of the naturalist is blended with a conception of character and plot which is often sentimental and romantic" (p. 87).

dent, gentleman farmer; his daughter, Grace; and the farm manager, Hobbes. Grimstone is thus symbolically situated between two extremes: modern vulgar expedience on the one side and traditional improvident graciousness on the other. Grimstone is attractive and seemingly prosperous, dependent on mixed farming, including fruit. And from strawberry time to apple time, the Vales for years have hired an old Indian chief, Solomon Sharroe, and his family to pick the fruit.

Fair-minded, kind, and generous, Derek is the obvious marriage choice for Grace Jerrold, the charming, cultivated daughter of his neighbour. In conventional romance this match would eventually overcome all obstacles and work out well. However, circumstances and misunderstanding conspire so that Derek forms a liaison with Fawnie Sharroe (old Solomon's pretty teen-age daughter), fathers a child on her, and the next summer marries her as "the right thing to do." Hope for the Derek-Grace union is rekindled when Fawnie runs off with the half-breed Jammery, and Grace shows herself to be fond of the baby, little Buckskin; but the baby dies, Fawnie returns, and Derek's life of mixed pleasure in Fawnie and nagging regrets about Grace continues. A conventional romantic reversal might have taken place at any one of several places but does not; instead a kind of Hardy-esque sense of fate prevails.

Since most of the names in Possession are significant, it is no surprise that Derek Vale, whose name alone suggests a tension between the mechanical and natural, is confronted with a dilemma like that of Edward MacLeod. Like Edward, Derek finds himself between two women: the civilized and aptly named Grace, and the natural and aptly named

Fawnie. The girls are described quite conventionally. Grace early appears to Derek "outlined against the sky, and dressed in white . . . akin to the shining gulls, and, like them, more of air than of earth."<sup>58</sup> But there is something almost unhealthy in her strong attachment to her father, whom she calls "William," not "Father," and who calls her "darling." Nor is Jerrold really admirable, in spite of his elegance and good manners. He is much more concerned with being a gentleman than a farmer, makes unwise decisions, is gradually bought out by his manager, Hobbes, and is finally left with only a small cottage and a life of keeping up appearances. Jerrold becomes almost a white equivalent of Solomon Sharroe, the old chief, an anachronism of empty dignity and gentlemanliness in a world of vulgar expedience.

Edward MacLeod came upon Wanda bathing and turned away in Victorian discretion, but Derek comes upon Fawnie bathing and stays to watch by the light of the Indians' bonfire:

. . . a hot thrill of pleasure stirred, like a pain in his breast. She seemed to rise, a dark water-lily on its stem, a flower of unearthly beauty, springing from the water, fed by the flames, filling the night air with the perfume of her desire. At her side the dark head of the smallest child lay . . . like an olive-tinted bud. It was a moonless night and the sky hung low, dark as a bowl of wine. (p. 52)

All the imagery surrounding Fawnie is consistently Dionysian, sensual, earthy and fertile; de la Roche makes no attempt to underplay the sexual element. The images are by no means all negative ones of self-indulgence, but are frequently positive images of fertility and fruition:

<sup>58</sup> Mazo de la Roche, Possession (Toronto: MacMillan, 1923), p. 43.

Fawnie and Derek kiss in a cherry tree loaded with fruit; they contrive to hide a brooding hen under Fawnie's bunk; the fruit crop that first summer is a marvel of fecundity. It is little wonder, then, that their love-making during a July thunder-storm should produce a baby.

Derek's succumbing to Fawnie's animal charms comes as no surprise. From the beginning of the novel, Derek has been associated in a positive way with the Indians and with natural and animal imagery. Contrary to the neighbourhood habit, Derek continues his uncle's policy of hiring Indian pickers; he is concerned that they live like people, not animals; the little Indian girls put a feather in his hair and say he is Indian like them; when a newly bought prize cow (from the Jerrolds) dies, Derek keeps the bull calf as his favorite, even though everyone considers him foolish.

But although Derek marries Fawnie, largely to give his son a place in the world, his problems are by no means resolved. He is constantly aware of the social pressures around him and of the limitations of Fawnie. Like Edward MacLeod, Derek cannot help but respond physically to the appeal of the beautiful Indian girl; and like Edward, Derek cannot be socially or intellectually satisfied:

Derek loved to watch her. He became more and more contented. And yet--he was never ten minutes alone without beginning to dream about Grace Jerrold. He would picture what his life might have been had he married her. He could not forget her. He thought it strange that he should be living in comparative content with one woman, while his mind dwelt with another.  
(p. 230)

Grace Jerrold is a fairly conventional character, but Fawnie has only a few attributes conventionally ascribed to young Indian women of

romance. Like Wanda, Fawnie is beautiful and passionate and loyal; but unlike Wanda, Fawnie is no sentimental Noble Savage. Instead, Fawnie is tough, ambitious, "sly," and really quite vulgar. Being like white people is very important to her, as to several other members of her family. For instance, one half-breed niece has special status in the family because of her whiter skin; Fawnie's tough, ambitious mother beats Fawnie only to arouse Derek's sympathy so that he will marry the Indian girl and thus make her and the baby "white"; Fawnie likes Derek's calling her "a little baggage," because she thinks the term describes the behaviour of white girls (p. 64).

The first change at Grimstone when Fawnie comes to live with Derek is that Mrs. Machin leaves (it is as if the animal and the machine cannot co-exist). But Fawnie is no Lali Armour. As mistress of Grimstone, lacking any kind of breeding, natural or otherwise, Fawnie becomes a vulgar imitation of what she thinks a gentleman's wife should be: she bosses and threatens Phoebe the maid; she buys impractical, expensive clothes without knowing how to look after them; she struts the baby in public in a grossly over-decorated perambulator; she is even contemptuous of other Indians.

Once Derek resigns himself to the situation, however, things do improve. He really enjoys the languid, illiterate, physical presence of his little Indian wife with her "unbelievable talent for disorder" (p. 214) and finds himself also enjoying the social company of his in-laws. This resignation is depicted as a true response to the land: "Grimstone folded him closer in its woods, and orchards, and streams, and in the lives of the aboriginal people who had once so barbarously

dwelt there" (p. 177). When Fawnie eventually provokes Phoebe to quit, she is able to maintain a simple kind of routine. In spite of her great youth, she is a good mother and devoted to little Buckskin. But she has a very ambiguous effect on Derek, a fact which underscores the realism of the novel: "The more Derek watched Fawnie, the more he thought of her as the completest human being he had ever known. . . . She was always cheerful, she was usually good-tempered, yet Derek had glimpses of primitive cruelty within" (pp. 229-30).

When Fawnie runs off with Jammery, Derek gradually adjusts to being a single parent. But when Fawnie returns at the end of the novel, just as the baby is being buried, Derek is thrust once again into the midst of turmoil and ambiguity. Derek loves Grimstone and feels linked to it, not only by the grave of his son, but by his connection with the land's earliest owners. He also feels a great urge to protect Fawnie, who is both his possession and his possessor (p. 288). However, even in the last paragraphs of the novel he is aware of Grace watching the house, and he cannot honestly respond to Fawnie's protestations of love and loyalty. In the Victorian scheme of things, Derek's reaction would be viewed as an expression of failure. However, in the romantic primitivism of D. H. Lawrence, his reaction would be viewed as a partial success of blood-consciousness.

In keeping with the growing realism of Canadian fiction Mazo de la Roche has challenged conventions of both social morality and pastoral romance. Derek will likely succeed in human terms because of his oneness with the land and its aboriginal inhabitants, but he will always be aware of his social limitations and the conventional shortcomings of

his wife in the eyes of the community. De la Roche implies, however, that his lot is preferable to the mechanical acquisitiveness of his vulgar neighbours, and in a way more stable and satisfying than the Jerrols' shabby gentility.

If ironic modification characterizes de la Roche's Possession, ironic reversal characterizes the next three fictions, all of which take place in that pastoral middle territory between the city and the wilderness. One such reversal occurs in James McNamee's Florencia Bay (1960), in which the conventionally supreme white male has no control over the situation at all. We saw Derek as a captive of Fawnie and Grimstone in a lovely pastoral setting; here Patrick Aloysius Crogan is captive to Charlie Jack and his daughter in a setting probably more suitably called piscatorial than pastoral. Pat is thirty-three, a veteran of the Second War, come with sluicing gear to Florencia Bay near Ucluelet on Vancouver Island to pan for gold. As soon as Charlie Jack (a sort of Indian "godfather" of the central west coast of the Island) decides that Pat will be a suitable husband for his pretty half-breed daughter Monica, Pat is quite literally made captive, because, "what Charlie wants, Charlie gets,"<sup>59</sup>

Twenty-one-year-old Monica Jack is an interesting and quite unconventional Indian girl. She is young and pretty and has learned all the appropriate native skills from her Indian grandmother. But in addition, Monica has had an expensive white education: a good Grade 13 from St.

<sup>59</sup> James McNamee, Florencia Bay (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1960), p. 63.



Ann's Academy in Victoria. She is thus as well-versed in Shakespeare as in basket weaving, she is a good Roman Catholic, and she has all the poise and manners the nuns could teach her. The storekeeper in Ucluelet calls her "a little lady" (p. 63). She is also extremely well-groomed and well dressed in "imported" fashions from Seattle (part of her father's successful smuggling operations). Pat's initial reaction to her underlines this aspect of Monica's character:

Crogan . . . regarded her with the same caution he would have accorded a stick of blasting powder. Poison and explosives both came in small packages, but neither was so prettily wrapped. The shirt was broadcloth, the slacks were tailored, the sandals . . . had not been chosen from a catalogue. Charlie must be making a fortune in fish. The body itself looked expensive, red toenails, red fingernails, red lips, shadow applied to the corner of the eyes to slant them, the swinging hair. The lily was gilded to the point of being exotic. (p. 37)

She is exactly the reverse of a sentimental little wild flower like Wanda.

But as well as being expensively educated and turned out, Monica is an aggressive, spoiled little rich kid. She is a terrible glutton; she demands quantities of expensive food whenever she feels like it; she even wants to go to Paris on their honeymoon "to see how those Frenchmen eat" (p. 205). She bosses her stepmother around and quite obviously has persuaded her father to get her Pat for a husband: "she wanted marriage like she had wanted a wristwatch" (p. 172). She lets Pat know in no uncertain terms that she intends to get him and will not give him up to anyone.

Monica's competition takes the form of Hope Wiston, a white woman

who is staying with her mother and another miner along the beach. She is the sort of person Pat thinks he wants--sensible, attractive, and easy to talk to; she seems very much like Grace Jerrold at first. However, one day at tea Monica forces Hope to admit she is divorced; and gradually the reader (if not Pat) is persuaded that Hope is coarse and unladylike, with fat arms like truck tires, a behind like a horse, and feet like halibut (p. 164). Pat is quite right in observing that Monica has double standards on the subject of marriage breakdown; but still the reader becomes unsure that Pat's hope for escape lies with Hope Wiston.

McNamee generally takes great pleasure in twisting conventions, in taking a stock romance situation and giving it a few ironic and irreverent turns while retaining at least a reasonable kind of verisimilitude.<sup>60</sup> It is fun to see Indians possessing wealth, power, cultivated taste and manners, double standards, and an ambivalent sense of morality--all characteristics normally attributed to white people--while the whites are depicted as dirty, shiftless, and impractical like Pat--all characteristics normally attributed by red-neck prejudice to Indians. Monica probably does save Pat Crogan from a fate worse than death as a shiftless perpetual bachelor and an unproductive gold miner. Instead he will have a permanent job with the "brotherhood" and a beautiful, intelligent, faithful brat of a wife; really it would have been an ideal

<sup>60</sup> David Bromige quibbles about the anthropological accuracy of the premise that the eldest must marry first. Such an error is noticeable only to an anthropologist and is not an important fact in evaluating non-realistic fiction. See David Bromige, "The Plain Untruth," rev. of Florencia Bay, by James McNamee, Canadian Literature, No. 5 (1960), p. 81.

situation had he been free to choose it for himself.<sup>61</sup>

Alan Fry retains the humour and the reversal of white supremacy in his Revenge of Annie Charlie (1973), a very funny fiction set in the Cariboo country of British Columbia; but he goes further than McNamee by making explicit social statements about Indians and the prejudices they encounter. Like Monica, Annie has been educated at a Roman Catholic boarding school and has achieved well; but unlike Monica, Annie remains essentially the intuitive, sensual primitive whose "salvation" of a white man is depicted positively rather than ironically. Annie is actually one of the very few "natural" women in Canadian fiction who make the two-directional trip from country to city and back and are actually the better for it.

Fry clearly supports the natural in its conflict with the civilized and sees the necessity of integrating the body and the spirit if a person is to be complete. When Annie is at school, she is puzzled by the attitude of the nuns, who equate pleasure with sin and teach guilt about bodies. (Annie longs for--and gets--big breasts and concludes that breastlessness must be an ideal condition for a nun.)<sup>62</sup> Later when she is hospitalized for tuberculosis, she is puzzled by the care given to bodies only, to the neglect of the person inside. When she is working in the white community as a nurse's aide, she is quick to perceive that most men attracted to her are merely exploiters of her body

<sup>61</sup> One is tempted to read Florescencia Bay as a humorous modernization of Jewitt's captivity (1803-05) as a slave of the rich and powerful Nootka Chief Maquinna.

<sup>62</sup> Alan Fry, The Revenge of Annie Charlie (Don Mills: PaperJacks, 1974), p. 126.

and not lovers of her as a person. Thus, bitter from coping with white prejudices, and despairing of ever finding meaning in a society which divides the body from the spirit, Annie returns to her family and reserve with its chaos, vitality, and wholeness.

It is there that she comes to the rescue of homely Gyp Sandhouse, a white neighbour and friend of her father, Chief Big Meadow. Once she decides that Gyp is really a nice man with an inferiority complex about his ugliness, she sets out to become, first his lover, and eventually his mate. At first Gyp cannot abandon himself fully to his natural urges and so uses contraceptives and refuses to take the responsibility of having Annie live with him. Annie, however, enjoys their love-making to the fullest:

In the nights they loved in a free and uncomplicated way that left Annie floating on clouds of pleasure and fulfillment. She had grown up with an ever-present belief, founded not in any rational argument to which she gave words, but implicitly in how good her body felt, that the ultimate experience would be the sexual one--even Sister Mary had not dented this foundation for joy--and now, in the realization, there was only wonder for how much more was in the fulfillment than the anticipation. (pp. 157-8)

The humorous climax of the story sees Annie compromising a very efficient Mountie (by teaching him a few things about his body too) and getting the murder charges dropped against her innocent retarded brother. At the same time Gyp overcomes his complexes, stops using contraceptives, and agrees to live with Annie and raise a family.

As for Annie, "she did not know where the resolve came from, for however strong-minded and self-directed she knew herself to be among her own people . . . she had never imagined herself so bold as to im-

pose her will on a figure of white authority" (pp. 166-67). It seems unlikely, however, that Annie could have found the strength without her knowledge of white ways and white weaknesses. She has successfully made the trip to civilization, like Lali and Monica; she has learned and experienced; but unlike the others, Annie has rejected the values of white society while at the same time profiting from her experiences. The Revenge of Annie Charlie is in effect a pastoral romance with a different set of values and Annie herself is a gorgeous, voluptuous descendant of the old satirical Noble Savage.

By far the most important of this group of modern "pastorals" is W. O. Mitchell's Vanishing Point (1973), a book which presents an interesting balance of pastoral romance form with social realism, and which is organized according to a kind of double irony. Set in the Stony Indian reserve of Paradise Valley and in a nearby city (doubtless Calgary), the narrative explores the relationship of the artificial white world and the traditional natural Indian world, which conscientiously ignores the values and lessons of white progress. The Paradise which appears ironic in the opening pages of the book is finally revealed to be a positive reality.

Paradise Valley is not filled with idyllic Noble Savages, nor with melodramatic ignoble ones, but with a very real assortment of kind and brutal, intelligent and stupid, healthy and diseased people of all ages, skills, and temperaments. In their midst is little Victoria Rider, whose name and character combine to suggest all the skills and potentials that the Victorian missionaries one hundred years ago saw as necessary for the Indians' survival in the great wave of white civili-

zation. Through the nine years or so that we watch her career, we learn really very little about her. We know that her family want her to "improve herself," that she is the first Indian pupil to matriculate and enter nurse's training, that she gets pregnant and drops out of training in shame, that she returns to the reserve and moves into Carlyle Sinclair's bed; but her character is not developed with any complexity, and she remains essentially an abstract force in the narrative.

Instead, the narrative focuses on Carlyle Sinclair and becomes primarily a study of his psychological self-discovery. He has been raised with all the typical twentieth-century prairie Puritan repressions of nature: his widowed father uses prostitutes but never admits doing so; his fastidious Aunt Pearl (associated mainly with white toilet bowls and her white stools) burns string in the bathroom to kill odours; the nurse who sees little Carlyle through his diphtheria is obsessed by germs which might enter one's "orifices." Added to all this, his art teacher emphasizes rules over creativity; when he first arrives in Paradise, he steams carbolic acid to cover up the Indian smells; his job entails dealing out alien white learning and pseudo-food in the form of Fyfe's minimal subsistence cookies.

But Carlyle is as sensitive to the appeal of nature as Edward MacLeod or Derek Vale; only the frames of reference differ. Carlyle has sold luxurious underwear to the above-mentioned prostitutes and found them interesting people; he scandalizes his Aunt Pearl by putting his penis in a magic lantern and magnifying it seventeen times; he fills his barren art exercise on the vanishing point with trees and animals; during the detention following, he relieves a bowel cramp in the art

teacher's desk drawer; he sits mischievously quiet in the plant conservatory of Ian Fyfe (the Regional Indian Affairs Director) watching a bee mess up the careful breeding program of his orchids. And finally he has experienced the vagaries of nature in the death of his wife and baby in childbirth.

For a long time, however, Carlyle believes in the whiteness of what he is doing, in spite of his recognition of the inadequacies of other whites in Indian affairs. He ostensibly follows the prescription of not becoming personally involved with his charges, although in fact he has become totally involved with Victoria without consciously realizing it. When she defects from the nursing program, he feels she has failed him. But when he attends the Reserve dance and accepts Victoria's invitation to the Rabbit Dance, he finally consciously realizes what has happened to him and what has been happening all along. The drumming and the dancing finally reveal to him his own repressed urge to life:

. . . we lash the hidden instinct wolf to life--we club the mirror--the Methodist glass--we break it--we smash it with disdain!

How had he arrived here in this tent flickering with lamp and firelight? He did belong with them. A wild and distant drum had pulsed for him and for Mate, when they had stood with the total thrust of prairie sun upon their defenceless heads. Together they had discovered that they were both alien from and part of a living whole. The dry husk of a dead gopher, an abandoned garter-snake skin, magpies, undertaker beetles, had taught them the terror of being human. But they know that they were accountable to each other; the badger, the coyote, the kill-deer, the jack rabbit, the undertaker beetle, could not share their alien terror. They were not responsible for each other. Man was.<sup>63</sup>

<sup>63</sup> W. O. Mitchell, The Vanishing Point (Toronto: MacMillan, 1973),

This realization of the humanity and animalness common to all men is, according to F. M. Macri, a central Canadian experience:

The opposition characterizing Canadian literature, that can be described as the quest of the divided self for its reintegration, can be defined as an alienation of the self, the soul, or the mind from the essential qualities of life. This alienation is caused by a clash between the individual and his external environment, culminating in a clash between the individual and himself. The typical traits of this existential split are the passive suffering of the hero and, as a consequence, his constant exposure to possible destruction. His grasping for light, for harmony, for peace can be called the agony of the type canadien.<sup>64</sup>

In The Vanishing Point this agony is resolved in the bridge of love between Carlyle and Victoria, which symbolically unifies Carlyle's personality. When Carlyle takes Victoria to his bed, he is in Jungian terms acknowledging the "female personification of his unconscious," or his "anima":

. . . the personification of all feminine psychological tendencies in a man's psyche, such as vague feelings and moods, prophetic hunches, receptiveness to the irrational, capacity for personal love, feeling for nature, and . . . his relation to the unconscious.<sup>65</sup>

This rather abstract function probably explains why Victoria's character is not developed in the realistic way of so many other characters in

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pp. 384-85.

<sup>64</sup> F. M. Macri, "Beautiful Losers and the Canadian Experience," The Journal of Commonwealth Literature, 8, No. 1 (1973), 90-91.

<sup>65</sup> M.-L. von Franz, "The Processes of Individuation," in Man and His Symbols, ed. Carl G. Jung et al (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1964), p. 177.



the book. But Carlyle's recognition of his basic human nature is exemplified in his acceptance of Victoria as a mate and results in his new wholeness. Too long has the white male world suppressed its female psychological component.

Structurally, Victoria's return to Paradise fulfills the pastoral two-way movement. She belongs there. But so does Carlyle; since civilized man has over-refined himself to the point of having white excrement, white costume-coordinated religion (in the person of Heally Richards the evangelist), and plaster animals, he belongs back in the chaotic, fecund natural world of body smells, disease, copulation, and death. There is nothing sentimental about this affair: Carlyle will have hell to pay with the Department of Indian Affairs, and the life he has chosen is far from idyllic. But it is more real in terms of life's meaning; inadequate as it is, it is still preferable to a world "up to its arse in fluorescent flamingoes" (p. 41).

In the scheme of Carlyle Sinclair's redemption, then, the Indians affirm a literary convention as important as that of the Noble Savage. Thorslev describes it as:

. . . a conception which also originated in the Romantic Movement, and which has been perhaps of more enduring significance than either the Noble Savage or the savage brute. Nature may be conceived not as rational, uniform, and ordered, nor as cruel and slothful, to be refined and overcome. As fecund spontaneous, sublime, yes, but as more than that: as "mother mysterious," a dark and amoral force from under earth, thrusting up indifferently foul weeds or fragile flowers; a "blood-consciousness" ranged forever against sterile rational order and efficiency, and creative of all that is lustful, much that is destructive, and all that is beautiful. . . . The rational Noble Savage is Apollonian, for all his sensibilities; this naked savage is Dionysian. . . . It is an over-simplification to identify this Dionysian savage merely

with the passions and lusts surrounding sex, although this is certainly one of his dominant characteristics. He is a product of an earthward mysticism, a radical denial not only of rational order, but of all otherworldliness and transcendentalism. . . . This Dionysian savage is the most enduring of them all, because he is quite immune to fact and to scientific voyages of discovery; he is on the one hand pure myth, on the other a universal psychological reality.<sup>66</sup>

Thus the psychological quest implications of The Vanishing Point give the book the dream quality of romance: good equals acceptance of life, bad equals sterility or rejection of life.

#### 4. Historical Fiction in the Twentieth Century

In the preceding section all the works, except for their sentimental nineteenth-century prototype, showed Indian women not only surviving, but bringing a positive change of sorts to the lives of the men they chose. All the settings are rural and more or less contemporary with the authors' lives. All the narratives conspicuously parody some element of traditional romance, and the group as a whole provides an interesting link between the public concerns which dominate the first two sections of the chapter and the personal concerns which dominate the last two sections. The life-giving role of the Indian which is important in this third group continues to be important and dominates the large body of historical fiction which appeared mainly between 1925 and 1960. The setting for most of this fiction is the frontier, and the conflict is usually explicitly between the natural and the culti-

<sup>66</sup> Thorslev, pp. 285-86.

vated, with society and its obligations much less frequently on the winning side. Only a few of the works have any psychological depth, but they bear witness to a pervasive theme in Canadian fiction. As well, a significant number of them resolve the conflict in the way one might expect: a happy or comic resolution occurs when the protagonist accepts the love of an Indian; an unhappy or tragic resolution occurs when he rejects it.

At the beginning of Sanford's Huronia romance The Trail of the Iroquois (1925), one almost expects Gilbert de Keroual to be destroyed because he "saw no charm in any Indian maiden, and rather than take one to wife would have remained for ever unwed."<sup>67</sup> He is, instead, attracted to a lovely French woman. Even when he is made captive to the Iroquois, he declines, with gracious, chivalrous excuses, the hand of Miratik, the beautiful virgin daughter of a chief. However, his excuses are so chivalrously thoughtful of the young woman, and her love for him is so strong, that she sets him free and they escape together on the eve of his torture. At this point Gilbert modifies his earlier attitude: knowing that the white woman he truly loves is married and unavailable, he vows in genuine affection and gratitude to marry Miratik, properly in Church (p. 199). Like many successful heroes, Gilbert commits himself to an Indian and survives--not only this, but several later predicaments. Although his commitment to the Indian woman is expressed in the prudish way acceptable in early twentieth-century romances, it is

<sup>67</sup> M. Bourchier Sanford, The Trail of the Iroquois (Toronto: Longmans, Green, 1925), p. 11.

sufficient to save him from destruction by the wilderness.

Set somewhat earlier, on the Pacific Coast at the time of Sir Francis Drake, and quite unlike most historical romance read for this study, is A. M. Stephen's melodramatic romance The Kingdom of the Sun (1927). It relies on magic and the supernatural for much of its effect and is highly unrealistic, but it does present two attitudes to life in the conventional two women characters: the golden girl Auria, English by birth; and the dark Keet-sa-o, daughter of a Haida medicine man. The success of the hero, Richard Anson, is a dubious one: he does fulfill the prophecy at the beginning and find love, but he also dies in the process. The characters of the two women are involved in this mixed victory.

Auria is no common English girl: she has been raised by the Mayans to become a sort of priestess, almost a vestal virgin (until intrigue forces her to leave Central America). As a religious figure combining two sophisticated cultures, she represents civilization, with its idealism and emphasis on the spiritual and ascetic. She gives herself to Anson only once in their association, just before sacrificing him in order to save her adopted people, the Salish.

Keet-sa-o is loving, brave, and loyal, and saves Anson from the machinations of her evil father: she is clearly meant to be a life figure. Most importantly, when Auria has sacrificed Anson, the Indian girl, who has killed her hated father, challenges her: "I would not kill that which I love."<sup>68</sup> Finally, in devotion to the memory of Anson,

<sup>68</sup> A. M. Stephen. The Kingdom of the Sun (London: Dent, 1927), p. 281.

Keet-sa-o becomes Auria's attendant and takes charge of the child when it is born. Anson dies a victim of ideals and social duty, but he is perpetuated because of the laws of nature. The child itself later becomes a kind of mythic figure: like Moses or Beowulf's Scyld Scefing, he is found in a canoe and grows to become a great Haida chief. On the whole, however, the Indians in Kingdom of the Sun have been rendered almost completely unrealistic by their unimaginative stylization and by their function of providing abstract and mythic contrasts: body and spirit, love and duty, dark and light. All that, along with the enormous improbability of the plot, has made it a pretty forgettable piece of Canadian fiction.

Much less abstract, but none the less conventionally romantic is Jany Rolyat's The Lily of Fort Garry (1930), set in Fort Garry during the 1850's. It deals with a young girl's choice between the glamorous and natural over the boring and settled. No one reading the story could quarrel with Margaret's decision; and the natural choice is clearly associated with Indians. Both of Margaret's choices are Scots-Indian half-breeds, but Colin Currie is associated with the fort; his father is the benefactor of Mrs. Moore and her family (who have been almost abandoned by Mr. Moore). Colin is financially secure and is obviously intended for an important position at the fort. However, Margaret is quite right in stating that "Colin Currie would not make a suitable husband for me."<sup>69</sup> He is hardly the sort of young man to

<sup>69</sup> Jane Rolyat [pseud. E. Jean McDougall], The Lily of Fort Garry (London: Dent, 1930), p. 25.

inspire romantic interest in a young girl: he was "a stout young man with string-coloured hair . . . his red-checked coat front the nutritive centre for many flies" (p. 64). Mrs. Moore obviously approves of him because if Margaret marries him the family will both repay some of its obligations and regain some of its lost status in the society of the fort.

Margaret's own choice is Roger MacLachlin, or Koominah Koush as she prefers to think of him:

. . . a striking young man "of country blood," piercing eyes, dark umber skin, features defined and bold. Posed in the doorway, in broad daylight in a blaze of sunshine . . . a striking figure, a noble animal, a brilliant and distinct entity. . . . (p. 68)

He has all the qualifications for the romantic hero: he is intelligent, brave, refined, and of mysterious background. He is connected with a tribe of Indians from farther West, which calls itself "The People." These Indians are further removed from white influences than the local Indians and in their richly ornamented costumes make a strong contrast to the demoralized local tribes:

There were several . . . groups of Indians standing about, all passively. With the passivity of the past in them, of people whose part in the story of mankind was nearing its close. Once in this land they had been sole owners and lords. Here and out on the plains they now moved in obedience to the commands of the great Company. Once they had been in the foreground of the picture, but now silent, sometimes sullen, always passive, they occupied the background.

But 'The People' were different; statuesque they were perhaps, but with the expressions of visiting lords, impressive and commanding. Far away where they roamed, they were not in the background, but still the reigning force one felt. Certainly there was an importance about them, not shared by other groups of Indians. . . . (pp. 64-65)

Clearly Margaret prefers the romantic notions of the wilderness over the settled realities of the fort; but when the choice is personified as Roger and Colin, her decision is inevitable. Roger is a true romantic Noble Savage, even if he is half-white, while Colin is the tedious man of the settlement, even if he is half-Indian.

With Philip Child's Village of Souls (1933) we return again to New France and to fiction which explores the psychological implications of the white man's relationship with the wilderness. Again the natural and the civilized are personified in the characters of two women: Anne, the dark-haired, natural girl (ostensibly Indian); and Lys, the golden-haired, consumptive courtesan (product of corrupt French civilization). That Anne is probably Spanish or Portuguese and merely raised by the Indians is immaterial to Jornay's attitude, since he believes her to be of Indian blood.<sup>70</sup> Indian or not, Anne is the embodiment of natural passion, fierce and often possessive; and as such she is the ideal mate for Jornay, the frontier man who has been a victim of the corruption of French society and who does not wish to return to France.

Village of Souls is a type of quest romance in which a central image is the Indian Village of Souls (or after-life). In reality it is a remote plague-stricken village where the once-abducted Lys lies dying of consumption. Jornay's journey to find Lys and his return to Anne are symbolically his quest for self-knowledge. As Jones puts it: "only after she has stripped him of his illusions and herself expired like a

<sup>70</sup> D. G. Jones states definitely that Anne is a half-breed, and he analyzes the relationship persuasively as an example of Jungian re-integration of personality. See Butterfly on Rock, p. 46.

wraith in a dream, does Jornay turn to embrace the girl Anne wholly and without reservation" (p. 46). His marriage to Anne makes him much happier than he has ever been before; certainly, it is free of the nervous tensions that attended his relations with Lys--and with civilization in general.

Also set in New France, Three Came to Ville Marie (1941) continues the important theme that personal success and wholeness come with an acknowledgement of one's natural characteristics. Alan Sullivan quite explicitly links survival with a commitment to the land; he also shows, as Sanford did, that the merest mark of affection to an Indian is sufficient to save the protagonist's life.

Paul de Lorimier, a Breton farmer, has come to New France and taken up a rich farm in Lachine in 1688. The governor gives him two Iroquois prisoners as slaves: a lovely young girl, Eri, and her grandfather, Onato. It is obvious from the beginning that Eri loves Paul and wants to be his woman. Both this love and her sense of her own superior Indian status contribute to her rejection of an alliance with Paul's servant Jean. But at no time is Eri clearly depicted; she is shown only as "the eternal woman, insensible to everything save what pulsed in her half-tamed blood."<sup>71</sup> When one night she abandons her habitual reserve and comes to Paul half-naked--"a daughter of the night, baring her young breast to the goddess moon" (p. 249)--he takes her because he temporarily dismisses as folly his love for Jacqueline, the

<sup>71</sup> Alan Sullivan, Three Came to Ville Marie (Toronto: Oxford Univ. Press, 1941), p. 242.



cultivated and beautiful French girl who jilted him in France. However, although Eri silently renounces her love for Paul when she perceives his love for Jacqueline, it is more than implied that her intervention resulted in Paul and his friends' being the only survivors of the Lachine massacre (1689).

Significantly, Paul is dedicated to the land, and Jacqueline is herself willing to adapt to the demands of the new country. However, such is not the case with Jules, Paul's old friend and Jacqueline's husband. Exiled from France by a court scandal involving Jacqueline, he is bitter and contemptuous of the new land and its inhabitants, both native and white. When he and Paul are wounded and taken prisoner during the abortive chase the day after the massacre, Jules is the one to die; he cannot withstand the abuse and tortures inflicted on him. Paul, however, is once again saved by Eri. Even though Paul barely returns her love, he does respond at one critical point to her overtures and thus accepts the natural side of human life. Eri, who believes herself pregnant by Paul, is as devoted to her white man as Wanda or Onawata or Miratik. Actually her literary ancestry goes back as far as Oucanasta in Richardson's Wacousta; she is the wilderness personified, which assists rather than hinders those whom it loves.

The wilderness loves Roger Sudden, but he does not love her back; and so he dies tragically in pursuit of the destructive illusion of the Golden Woman. Set mainly in Nova Scotia between the founding of Halifax in 1749 and the fall of Louisbourg in 1758, Raddall's historical novel Roger Sudden (1944) shows the fate of the man who mistakenly chooses civilized materialism and abandons a more natural way of life.

The novel exhibits an interesting balance in that the natural life is not idealized, and the civilized life is not castigated. Although one is aware of the values of the Indians and their culture, one is also aware of their limitations and their ineffectuality in stemming the tide of white men. Similarly, although one is aware of the destructiveness of materialism, one sees the pleasures of Roger's material success. The mid-century influence of realism has strongly modified romance formulae in this novel.

In his relationship with the wilderness, Roger never makes the sexual act of commitment which has physically or spiritually saved so many other protagonists of Canadian fiction; instead he masquerades as the husband of Wapke, a beautiful young Micmac widow, whose husband was killed in the skirmish where Roger was taken prisoner. Handsome and masculine, Roger is saved from torture and claimed as a replacement for the dead Peyal, according to the practical race-survival custom of many Indian tribes. However, when Roger is first aware of Wapke, her face blackened in mourning, he is instantly revolted at the idea of mating with "that animal."<sup>72</sup> Even when Wapke comes out of mourning and reveals herself to be young, beautiful, wise, and sensual, Roger refuses to consummate the marriage. Thus he never commits himself to the natural life; his attitude may even be seen as blatant rejection of the primitive:

. . . all his instincts rebelled. To mate with this wild

<sup>72</sup> Thomas H. Raddall, Roger Sudden, introd. by J. R. Leitold (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1972), p. 148.

thing, to produce hybrid things, half beast and half himself, and to live year in year out among these mockeries, like a man shut up in a room hung with distorted mirrors . . . ugh! Darkness! Darkness! (p. 166)

In this passage, then, Roger interprets the idea of mating with an Indian as a reversion to one's bestial components.

However, the same passage indicates that Raddall makes the conventional link between the Indian and the natural world, a link that Roger comes to recognize somewhat less negatively as the years go by. As Leitold says:

From his initial feelings of astonishment and fear at the cruelty of the Indians, particularly the women, he comes to admire their endurance and patience, to understand their innocence and to envy a freedom circumscribed only by the seasons.<sup>73</sup>

But however much Roger may adjust to the Rousseauesque virtues of Indian life, he cannot force himself to enter Wapke's bed. Since she is determined to bear children, she eventually has to ransom Roger to the French and marry an Indian who will, she hopes, help her realize her natural functions.

Although Roger recognizes that with Wapke he is safe from the wilderness and other Indians, yet he lives a fraudulent existence, always aware of the Golden Woman of material success. This Golden Woman has a personification in the form of Mary Foy, a red-haired Jacobite idealist with whom he is in love. Mary is an attractive and sympathetic person,

<sup>73</sup> J. R. Leitold, *Introd.*, Roger Sudden, by Thomas H. Raddall (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1972), p.[v].

but she too is fraudulent and misguided: she poses as a wife, but is a virgin; and her Jacobite zeal has been wasted on a worthless object, her brother. Roger fears the darkness of abandoning himself to an Indian, but ironically he chooses darkness masquerading as the light of idealism. He eventually realizes what Mary really is to him: "it came on me that I'd a Green Dancer in my arms and must pay the penalty. The lad loses her, and his soul as well, doesn't he?" (p. 280).

However, Roger is granted success in his pursuit of the Golden Woman for a period which roughly equals the amount of time he lived with the Micmacs. Strangely enough, it is an Indian totem of great power and antiquity which is linked with Roger's success. But the success is as illusory as his "marriage" to Wapke. When jealous forces gather about Roger and he must seek asylum at Louisbourg, he is caught in the English siege of that fortress and the fish totem is smashed. Back in the Indian camp, Roger begins to realize the significance of what has happened and makes the symbolic statement: "Behold! It is finished, like the Sakawachkik, the Ancient Ones, who made it and whose bones were scattered long ago. So is thy fortune--and mine!" (p. 313). But Roger still fails to understand the role of Wapke in his life; even after she has slain her brutal Indian husband "as the woman slew the warrior in the God-book" (p. 321), he leaves her again to seek Mary in the false belief that she is the only woman who can give him peace.

But at the moment of his execution for treason he is allowed a prophetic vision and a partial realization of the relation of the English to the land they are in the process of conquering and subduing, a vision of a race imposing on rather than adapting to the wilderness

they tame and rejecting union with native women: "the English who were not content to mate with savages but who took their women with them everywhere, resolved not merely to penetrate the wilderness but to people it!" (pp. 357-58). In a way then, Roger Sudden is the prototypical Englishman as Raddall understands him, the representative of a race at odds with the natural world around it. And he never really understands its implications.

Roger Sudden does not lose completely; as a kind of tragic hero he is allowed a partial reversal and recognition. But Tristram Crabtree, the passionate, dark Yorkshireman of Will R. Bird's trilogy of historical novels emerges as a fully developed tragic hero. Here Stays Good Yorkshire (1945), Tristram's Salvation (1957), and Despite the Distance (1961) are basically set in the Cumberland area of Nova Scotia and Halifax in the years immediately before and after the American Revolution. The books do not purport to be authentic history;<sup>74</sup> but Bird has affixed a bibliography of some dozen books on the history and manners of the Cumberland settlers of the late eighteenth century. This list is small compared with the four-page bibliography to Niven's Mine Inheritance (1940), but it is typical of a researched, essentially realistic type of historical fiction which occurs periodically in Canadian literature and which is part of a widely observed documentary tradition. Bird creates for the reader a sense of involvement in the intricacies of daily living, which is at the heart of realism and differs

<sup>74</sup> Will R. Bird, Pref., Here Stays Good Yorkshire (Toronto: Ryerson, 1945), p. vii.

from the types and idealizations of romance. In both the love scenes and the fighting scenes Bird avoids the heroic, the melodramatic, and the sentimental.

Tristram Crabtree is a Hardy-esque character of violent, irresponsible temperament, which leads him into, among other things, murdering an ugly pock-marked Indian by the name of Sour Bear, and fathering a child on Marsh Rose, the beautiful, seductive daughter of the local Indian chief. In a way the two Indians focus the two ungovernable aspects of Tristram's character: his weakness for women and his violent temper. For the trilogy is essentially tragic in its structure; it features a flawed protagonist who possesses exceptional energy and acumen, who rises to a position of considerable prestige and prosperity in his community, and who, as a result of pride and his flaws, loses control of his position and himself, wanders for a year, and in the face of total social rejection in his old community goes to live humbly in Halifax. Here he at last finds spiritual comfort, which culminates in his self-sacrificial death to save the life of his hitherto-rejected half-breed son.

The historical novels of Bird and Raddall provide a short interlude of realism in a theme dominated by non-realistic fiction. With Wayland Drew's Wabeno Feast (1973) we return once again to non-realistic fiction, in this case science fiction. Like Roger Sudden, Drummond McKay, the eighteenth-century trader whose journal provides the historical and symbolic focus for the book, cannot go more than half-way into a life that will be spiritually fulfilling. He cannot abandon himself to the wilderness, once again personified as an Indian woman.

His colleague Elborn says of him:

. . . you are a poor, meek coward! . . . Afraid to choose. Afraid to die. Afraid to go into life even after you have seen what it might be. Even after she has shown you. You must plan, and think, and cherish your puny ideals until you end crouched by your miserable fire, alone.<sup>75</sup>

The beautiful Indian woman is a member of a band, gathered under Miskobenasa, who are consciously resisting the technology (and attendant demoralization) of the white man. She is clearly a personification of unspoiled natural life: Miskobenasa's entire band is depicted in the manner of Rousseau's Noble Savage, and the ideal of life they represent requires total abandonment of civilized trappings.

McKay wins their confidence and with it the lovely young Indian woman, but he cannot himself give up his white ways: he continues writing and keeping his journal, and he starts to build a large, white-style dwelling. As he reconstructs his old way of life and dissociates himself from the natural life around him by "the killing of great trees" (p. 258), he gradually estranges the Indian woman. Just before she leaves him, she challenges his values:

It is not for me that you must build such things to continue after you are gone, yet never live. It is very sad, that you must write in your books what you believe has happened to you. It is very sad that you cannot see the evidence on every side of what life is, and strength, and pride, but you must invent your own ideas and exist by them and die. And it is sad that you cannot see what a woman is, but must use her as you would an implement, or an excuse for the evidence of your own disease. (pp. 259-60)

<sup>75</sup> Wayland Drew, The Wabeno Feast (Toronto: Anansi, 1973), p. 264.

In the late twentieth century, Paul and Liv Henry, who have acquired this journal, read it as they travel by canoe "all the way" out of the civilized, technological world which has literally collapsed. As they read it, they also burn it, the last wordly remains of a man who was afraid to go all the way.

The Wabeno Feast, then, is a further example in fiction of the dominant Canadian theme that was suggested as early as Wacousta, that too much civilization is destructive; and that once the individual has suppressed the natural, spontaneous, passionate element in his character, he is either destroyed or left incomplete. The integrating process of self-discovery usually means shucking off the trappings of civilization, whether they be social responsibility, bureaucratic duty, or a Ph.D. thesis.<sup>76</sup>

Obviously, wherever a positive statement is made, there will be a negative reaction. Thus a few Canadian writers construct narratives in which a sexual liaison with an Indian is depicted not as life-giving, but instead as destructive or life-denying. In some respects this position was implied in An Algonquin Maiden, which suggested that Edward made the right choice in rejecting Wanda and not yielding to his

<sup>76</sup> Alexander Knox's Totem Dream (1973), although classified as a Canadian novel, shows the influence of the author's forty-years' residence in the United States. Rather than having to choose, the young hero ends up with both the good job and two beautiful Indian women. The fiction is quite eccentric to the works discussed so far. Since a father-figure has to be killed before the hero can achieve his success, one is inclined to endorse Robert Kroetsch's "suspicion" that "Canadian writing tends to be Jungian, whereas American writing tends to be Freudian" ("The Canadian Writer and the American Literary Tradition," The English Quarterly, 4, No. 2 [1971], 47).



animal nature. Such a negative position was also darkly hinted at by Richardson in the character of Wacousta. In keeping with the strong nineteenth-century belief in progress, industrialization, and the perfectability of man, it is quite logical that the ideals of rational white imperialism should be victorious in any conflict during this period; it marks a victory for civilization. Although these early works express regrets about the displacement or destruction of the Indian, there is a small body of twentieth-century works which depict a sexual liaison with an Indian in negative terms and which conclude in an unambiguous statement of the positive worth of civilized values.

The earliest of the full-length works<sup>77</sup> to do so is Jane Rolyat's Wilderness Walls (1933), which is obviously modelled on Conrad's Heart of Darkness,<sup>78</sup> and which deals with the destructive potential of the Indian lover. Wilderness Walls is set in a Hudson's Bay post in the Lake Nippissing area in the years immediately before Confederation, and it explicitly presents a confrontation between the wilderness and the outposts of civilization: the primal forest seems like a garrison confronting the Company post with its crumbling pallisades and the mission with its vegetable garden. The wilderness and the Indian are specifi-

<sup>77</sup> There are two short stories from the turn of the century which depict the Indian lover in negative--even demonic--terms: Josette Gertrude Menard, "An Indian Lover," The Canadian Magazine, 5 (1895), 242-49 (a seemingly ideal Indian lover lapses into primitive behaviour and thus becomes responsible for the death of his white sweetheart's father); and W.A. Fraser, "The Medicine-Making of Naskiwis," The Canadian Magazine, 21 (1903), 19-23 (superstitious belief in demonic possession by a former Indian sweetheart leads to a death).

<sup>78</sup> Although I can find no external evidence that the parallel was intended, the internal evidence is very strong.

cally linked in the emphasis on their stillness, their mystery, and their essential hostility to the white invaders.

Wilderness Walls is an initiation romance in which the protagonist Vincent Reid must confront and come to grips with the wilderness both internal and external. The question is whether or not he will survive. Like Conrad's Marlow he journeys deep into the wilderness where a group of half-civilized Indians live around a half-wild trading post. Only vestiges of civilization remain: a servant who normally wears moccasins replaces them with boots when he comes indoors; the employees perform dinner parades; Chief Factor St. Clair makes speeches and babbles poetry and keeps his dusty house as a kind of monument to his late wife (while the forest debris circulates with the dust on the floor). The Indians are collectively ambivalent: those clustered around the fort seem lifeless, except for Pecuchie who supervises the traditional canoe-building.

Twenty-year-old Vincent has come into the company's service full of the romance of the North; and soon after his arrival he feels the appeal of the rhythmic native drums as well as the hostility of the wall of silence holding in the forest. He is fascinated by Cingebis, the ideal voyageur who disappears on the trip up, and by McIvor, the Scottish half-breed clerk who apparently received an inheritance and went back to a life of ease in Scotland and whose progressively more chaotic accounts Vincent must put into some kind of order. The mystery of the narrative hinges on the revelation that these two characters are the same man.

Conventionally, there are two women: Camille, a young French woman,

symbol of civilized order; and Ada, a young Indian girl, symbol of the wilderness. Ada is immediately attracted to Vincent, but he considers her ugly and barbaric with her flat face, her shapeless dress, and the thimbles jingling in her hair. As well, Vincent is devoted to the memory of Camille in her white dress; her photograph, together with the precepts of his penmanship school and the pressures of hard work, serves to keep Vincent from giving in to the appeal of the native drums and from lapsing during his initiation period into what is depicted as undesirable savagery.

One Sunday, while chasing Ada's little brother through the woods, Vincent becomes lost, discovers a trail of blood, follows it, encounters Cingebis, fights and wins. This incident marks Vincent's first victory over a primitive force, a force which is explicitly depicted as demonic. Cingebis's name is constantly juxtaposed with images of snakes and references to Mephistopheles; and the smouldering ground fire which Vincent briefly mistakes for gold is reputedly the remains of a forest fire set years earlier by Cingebis-McIvor.<sup>79</sup> This association with the demonic is even more emphatically made when Vincent finally realizes that Cingebis is actually McIvor, who never did go back to Scotland:

The voyageur who had quarrelled with Pecuchie, the wretched and malicious bookkeeper. . . . the mythical hero of his dream, the duck of his dream, the owner of the buried box of stones, were one and the same person, were the flesh and blood with whom Vincent had wrestled in the forest above and

<sup>79</sup> Jane Rolyat [pseud. E. Jean McDougall], Wilderness Walls (London: Dent, 1933), pp. 186-87; 237-38.

vanquished, the red devil whom he had last seen pounding past the mound, where Vincent lay hidden, pounding past infuriated, smoking with rage like an all-devouring flame of fire.

Glittering rings on his arms, ankles, shining discs of silver in his ears, a ring in his nose, from whose shorn head had floated an enormous plume attached to a single tuft of hair, from whose neck had dangled a necklace of human bones--McIvor, reverted to savagery, still abroad in the country.  
(p. 248)

As Vincent continues to reject Ada he becomes aware of her relationship with McIvor and realizes that the mysterious box contains not only ore samples, but most probably the body of Ada and McIvor's infant (p. 265). Like Kurtz, McIvor literally embraced the wilderness to the extent of going completely wild and performing an unspeakable act. And at the end, like Marlow, Vincent receives an enlightenment (clearer to him than to the reader) as he spies on the last rendez-vous of Ada and McIvor before they vanish, "reverted irrevocably to savagery" (p. 258). Dressed as an Indian, McIvor is silhouetted by torchlight as Ada runs to his embrace: "the light went out . . . leaving all in darkness again, the hero in his hiding place in jet-black darkness, yet greatly enlightened" (p. 254).

Having gradually found throughout the story the strength not to fear or despair, and having come to an understanding of the appeal and dangers of reverting to savagery, Vincent does not collapse when he learns of Camille's intention to return to France. Unlike McIvor, Vincent has been able to resist the lure of the wilderness (partly seen in the temptations of Ada); he will likely continue to bring progress and order into the "colossal stillness" of the wilderness and into the lives of its aboriginal inhabitants.

Rolyat's Indians are not flesh and blood realities. Instead, they are depicted as psychological impressions, or pressures, with only selected features treated in any detail. Wilderness Walls can in no way be construed as a realistic novel and I cannot share Desmond Pacey's rejection of it as a mere romantic and sentimental tale with some fairly exact descriptions of geography and the work of a trading post clerk.<sup>80</sup> To judge it as a realistic novel manqué is to misread it, to ignore the effect of Vincent's point of view, and to disregard the symbolic expression of the relationship of civilization to savagery, seen in part in the relations between men and women.

Also saved by his rejection of an Indian girl is Godfrey Bethune in MacDowell's Champlain Road (1939), but MacDowell gives more than mere physical revulsion as a reason. Arakoua (Little Sunbeam), the daughter of Huronia's foremost warchief, is beautiful, rich, and powerful; but she is darkness masquerading as light. She is aggressively jealous and selfish and ultimately treacherous to her desired lover and to her community. She indirectly destroys one young man whom she ensnares out of spite to Godfrey, and almost murders Godfrey himself so that she can meet him in the Land of Souls. But unlike Rolyat's stylized picture of Indian savagery and demoralization, McDowell's is a realistic picture of all the various personality types that go to make up a society on the verge of collapse; Arakoua is simply one specific destructive type that contributes to the destruction from within. None

<sup>80</sup> Desmond Pacey, "Fiction: 1920-1940," in Literary History of Canada, p. 666.

the less Bethune's survival and success are based in part on his rejection of relations with this obviously unsuitable, although beautiful, Indian woman.

In the same vein is Perrault's The Kingdom Carver (1968), a work which is quite anomalous to the general tone of fiction about Indians in the year of its publication. It presents without qualification the aggressive male chauvinist attitudes of the period it discusses (the era of the Great War) and treats negatively the female characters of the narrative: at best they are a hindrance, at worst they are a downright menace. All the major male characters are handicapped by women: Mr. Laird has to leave his wife and family behind in order to go out and make an independent success; his son Dave was expelled from school for some intimate experimentation with his girlfriend at a school picnic; their white assistant McKillop has a weakness for women and is running away from two wives; and their Indian assistant Johnny George is constantly under pressure from his wife, Teresa. Teresa is vain, selfish, lazy, and promiscuous, as well as beautiful; it is her obvious wish to advance materially, and Johnny is an ambitious, far-seeing man who will be able to provide for her. But she destroys him by abusing his love for her, so that he quite literally gives up wanting to live when she runs off with Townsend, the Englishman.<sup>81</sup>

Townsend she also destroys; a year or so later Dave comes upon Teresa and Townsend in a small cabin, Townsend rotting in the last

<sup>81</sup> E. G. Perrault, The Kingdom Carver (Toronto: Doubleday, 1968), p. 245.

stages of venereal disease. Somewhat later again, in Vancouver, while trying to set financial matters right for his father, Dave picks up some important business information from Pelley, a man who once cheated the Lairds. But Dave also learns that Teresa is now a prostitute and Pelley is her regular customer; corrupt and diseased, but still beautiful, Teresa is transforming Pelley into her next victim. The independent financial success of the Lairds' enterprise is assured, and Dave flees from his own prostitute companion.

Written during a period of growing interest in women's rights, Indian rights, and conservation, The Kingdom Carver is eccentric in its endorsement of the idea that men have the right to carve out their kingdom from the wilderness, no matter what happens to nature; that women are a serious handicap to men's realizing their goals; and that the Indian woman embodies all the dangers of women magnified. Also clear is the message that a man must be able to suppress the beast within if he is to achieve this success. The beast within is explicitly seen as sexual abandon to one's most primitive passions, personified here as a wholly unworthy, but exceedingly tempting, Indian woman.

##### 5. Primitive Vitality

Twentieth-century historical fiction about Indian lovers has not been generically consistent: it has run the gambit from the improbable and popular romance to the more realistic tragedy. However, with only a few exceptions, a liaison with an Indian, however brief, is viewed as beneficial, usually physically, and at times psychologically as well.

Some of the psychological implications of the Dionysian primitive (the figure lurking outside the walls of orthodoxy) we have already seen suggested by several writers over the years--from John Richardson through Mazo de la Roche to W. O. Mitchell. But it is in the fiction of the past twenty years or so that Canadian writers have become increasingly pre-occupied with the psychological role of the Indian and with the concept of the primitive figure as a source of creative energy; only the character who can dissociate himself from established society can avail himself of this energy. The protagonist no longer sits behind the protective walls of his social structure regretting having conquered (or suppressed) his natural self; instead he throws over convention, seeks the expression of his natural and creative components, and ceases to care about being accepted.<sup>82</sup> He is thus able to create, whether the creation be babies, or works of art, or both.

This creativity is linked not only to the rediscovery of the natural, intuitive self, but also to the discovery of where real meaning lies. As long as writers equated civilization with male rational order, they equated the wilderness and its inhabitants (normally Indians) with disorder: for example, Wanda, Onawata, and Fawnie. However, once writers came to equate civilization with meaningless order and conformity, they began also to find real meaning and vitality in the apparent disorder of the natural world. Criticism of social values gone astray has been seen in the group of "reversed" pastorals, but the full mythic impli-

<sup>82</sup> This corresponds to what Margaret Atwood in Survival ([Toronto: Anansi, 1972], pp. 38-39) calls Victim Position Four.



cations require a less traditional literary form.

With the growing disregard of the conventions of realism in recent years, authors have found that they can depict this conflict between nature and civilization in a more abstract way. What was once placed in a fairly realistic rural or historical setting is now set in a kind of dream world which bears greater resemblance to the world of romance than to the world as we know it. What was once an heroic conflict between a paradise of ordered civilized society and the forces of disorder threatening it becomes an ironic one in which what once appeared paradisaical is revealed to be "a deceitful illusion that turns out to be demonic, or a destructive vision."<sup>83</sup> The two-way movement of romance is easily seen in this new kind of fiction as a descent into the absurdities of modern civilized life, depicted as destructive, and an escape into a new, full, and creative life which approaches the statement of a new mythology.

The Canadian novels of Margaret Laurence illustrate a developing absorption with this kind of primitivism while remaining basically realistic in mode. The Indian interest in Laurence's work lies in the characters of the Métis family, the Tonnerres. Margaret Laurence creates three generations of Tonnerres in her Manawaka fiction; indeed, there are Tonnerres in all of them except A Jest of God. From The Stone Angel on, they gradually develop in significance until The Diviners, when the nomadic Jules Tonnerre becomes the mate of Morag and the

<sup>83</sup> Northrop Frye, The Secular Scripture (Cambridge: Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1976), p. 98.

father of Pique.

The Tonnerres have little beyond a symbolic function in The Stone Angel (1964). In keeping with one of the central image patterns of the novel--the wild versus the cultivated--the Tonnerres live in shacks outside the pales of Manawaka, just as the wild weeds are fenced off from the portly peonies in the cemetery. The headstrong Hagar has responded to a repressed physical need when she accepts the sensual proposals of Bram Shipley and marries him, only to spend most of her married life trying to civilize him. The message of the novel, that Hagar's pride was her wilderness, needs characters without this artificial pride to underline the message and to point out the destructive nature of Calvinist repression of the natural man.<sup>84</sup> Bram's association with Indians, Métis, and horses symbolically emphasizes his natural, physical character. Similarly, Matt. Currie's association with old Jules Tonnerre and John Shipley's friendship with Lazarus Tonnerre serve to underline the mysterious and untamable in the characters of Hagar's brother and son.

The two daughters of Lazarus Tonnerre, Piquette and Valentine, are both destroyed in their liaisons with white men; their lives are real, sordid, and tragic. Piquette is first seen in "The Loons" of

<sup>84</sup> Martha Ostenso treated this theme many years earlier in Wild Geese (1925). Here Ellen turns down her Métis suitor Malcolm, her ticket to a new life, because she lacks the courage to defy her father, whose warped values imprison her. Rudy Wiebe also treated the destructive nature of narrow religious precepts in Peace Shall Destroy Many (1962). Here Elizabeth Block, hungry for a man, goes to the bed of the half-breed farmhand Louis Moosamin. However, Elizabeth is unable to resist the pressures of her stern Mennonite father; she is unable to follow through this natural urge with a commitment; and consequently, the child she conceives is stillborn and she herself dies in childbirth.

A Bird in the House (1970) having her tubercular leg treated by Dr. McLeod at the McLeod's summer cottage. She is older than Vanessa McLeod, who is full of romantic and adventurous stories of Poundmaker, Big Bear, Tecumseh, Pauline Johnson, Hiawatha, and Jesuit-torturing Iroquois. Piquette resents Vanessa's Indian questions because she is desperate to be considered white, even more so than Fawnie of Possession. A few years later, loud and vulgarly dressed, she tells Vanessa that she is going to marry a blond white man with an English name:

For the merest instant, then, I saw her. I really did see her, for the first and only time in all the years we had both lived in the same town. Her defiant face, momentarily, became unguarded and unmasked, and in her eyes there was a terrifying hope.<sup>85</sup>

But the primitive cannot escape to civilization; it will destroy him. So Alvin Gerald Cummings of the blond hair and classy name takes what Piquette has to offer and then runs off, leaving her with two children and an inner wish to annihilate herself through liquor.<sup>86</sup> She dies with her children shortly after in a fire. Morag of The Diviners (1974) has to cover the fire story for the newspaper and can only notice the sweetish smell of burnt flesh and burnt wood and reflect on the reality of the smell as an ironic comment on the romantic name for the

<sup>85</sup> Margaret Laurence, "The Loons," in A Bird in the House (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1970), p. 124.

<sup>86</sup> Piquette's younger sister, Valentine, appears briefly in The Fire-Dwellers (1969) as a Vancouver prostitute. Although she is conventionally "noble" in that she does Stacey a good turn, she is realistically bent on self-destruction too, through drugs and alcohol.

half-breed--the Bois-Brulés.<sup>87</sup>

With The Diviners Margaret Laurence has shifted from the realistic mode of her earlier work into a format more closely resembling that of quest romance, which clearly pits the sterility of conventional society against the vitality of that society's outcasts; these outcasts have the gift of transforming the sordid realities of life through their legends and folklore into an expression of human aspiration. Jules Tonnerre and Christie Logan bring to Morag a sense of the clearer vision of the outcast: Christie, the garbageman, can, like a priest, "tell the garbage": Jules can see through Morag's apparent acceptance of her outcast status to recognize her conformist ambitions. Christie tells her glorious tales of her ancestor Piper Gunn and the Selkirk settlers, and of her father Gunner Gunn, the war hero; all the stories are exaggerations or fabrications. Jules tells of Rider Tonnerre, the prairie horse-lord, black-bearded, seven feet tall, whose career spanned most of the period from the Seven Oaks Massacre (1816) to the Riel Rebellion of 1870; these stories too are improbable and exaggerated.

The Diviners summarizes three generations of white-Métis relations. The reality is there, often sordid, petty, and tragic. But with the family stories and songs (which can transform even Piquette's sad life and death) Margaret Laurence is telling readers that romance is necessary, that the human spirit will always edit its memorybank movies and select the significant, the grand, the heroic--all those things which

<sup>87</sup> Margaret Laurence, The Diviners (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974), p. 129.

put romance into lives that are otherwise stifled, all those things which glorify the defeats one has suffered or the small victories one has achieved.<sup>88</sup>

Morag Gunn is white, but an outcast, and so on a meeting ground with the outcast Tonnerres. However, being white, she can overcome her social handicaps and enter the polite world she has always desired: a job, nice clothes, a college education. Without this interlude of "civilization," Morag would never have found the psychological stability she later finds when she rejects the artificial world. Her husband, Brooke Skelton, the English professor, is an apparently idyllic, but really shallow, mate (brook) who proves to be a suppressor of life (few things are more lifeless than skeletons); he wants no children and treats Morag as an attractive, companionable piece of furniture, not as a human being. He is very respectable and respected, but he is blind to Morag's real humanity and is blatantly racist in his attitude to Jules.

With Jules, however vagrant and unpredictable, Morag finds the fulfillment she needs: a spontaneous, rewarding sex life; a fruitful career as a writer; and a child, Pique. Neither Morag nor Jules lays any claim to the other; their lives are mutually satisfying and supportive when they meet, independent when they are apart. Their child also grows up to reject the settled life of civilization and returns to

<sup>88</sup> W. P. Kinsella echoes this sentiment when his Indian narrator decides not to correct a factual error in a local legend because of the good things the legend does for its listeners ("The Kid in the Stove," in Dance Me Outside [Ottawa: Oberon, 1977], pp. 81-85).

the bush to help her Uncle Jacques raise orphaned and abandoned Métis children.

With Pique's decision comes a pastoral resolution to the whole history of the Tonnerres in their relation with white society: a move away from the debilitating proximity of sterile civilization and a commitment to natural life. The happy coincidences which result in the return of the hunting knife and the plaid pin to representatives of the race for which each is a symbol (Jules and Morag) provide the conventional romantic birthright talisman for Pique, who will inherit them both. The romance is thus a comic one of re-integration (of both society and personality) and hopeful new beginnings.

In Fallout (1969) Peter Such also shows the coming together of two cultures, physically and spiritually (there is an important image pattern based on Thunderbird and on Noah's Ark). Set in the Elliott Lake-Blind River area during the uranium boom of the 1950's, the narrative portrays the transforming character of spontaneous, natural love over the killing effects of modern technology. This victorious transformation is symbolized by the love of Marian Machar (teen-age daughter of a white technocrat) and Robert (a somewhat older man and a traditional Indian).

From the beginning, both Marian and Robert are seen in terms of both their own and the other's culture, a fact which prepares us for their eventual union. For example, Marian befriends several Indians in the story and is described thus: "Marian Gazelle, Marian the deerfoot, Marian the bounding one. Under her moccasins dry lichens crackled."<sup>89</sup>

Robert, on the other hand, drives a decrepit black Lincoln decorated with an "old thunderbird made flightless fallen from mountain, wounded still screaming out thunder" (p. 22), is going to take a welding course, and has tuberculosis, "the cough of my people . . . our cough we all die with" (p. 47)--a legacy of the white man.

But Robert is also the leader of the gang of young Indians and basically a pagan; he is the only one of the group to have trusted the snake gods to carry him on their backs through the cataracts of the Snake (now Spanish) River:

. . . snake-back he could ride there and the hissing called him leap then, leap then. When he leaped was joy, was terror, in the heavy water, weight like hands that pushed him under; but beneath his guts the upforce threw him wild like riding, he could ride it, laughter in his guts the snake men bore him past the cliffs and he was hundreds of flung yards out into the bay before the terrible strong race had left him floating quite exhausted. . . . (p. 25)

Here is a man who can dare and survive, thanks, it seems, to a belief in the old ways.

This pagan element is present again when Marian and Robert first make love. They go out together on Robert's boat, which is explicitly an ark symbol, the implication being that they will survive the holocaust ahead. While they fish, they follow all the Indian laws for appeasing the fish gods; and when they make love, they do so in the presence of the sky god and the wood god. Their love-making is an ideal of togetherness, and their subsequent fishing is surrounded by

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the mystery of nature: "Fish-god you have spoken twice--once in beauty, once in power" (p. 111); "he was a man now, full strength . . . He had held the fish-god and spoken with him. His mind was large enough" (p. 112).

The absurdity of the white world is made clear when the uranium operation closes down before it begins production; the death-dealing of white civilization is symbolized by the car accident which kills whites and Indians alike. Marian recognizes the power of nature when the tornado rips through the town, devastating everything in its path; at this point she suddenly and spontaneously jumps out a broken window to join Robert and avoid her family's rigid plans for her future.

Although the Indian in this couple is closer to life and nature, Such seems to say that the Indian has no special prerogative and that the white can respond to the life force and nourish the creative impulse it fosters. The creative impulse here is seen in terms of artistic creation rather than in terms of babies. The beginning and closing frames of the story describe this creativity: in an abandoned gas station along the highway lives a white woman, who rides a stallion to an old refinery to bring back industrial detritus which her Indian husband welds into sculpture. The most notable sculpture is a fantastic totem created from car scraps, surmounted by a Ford Thunderbird "black, with a red grille mouth" (p. 142). Such thus affirms the creativity of the complete natural man (symbolized in the strange mating of white industry with the pagan gods) and the ability of man to transform the ironic into the mythic--the debris of a wasted civilization into a new statement of faith.



Matt Cohen's Wooden Hunters (1975) also explores the opposition of nature and civilization and the vitality of the Indian. Laurel Hobson, a Vancouver girl, returns to a Pacific Island with her boyfriend Calvin six years after her first visit. That earlier visit provided her with her first sexual experience; like Marian Machar, Laurel Hobson mates with an Indian man considerably older than herself. Johnny Tulip is tubercular, like Robert, and is also connected with preservation of the old ways (notably by his blowing up some industrial machinery which is destroying old Indian sacred grounds in the name of progress).

On a purely realistic level, the book is a picture of escapism through drugs, liquor, and sex. Also realistic is the demoralizing relationship Johnny's sister Mary Gail has with the American entrepreneur, C. W. Smith, owner of the local hotel. Smith is a new version of that old character, the exploitive, soulless American who destroys nature and has no respect for Indians or traditions. But the book works on another level. As in many narratives of the past ten years, there is a mythic sense of moving down through the absurdities of contemporary experience and re-emerging with something positive: out of the dregs of human experience evolves a new mythology.

Of the several significant patterns of imagery in Wooden Hunters the Indians are mainly associated with the wood imagery. They are especially associated with the decaying cedar totem poles, which are superficially rotten but sound at the core, and with the mystical second sight of Johnny Tulip's blind mother who has polished wooden orbs in place of her eyes. The organic, the human, the durable, and the spiritual are thus interwoven, forming the web of life which

enmeshes Laurel and her boyfriend Calvin. Laurel's name is also explicitly linked to the natural world: Laurel means both a kind of salmon and an evergreen shrub.<sup>90</sup>

The literature of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in Canada saw in the white-Indian liaison a way of showing a superior rational order (male) modifying or being victorious over the inferior intuitive order (female). The women suffered the results of the new order in all respects. In this new kind of romance represented by Wooden Hunters, the female life-force figure is often a white woman drawing on the energies of a natural man to revitalize a sterile society. Lady Chatterly was an early English example; Morag produced Pique; Marian Machar helped Robert create meaning out of chaos; and here Laurel, whose relations with Calvin have made her pregnant, becomes the carrier of new vitality back to her culture. "You have a good future," says Johnny Tulip's mother as she opens her eyelids from the polished false eyes, which are as durable, mystical and real as the rounded eyes of totem pole figures (p. 219).

One reviewer of Wooden Hunters comments that "Cohen's Indians do not escape the romanticism that blurs the portraits of most Indians in recent Canadian novels."<sup>91</sup> And apparently contradicting, John Moss states that "Cohen writes essentially realistic fiction."<sup>92</sup> However,

<sup>90</sup> Matt Cohen, Wooden Hunters (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1975), pp. 169-70.

<sup>91</sup> Francis Mansbridge, rev. of Wooden Hunters, by Matt Cohen, Canadian Fiction Magazine, No. 20 (1976), p. 102.

<sup>92</sup> John Moss, Introd., Wooden Hunters, by Matt Cohen (Toronto:

both comments, particularly the former, are somewhat misleading. Like many of his contemporaries, Cohen is working within a psychological framework where archetypes are all-important; such fiction may have all the graphic reality of a Colville row-boat without being realistic. The Indian characters in Wooden Hunters are only superficially realistic; their function is considerably more abstract, almost allegorical. Fiction of this sort approaches a type which is closely related to the romance and called fabulation:

Such narratives suspend realistic illusion in some significant degree in the interests of a freedom in plotting characteristic of romance or in the interest of an explicitly allegorical manipulation of meaning, or both. They also tend to draw inspiration from certain popular forms of literature, or subliterate, in which the arousal and gratification of very basic fictional appetites (such as wonder, wish fulfillment, suspense) are only loosely controlled by the disciplines of realism: especially science fiction, pornography and the thriller.<sup>93</sup>

Leonard Cohen's Beautiful Losers (1966) is such a work of fiction and uses the appeal of pornography to make it probably the earliest of Canadian narratives to exploit the Indian character in an almost purely abstract way. The book departs quite radically from the conventional white girl-Indian girl division. Both the major women characters are Indian: Catherine Tekakwitha, the saintly Iroquois virgin; and Edith, the narrator's Indian wife. Beyond the facts of Catherine Tekakwitha's

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McClelland and Stewart, 1975), p. xi.

<sup>93</sup> David Lodge, The Novelist at the Crossroads (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971), pp. 19-20.

life and the superficial realism of incidents such as Edith at thirteen being raped by four white men in a stone quarry, there is virtually no realism in the depiction of these Indian women. Nor is either of them what one would call natural, in the way one thinks of the word in connection with Wanda or Fawnie. Both Catherine and Edith are "whitened," Catherine by the Jesuits who teach mortification of the flesh, Edith by modern cosmetic technology which teaches glorification of the flesh. The seventeenth-century Mohawk community surrounding Catherine Tekakwitha is depicted as obsessed with sex and procreation, while Catherine recognizes and renounces her body's urges and continually frustrates the aims of her lascivious old aunts to get her married. The culmination of this sexuality occurs in the Andacwandet, or "fuck-cure," dreamed by Catherine's ailing uncle.<sup>94</sup> This pure sensuality is complemented by the myth of Oscatarach, the Head Piercer, who removes the brains from those who pass to the Eternal Hunt (p. 114) and thus assures salvation through the conquest of the rational.

As a student of Indian folk-lore the narrator is familiar with these and other Indian traditions, which remind him constantly of his own passivity and inability to get out of his head long enough to have a natural, spontaneous sexual experience--specifically an orgasm. F (his mentor, friend, or alter ego) persistently challenges him to get out of himself and finally tells him to "Fuck a saint." The book is basically the narrator's quest to do so and thus reintegrate his body

<sup>94</sup> Leonard Cohen, Beautiful Losers (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1966), pp. 128-32.

and spirit.

Edith, a creation of modern cosmetic technology, also cannot achieve a climax, except with a Danish vibrator, a creation of artificial erotic technology. (She even commits suicide in terms of modern technology: under a descending elevator propelled by a fast food delivery boy.) Nor can any amount of holy water from Tekakwitha's spring (shot up like drugs) stimulate a spiritual satisfaction in her life. Eventually Edith as a character merges with Catherine in the epilogue. Here they become a beautiful blond housewife in a fast car and moccasins, naked from the waist down, who directs the narrator's final sexual act-- seen as a kind of salvation.

In spite of its excesses, Beautiful Losers exploits once again the theme of the white rape of the natural world, the male supreme over a female victim. The conquest may be white, male Christianity with its anti-life ideals of virginity and denial of the body; or it may be by white male technology which creates beautiful, lifeless shells. But Cohen implies that the active dedication in the limited lives of Catherine and Edith is preferable to the impotent, cerebral life led by the narrator before he goes through his long period of self-mortification in the tree-house. In spite of its rather obsessive sexuality Beautiful Losers actually points to a conventional view of the natural Indian as embodying life and of white technology destroying life. The reintegration of the narrator's physical and cerebral selves is not very different from Carlyle Sinclair's rejection of a rational world of mathematical illusions for the irrational world of life's processes. As D. G. Jones says: "Beautiful Losers celebrates the triumph of the out-

cast irrational world against an overly exclusive and overly mechanical rationalism."<sup>95</sup>

Robert Kroetsch also uses the Indian as a symbol of the irrational and of sexual vitality in three of his works: The Studhorse Man (1969), Gone Indian (1973), and Badlands (1975). Although these narratives depict comparatively few actual instances of Indians involved in sexual unions, none the less, the Indian is consistently associated with the procreative and life forces, to the point that the works take on the overtones of fertility myths.

In an interview a few years ago with Donald Cameron, Kroetsch spoke both of the difficulties and limitations of trying to create or define a "realistic" experience and of the absurdity of the modern Canadian situation. "I suppose Canadians have a front-row seat on power and yet feel powerless quite often, and develop a sense of the absurd out of their own predicament."<sup>96</sup> This sense of the absurd is an important part of the ironic mode which Frye says prevails in modern literature.<sup>97</sup> But Frye also notes how the circular movement of the five modes can clarify certain aspects of modern literature:

Irony descends from the low mimetic: it begins in realism and dispassionate observation. But as it does so, it moves steadily towards myth, and dim outlines of sacrificial rituals

<sup>95</sup> D. G. Jones, Butterfly on Rock (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1970), p. 81.

<sup>96</sup> Donald Cameron, "Robert Kroetsch: The American Experience and the Canadian Voice," Journal of Canadian Fiction, 1, No. 3 (1972), 48-49.

<sup>97</sup> Northrop Frye, Anatomy of Criticism (1957; rpt. New York: Atheneum, 1966), p. 60 (hereafter noted as AC).

and dying gods begin to reappear in it.<sup>98</sup>

The nightmarish negation of the ironic, and the dream-like affirmation of the mythic are to be found in the Kroetsch books under discussion. Kroetsch himself speaks with enthusiasm of the mythic trickster figure, "the force that gets you out of the rational frame."<sup>99</sup> Trickster figures such as coyote and raven are, of course, extremely important in Indian mythology and are in Jungian terms: "the first, rudimentary stage in the development of the hero myth."<sup>100</sup>

The Indian as a character has a minor but significant role in The Studhorse Man. First, Hazard Lepage has a dream in which an Indian delivers a telegram and asks for his skull back. The telegram bears a sexual message: "BRING SKULL WITH YOU STOP WHERE ARE ELBOW KNEES PECKER LOVE MARTHA," to which Hazard replies: "CANNOT GET AWAY AM IN COFFIN VERY SORRY REGARDS HAZARD."<sup>101</sup> The Indian is thus early associated with the life cycle and sexual energy, which are at the core of primitive mythologies. The second Indian is the young Cree that Hazard saves from drowning along with the colt who will be the ancestor of Poseidon. The Indian appears almost mysteriously and vanishes just as mysteriously, leaving Hazard with a sort of "penis trickster"<sup>102</sup> which

<sup>98</sup> Frye, AC, p. 42.

<sup>99</sup> Cameron, p. 50.

<sup>100</sup> Joseph L. Henderson, "Ancient Myths and Modern Man," in Man and His Symbols, p. 113n.

<sup>101</sup> Robert Kroetsch, The Studhorse Man (Toronto: Macmillan, 1969), p. 19.

<sup>102</sup> For a full discussion of this term see Cameron, p. 50.

will dictate the rest of his life--and his death. The third Indian to be associated with procreation is shy, middle-aged Mr. Running Post, who observes Poseidon's illicit mating with a filly and runs to compliment her owner on his choice of stallion. Kroetsch thus firmly establishes the connection between the Indian and the life cycle.

One image in The Studhorse Man helps to clarify the function of Daniel Beaver in Gone Indian, namely the five compass points mentioned by Sister Raphael: east, south, west, north, and centre (p. 51); the town of Notikeewin is the site of the last great Blackfoot sundance and is thus at the spiritual centre of a vanished culture. It is fitting that the practical Beaver should help Jeremy achieve his quest in such a place.

Manhattan-born Jeremy Sadness, married, Binghamton graduate student, is sent by Mark Madham, his thesis advisor, to Edmonton for a job interview. Dressed as an old-fashioned Indian in buckskin and braids, Jeremy announces to the Custom's agent: "I want to be Grey Owl"<sup>103</sup> (a man who has fascinated Jeremy's romantic nature since boyhood). However, Jeremy has been named after that great utilitarian, Jeremy Bentham. So a conflict between the romantic and the rational is established, as well as the central question of being reborn: do you kill yourself as Archie Belaney and re-emerge as Grey Owl, or do you remain eternally mummified as Jeremy Bentham? Jeremy Sadness has already decided.

But Jeremy's immediate problem is more tangible: he cannot make love lying down. He thus goes through a series of adventures patterned

<sup>103</sup> Robert Kroetsch, Gone Indian (Toronto: New Press, 1973), p. 6.



as romance, in which the descent involves false identity, alienation, and false accusation, before he recovers his identity and sexual prowess. In Edmonton he accidentally assumes the suitcase and, later, the identity, woman, and job of one Roger Dorck, who is in a coma following a snowmobile accident. To this false identity must be added his false Indian identity; he is thus a divided person with two false identities. He must find himself.

Jeremy's character is ambivalent. Although he is running the absurd festival as if he were Dorck, he is dressed as an Indian, is resented as such, and is beaten and robbed. When he is thus stripped of all his fake Indian gear, Daniel Beaver and his wife take him in and give him real Indian clothes of their own. Daniel Beaver also expresses his admiration for Grey Owl, of whose white identity he was ignorant. He even links Jeremy with Grey Owl: "I knew him in the bush. He was brave like you. He would fight the white man" (p. 101). Kroetsch seems to be stating here that being Indian is a way of life or a state of mind rather than anything purely racial.

In his kindness and common sense, Daniel Beaver is not very different from the old satirical Noble Savage confronting the madness of white civilization. But Beaver is also the agent for a much more mythic resolution. It is while sleeping in the Beavers' truck that Jeremy has an important dream, the one part of the book which explicitly connects Indians with sexuality. In the dream the Indians become revitalized and Jeremy is allowed to be reborn (from a rather Jungian cave) as a buffalo. Thereupon he mates with the mythic Indian figure, the Buffalo Woman, and rediscovers his full sexual vitality; when he awakes he

undergoes a symbolic death (sleeping in a coffin), is reborn as a complete man, abandons his Dorck identity, and discovers he can make love lying down. His success is clearly linked to his association with Indians.

In Badlands Kroetsch goes back even further than the buffalo. Here William Dawe, black-bearded, hunch-backed, and unlikable, leads a paleontological expedition by flat-boat down the Red Deer River in search of dinosaur skeletons. The venture is only a mixed success, because a blasting accident kills one of the party and buries the tail section of the Daweosaurus they are excavating. In summary, the story sounds more realistic than it is; it has a distinctly dream-like and mythic quality about it, with sex and Indians at the core. Actually, there is only one Indian, Anna Yellowbird, a fifteen-year-old war widow who wishes to accompany the expedition. She moves almost like a spirit of the land throughout the story and is early depicted thus:

She was standing by a black birch, her hair and her shoulders wrapped in a bright, patterned blanket, her feet lost in silver-green wolf willow. . . . For an instant Web saw her so clearly he might have recognized the grass, the prairie needles, caught in her long and shapeless dress. She was raising her right hand towards the boat.<sup>104</sup>

She is obviously meant to have some mythic-romantic role to play. However, fifty-six years later when Anna Dawe (William's white daughter) finds her in Gleichen, she is realistically depicted as a dirty, drunken old woman. Still, she has not altogether lost the sense of mystery and

<sup>104</sup> Robert Kroetsch, Badlands (Toronto: New Press, 1975), pp. 23-24.

vitality which enveloped her in the past and which leads eventually to the two women's liberation from the rational systems which Dawe represents.

Part of Dawe's failure is due to his lack of commitment either to Anna or the land. He is greedy and possessive in sex as well as paleontology: "the sexual act as he provoked it, in his diabolical and maliciously meditated and organized and executed fashion, was intended to foreclose on randomness itself" (p. 109). He loves fossilized, not natural, beauty (p. 102); and as the aggressive, organizing, rational male, he says the expedition has no room for women (p. 9). This is a potentially dangerous attitude, certainly a crippling one, and Anna Yellowbird recognizes the fact that he never did as he pleased (p. 26), that he lacked spontaneity. Anna does try to save him: after a fall in which he cracks his knee, she nurses him and makes love to him. But Dawe resists her:

She made him lose the past. He began to hate her for that. Sullen, then, sullen, in the last clinging gesture, absurdly, he unreeled to his mind's eye the field notes he had faked for the world from Web's reluctantly postulated observations. (p. 196)

This was the summer "he ceased to dare to love" (p. 139) and killed himself spiritually.

Dawe is associated with things faked and fossilized instead of creative and procreative. These latter are left to Web, the perpetually sexy, story-telling Web. Web succeeds where Dawe fails. His mind is uncluttered, his response to life natural, his vision somehow clearer. It is he who sees Anna's relation to the land, it is he who wins at

squaw-wrestling with the snake-man in the cave, it is he who discovers the great skeleton of the Daweosaurus. He is a whole man. Anna Dawe recognizes this characteristic and presents much of the symbolic commentary as she herself seeks wholeness and new beginnings. At the end of the book both she and Anna Yellowbird liberate themselves from the ghost of Dawe by throwing away all his faked notes, his records, and his photographs.

With Badlands, then, Kroetsch has further endorsed the theory proposed by D. G. Jones that the garrison must admit the wilderness and mix with it in order to survive. But these three books of Kroetsch's also pose a bleak picture of the sterile, rational, male world, rendered absurd in its excesses; and they further present an antidote in the irrational, primitive, female life-force figure, whether that be the mythic Buffalo Woman or the more human Anna Yellowbird. The Indian is consistently associated with life, sexual vitality, and real human values in a world that seems to have lost its sense of direction. They are certainly within Kroetsch's stated purpose of showing the spiritual dimension of the secular.<sup>105</sup>

Fertility and the buffalo are also linked in David Williams's Burning Wood (1975). Although a member of a fundamentalist religious group, bald teen-age Joshua Cardiff, like Jeremy Sadness, has rather romantic notions about old-time Indians. He feels his blood responding to the sound of the Indian drums from the nearby reserve, is actively friendly to some Indian workers on his Dad's farm, and forms a friend-

<sup>105</sup> Public lecture, Bishop's University, 26 January 1978.

ship with Thomas Singletree, an Indian lad his own age. When the two boys escape from the Bible Camp to attend the Sun Dance at the reserve, Joshua experiences a vision of the Buffalo, which he misinterprets as an indication that in the old buffalo days lay the power and dignity of the Indian. The Tom Sawyerish version of a buffalo hunt which he organizes as a result of his vision ends tragically in the death of Thomas Singletree, who is gored by a bull.

After the burial Thomas's sister Lulu, who understands what has motivated Joshua, comes to him, naked under a buffalo robe, indicates her pubic area, and says: "D'buffalo are dere."<sup>106</sup> He looks at Lulu:

. . . but from the uncreate feeling that it was Death herself, the Gorgon, Medusa-face, on which he had looked (and for another moment he would think he was merely mad)--until somehow he missed knowing that he was already kneeling above her, the lung-crushing heaviness still aching in his chest, and then he was upon her flesh of woman clay-coloured by the brown mound of earth the brown buffalo robe drawn in silence over his arching back and he ceased to exist there was only the motion ceaseless enduring the rhythm older than life and the tight gripping bond of living man woman earth the trees overhead like cathedral spires and Thomas in the belly of the earth. (pp. 163-64)

Few writers have treated so explicitly the white move from considering the Indian (or primitive experience) in terms of death to recognizing the Indian's identity with the life forces and the mythic-religious sense of man's unity with the earth. It is little wonder that Joshua (already a kind of outcast because of his unusual baldness) should counter the traditional beliefs and fears of his family and marry Lulu.

<sup>106</sup> David Williams, The Burning Wood (Toronto: Anansi, 1975), p. 163.

The book contains a reminder that unity with the natural world is a spiritual experience that most white man have forgotten. And Lulu the Indian teaches this lesson to a young man who has sought a life different from that of his garrison.

Both Atwood's Surfacing (1972) and Engel's Bear (1976) focus on the animal in the primitive experience, but both depict the Indian as a mediator between the human and animal world. Atwood's narrator sees her boyfriend as a buffalo; her successful abandon to Joe comes after the discovery of her father's body in the lake and the primitive reversion to animalness she feels compelled to perform. The Indian link is the rock paintings that her father was searching for at the time of his death and which focus the search for unity and completeness that the narrator undergoes. Similarly, Engel's Lou discovers herself and is initiated into a new life through her relationship with a bear; this bear has been looked after by Lucy Leroy, an ancient Métis woman, who saw from the beginning that Lou and the bear would "get on good." Lucy here is the guardian of the primitive experience which teaches and enriches. For both Lou and Atwood's narrator, then, a new and meaningful life is to be found in the natural world, which is mythically or spiritually linked with the Indian; but in both cases at this point the Indian himself almost entirely disappears.

The first conclusion one is bound to reach from the material in this chapter is that it is plentiful and diverse. Nevertheless, non-realistic types of fiction prevail, in spite of the frequent discussion of very real social problems. As Frye has stated, romance "is almost

by definition a love story";<sup>107</sup> so one might speculate that the reverse is also true, that a love story is almost by definition a romance, with the focus changing as public mores change. All the same, realism exerts its pressures from two directions: from the actual observation of fact and from the periodic resurgence in taste for the realistic novel.

The question of whether a person of a different race and radically different culture can be a suitable marriage partner for a white person is one which has been with us for many years. From the time that Arabella Fermor decides not to "turn squaw" until the 1950's when Kanina Beaverskin and Rory MacDonald decide to marry in spite of race prejudice and cultural pressures, writers have continued to discuss the very real roles which religion, education, and personal temperament play in the choosing of a suitable mate. Obviously the arranged marriages of the Catholic Hurons of Lorette are repulsive to the lively sensibility of a young Anglican gentlewoman, but after Frances Brooke the majority of writers, even many nineteenth-century ones, see no deterrent to an inter-racial marriage, all other things being equal.

Equality, however, is least likely to occur when the white partner is from the upper class. Bellegarde is alert enough to realize that he will never be accepted as an equal in the French-Canadian seigneurial class, but that he can achieve results with his own people. Only Gilbert Parker creates an Indian character who makes the socio-cultural leap from the reserve to the English mansion. Neither Haliburton's

<sup>107</sup> Frye, SS, p. 83.

beautiful, educated Jessie, nor, a century later, Bodsworth's beautiful, educated Kanina, is, or considers herself to be, socially acceptable in the white world; but both marry men whose education in natural sciences helps to bridge the gap between the two cultures. Other Indian women marry men of the frontier, where the way of life is similar for both whites and Indians; and occasionally the man chooses to live amongst the Indians. The only conditions to these marriages seem to be that the Indian be Christian or that the white man provide beneficial leadership. The tragedy arises when men refuse to accept the responsibility of their Indian wives.

Perhaps because most of the fiction dealing with social concerns relies heavily on plot and "message," it remains in the realm of popular romance. Even the book by Haliburton is not one upon which his reputation rests. It is lively and readable enough, as are the works by Parker and Connor, but they all lack the subjective dimension one expects from serious romance, and instead merely reflect "the ideology of the ascendant class." For although writers of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries voice some criticism of the white treatment of Indians, their concern often seems formulaic and their real sympathy seems to lie with the notion of the white man's burden. It is only with the rise of realism after about 1920 that the works seem less like popular romance and the social criticism seems less formulaic and more genuinely integrated into the plot and characterization. Thus in the work of Grace Campbell and Frederick Niven one sees the tragic and potentially tragic ramifications of frontier mixed marriages, and even in The Strange One the two lovers are obviously making a com-



promise in their decision to stick with each other.

A large and important group of nineteenth-century romances, all historical, are less concerned with specifically social aspects of inter-racial marriage, but deal instead with conflicts of a much grander scale, which lend themselves to stylization. The romance was the ascendant genre in North American fiction during most of the nineteenth century, and most of the Canadian fiction discussed here appeared in mid-century when the genre was in full vigour. These romances do not deal with trappers and domestic skills, but with political and military leaders and the country's destiny. There is far more room for idealization and convention, for Noble Savages and matchless bravery. The areas of history handled are among those considered of central importance: the siege of Detroit, the fall of Fort Dearborn, the defeat of the Beothuks, the French and Indian wars, the fall of Fort Beauséjour, the voyages of Cartier. In the subjects alone there is ample room for romantic plotting and characterization. Only in Wacousta, the earliest and best book surveyed in this section, is there a strong realistic strain which borders on the high mimetic mode of tragedy and in which some richly suggestive and subjective elements of romantic conflict are juxtaposed with the real ambiguities of human behaviour. In the other works the conflicts are considerably more stylized. Douglas Huyghue's Nomades of the West exhibits the structural potentials of the romance genre probably better than the others, with its fearless white youth, two Noble Savages, a wise half-breed, villainous "praying Mohawks." colourful foes, a beautiful maiden, a mad medicine man, and a happy ending--all played out against a richly detailed and researched back-

ground of geographical, historical, and ethnic fact. Huyghue's attention to detail shows up the inferior formulaic nature of Ottawah, with which it is almost exactly contemporary.

The whites in these romances are nearly always garrison commanders, fearless young officers, and their families; the Indians are nearly always wise old chiefs, brave young chiefs, and their families. Although in most Canadian Indian tribes the chief had limited powers, romantic elitism required that he be given aristocratic, if not regal, power and be depicted accordingly. Also, although in reality "a chief's daughter was a chief's daughter," in romance she became an Indian princess, a purely literary phenomenon.<sup>108</sup> However, in spite of the romantic elevation of the status of the chief and his family, a further element of romantic elitism determines that white-Indian marriages are circumvented--there might be something second-class about mixed blood. Only Ottawah raises the issue of mixing blood lines, but in it, as in most of the other romances discussed, a number of conventions intervene to prevent the marriage. Only in Wacousta is a beneficial liaison implied, but this work, like most works to which critics devote a good deal of attention, is much more richly textured than other works of the period and genre.

One nineteenth-century narrative, An Algonquin Maiden, stands apart because of its symbolic handling of romantic conventions and real social concerns. The question of the social propriety of a young

<sup>108</sup> Albert Britt, Great Indian Chiefs (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1938), p. 20.

gentleman marrying an Indian girl is heightened into an abstract conflict between nature and civilization. The pastoral setting is conventionally suited to the story of a young Indian girl's tragic love for a young white man who will inevitably marry another young woman of his own race and social standing. The romance becomes virtually a prototype for a series of interesting and/or amusing works which challenge or parody the heroics of "all for love," the value of civilization, or even the Noble Savage.

Given the rise of realism in the 1920's, it is not surprising that a novel appeared which neatly parodies most of the situations and conflicts in An Algonquin Maiden. Except for the presence of a beautiful Indian girl and a tortured young man torn between two women, Possession turns every idealized situation around to reveal its probable modern reality, and it assiduously circumvents every potential for romantic reversal to become one of the few realistic novels about Indian lovers. Two later, less serious works, Florencia Bay and The Revenge of Annie Charlie, reveal the basic silliness of racial prejudice by putting the Indians in a position of power in the relationship and by either debunking the convention of the Noble Savage or humorously exaggerating it. But the potential for irony in this type of pastoral is most fully realized in The Vanishing Point, where an ironic paradise reveals itself to be a real pastoral haven with the union of the white man and his Indian lover.

Perhaps the least coherent sub-group in this chapter is the historical fiction of the twentieth century. The historical element tends to lead to stylized conflict and the romantic evocation of earlier

times; however, the documentary element in historical fiction provides a certain kind of realism which occasionally reflects the ambiguities and lack of stylization one associates with the novel. Thus from the popular escape-romance heroics of The Iroquois Trail and the improbable romantic magic of The Kingdom of the Sun, through the psychological romance of The Village of Souls and the tragic mode of Bird's Crabtree trilogy, to the stylization of The Wabeno Feast, there is more than usual variety in genre and mode.

There is, however, a consistency in theme and attitude which serves to tie the group together--a consistency in the depiction of a choice offered to the protagonist between nature and civilization. Although some of the protagonists eventually take the civilized option, usually for some conventional reason, those who survive and succeed have in some way given a pledge or commitment to the natural option. Those who fail have rejected it. Only three works--Wilderness Walls, The Champlain Road, and The Kingdom Carver--depict the reverse, the potential destructiveness of a sexual liaison with an Indian. Nevertheless, the dominant theme is one which pervades the subject of Indian-white love relations in Canadian fiction and serves to distinguish it from American fiction, where, if we are to believe Leslie Fiedler, the dark girl is always defeated or destroyed, while the fair heroine wins the hero.<sup>109</sup> In Canadian fiction the "right" woman is often the Indian woman.

The potential of the life-giving Indian character is nowhere better

<sup>109</sup> Fiedler, *passim*.

realized than in the fiction of the past twenty years, largely because of a resurgence of non-realistic literary forms, the existence of freer sexual mores, and a widespread concern about repressed social groups generally. Some of Canada's most important writers of fiction have contributed to this unprecedented flowering of works which depict the Indian-white love relationship in fairly explicit sexual terms and which actively acknowledge the long-repressed irrational side of the individual and collective Canadian unconscious. Appalled by the excesses to which progress and reason have brought this society, the writer turns to a segment of society--the Indian--which did not die out as the nineteenth century anticipated, but which continued to thrive in its own way while steadfastly ignoring the unnatural activities around it. The writer develops fully the Indian lover as a metaphor for life and vitality, which is a function very close to that of the eighteenth-century satirical Noble Savage: he becomes an agent for revealing the essential inadequacy and impotence of much of what modern man takes for granted.<sup>110</sup> The values of progress and reason propounded at the turn of the century are revealed to be as white, lifeless, and sterile as a Canadian winter. With the melting of all the whiteness comes an awareness of the dark, fertile earth lying just below. Canadian fiction writers in the past fifteen years have more or less explicitly turned

<sup>110</sup> The old-fashioned satirical Noble Savage aggressively despising white culture is not common in Canadian fiction. One example, though, is Theala in Servos's Frontenac and the Maid of the Mist (Toronto: Hal de Gruchy, 1927), who page after page denounces Frontenac's culture in favour of her own. Unfortunately, the story is wooden, stagey, and totally unconvincing and only too obviously displays its origins as an opera.

to a position which is as abstract and fantastic as fertility myth, with the Indian lover seen as the source of the fertility. The Indian is still seen, as he was in the late nineteenth century, as the "darker" side of the human psyche; but he is no longer shown symbolically as an element to be repressed or dominated, but one to be recognized and nurtured. A majority of modern Canadian writers of fiction have thus looked at the modern Canadian and found him lacking in the skills to survive as a human being. Survival, they nearly all seem to conclude, requires recognition of and adaptation to a force that is basic and primitive and found in the "enigmatic faces" of Indians. Life is not in the garrison of the white man and probably never has been; instead it is in the Indian camp or reserve. And only those whites who have met the Indian intimately have found this life.

The theme of the Indian lover in Canadian fiction is obviously a large one with many variations. The five groupings in this chapter are by no means the only way of classifying occurrences of the topic; they do, however, indicate where the most durable features of the theme lie and where the most important literature places its emphasis. On a purely historical level both social attitudes and literary practice have exerted pressures, so that the fiction written before the early twentieth century differs in tone and focus from that written more recently. Obviously the realistic novel has modified both mode and genre from the 1920's on in most of the serious (as opposed to popular) fiction; but the greatest change has come with the uncorseting of Victorian morals, the close examination of the results of rational Victorian progress, and the acknowledgement of the role of the Indian

as a natural and essential part of both our national and personal experience.

### Chapter III

#### God and Manitou: The Indian and Religion

Like the love relation between men and women, the relation between men and their gods is a fictional subject of great antiquity. But whereas a love relationship is ultimately between two individuals, the worship of a god is usually a collective thing, an expression of a community's fears and aspirations. Religions take many forms and have many expressions; and conflict almost inevitably arises when disparate religions encounter one another. The question which touches this thesis is: what happens in fiction when a religious system which is comparatively simple and nature-oriented meets another which is doctrinally complex and backed by technological power and elaborate political organization. The subject has attracted its fair share of fictional treatments, which may be grouped into four general categories.

From the earliest Biblical writings, the man outside the pale of orthodoxy is "the Wild Man" (e.g., Cain, Ham, Ishmael). These Wild Men are depicted as "inhabiting a wild land, above all as hunters, sowers of confusion, damned, and generative of races that live in irredeemable ignorance or outright violation of the laws that God has laid down for the governance of the cosmos."<sup>1</sup> For the ancient Hebrew, the Wild Man

<sup>1</sup> Hayden White, "The Forms of Wildness," in The Wild Man Within, ed. Edward Dudley and Maximillian E. Novak (Pittsburgh: Univ. of Pittsburgh Press, 1972), p. 14.



was under the curse of God, in a state of unredeemed and unredeemable degeneracy. Thus it was that traditional Old Testament theology justified centuries of black slavery and the general persecution of dark-skinned people.

The habitat of the Wild Man was a wild land, a nature which assumed "the aspect of a chaotic and violent enemy against which man must struggle to win back his proper humanity."<sup>2</sup> When such a wild, uncultivated land was found, as in the Americas, it was logical to view the aboriginal inhabitants as Wild Men, as forces of disorder--even as agents of the Devil. Certainly, in their great primitive appeal they represented a threat to the fragile, rational structures of white civilization. As the English-Puritan girl in Short of the Glory reflects:

They were a wretched remnant of a race seduced to the western hemisphere by the Devil himself. As God had called Abram out of Chaldee, so the Devil, aping God's ways, had led his subjects to America. And like their father the Devil, they raged up and down the land seeking whom they could devour.<sup>3</sup>

And even in more modern times, a young missionary in The Burning Wood says that "Satan walks among them."<sup>4</sup> Such irrational fears motivate the prejudiced and often violent responses of some people, especially

<sup>2</sup> White, p. 12.

<sup>3</sup> E. M. Granger Bennett, Short of the Glory (Toronto: Ryerson, 1960), p. 51. For an amplification of this attitude see Roy Harvey Pearce, The Savages of America, rev. ed. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1965), pp. 19-35.

<sup>4</sup> David Williams, The Burning Wood (Toronto: Anansi, 1975), p. 32.

the illiterate, the ignorant, the self-interested, and the over-zealous. The first part of this chapter, then, will examine works in which native religious practices are depicted as black and damnable or as merely superstitious and contemptible--"unmeaning mummery," as Ballantyne referred to the rituals of the medicine tent.<sup>5</sup> Obviously, there is plenty of room here for the depiction of symbolic conflicts and for a high degree of romance and melodrama.

But Christianity normally permits man to regain his paradise through the intercession of Christ, so that even the most monstrous, according to St. Augustine, are "to be seen as possible converts rather than as enemies or sources of corruption, to be exiled, isolated, and destroyed."<sup>6</sup> When the New World opened up to trade and settlement, amongst the earliest arrivals were Christian missionaries, out to emulate the achievements of their predecessors in pagan England, Ireland, and Germany a millenium earlier. To the missionary the Wild Man (the Indian in this case) was not spiritually corrupt, but sinful through ignorance; nevertheless, as Fairchild summarizes, ignorance could not "possibly absolve them from the curse of Adam."<sup>7</sup> The aboriginal state of sin is sometimes viewed as evil, sometimes as possessing a kind of good, practical relevance to the lives of its practitioners; but there is never any doubt that the Indian can and must be redeemed through

<sup>5</sup> Robert M. Ballantyne, Hudson's Bay, introd. George Woodcock (Edmonton: Hurtig, 1972), p. 57.

<sup>6</sup> White, p. 17.

<sup>7</sup> Hoxie Neale Fairchild, The Noble Savage (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1928), p. 422.

Christian teaching. The great Brébeuf, for example, writes: "it is so evident that there is a Divinity who has made Heaven and earth that our Hurons cannot entirely ignore it. But they misapprehend him grossly. For they have neither Temples, nor Priests, nor Feasts, nor any ceremonies."<sup>8</sup>

The idea of a perceivable and universal deity which men could appreciate without the mediation of organized doctrine was fundamental to the eighteenth-century Noble Savage figure and to such missions as those of the Moravians, who had wide influence in the area around the Great Lakes. This is the religious sense that Cooper praises in Natty Bumppo and Chingachgook and that Douglas Huyghue praises constantly throughout Nomades of the West (1850), where the good Indian and the simple Christian live by the same humane, peaceful, and enlightened values, values which are contrasted with the dark superstitions of both mad shamanism and (especially) Roman Catholicism. The absence of revealed doctrine, and of such notions as the Trinity and the Fall, is considered to be a real religious advantage. The Christian theology which is seen as important is that which derives mainly from Christ's ministry of Love. The second part of this chapter will deal with the more tolerant Christian view that the road to a good life for all men, red or white, lies in the comfortable words and exhortations of Jesus Christ. Obviously, a good deal more documentary realism will be possible here; even when writers choose romantic structures, they are

<sup>8</sup> Jean de Brébeuf, "Relation of What Occurred among the Hurons in the Year 1635," in The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents, ed. S. R. Mealing (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1963), pp. 43-44.

likely to be concerned with factual details of both Indian and white religions in order to illustrate the point they wish to convey.

Of course, not all writers or commentators are prepared to endorse the influence of Christianity on the lives of the Indians. Some see advantages in certain features of the conversion, usually in the replacement of native revenge, violence, or superstition by Christian forgiveness, love, and faith; but others question the rightness of suppressing the native beliefs and practices which form the warp of the fabric of Indian cultural life, and they wonder just how different faith and superstition really are from one another. They are also interested in an anthropological approach to native religions and frequently try to enrich their fictions with discussions of the practical and ceremonial features of the native religious life. In the earliest comments, especially those of first-contact explorers, writers observed the rituals and taboos surrounding essential parts of native life, such as hunting. And the ceremonies of the more sophisticated cultures--for example, the Sun Dance of the Plains Indians and the Winter Ceremonies of the Pacific Coast Indians--have always attracted considerable attention, largely because they are dramatic, exotic, and elaborate. Logically, then, one might expect as high a degree of realism in this third section as anywhere in this chapter since any careful questioning of Christian conversion should be accompanied by clearly depicted alternatives in the Indian tradition.

One thing that many missionaries could not explain was the fact that the ignorant aboriginal seemed to be perfectly satisfied with his own simple theology. He lived in harmony with nature, adjusting his

physical and spiritual life to the demands of the seasons. Most Indian tribes believed in the existence of numerous nature spirits and usually a single controlling spirit (now generally referred to by the Algonquin word Manitou). Many writers found in this natural religion the material for portraits of Noble Savages, especially of a sentimental or satirical variety. Although Canadian fiction is relatively free of the sentimental figure showing his great sensibility by communing with trees and spirits of the woods, there is a significant amount in which the shortcomings of organized white religion--and white society generally--are criticized by the author's extolling the simple virtues of the Indian's natural religion. A version of this was seen in the previous chapter, where the sexual energy of the primitive figure was seen as revitalizing sterile modern civilization. Thus romance will logically dominate this final section; the works covered deal once again with abstractions and depict in the Indian religions a code for living which is not only valid, but actually valuable and even at times preferable.

#### 1. Damnable Darkness

The tendency to document Indian religions in a fair and balanced way produces a strong vein of realism in Canadian fiction about Indian religious practice; but the subjective and metaphysical nature of religion itself calls forth the stylization of romance, with its very human wish to belong and its equally human fear of being ostracized. Such strong feelings lead logically to the garrisoning of a religious system and the drive to protect it. One fairly effective means of

doing so is through fear: the other system is represented as something dark, alien, and evil, something that threatens people's individual and collective well-being. The ensuing conflict becomes an archetypal struggle between light and dark, with the reward being salvation and the punishment damnation.<sup>9</sup>

One occasional Indian religious practice which inspired greatest fear among Christians was cannibalism, although the practice was neither universal nor particularly frequent. Among some eastern tribes, ritual cannibalism, particularly of exceptional enemies, was a part of warfare; Alexander Henry, the trader, describes a war feast after Michilimackinac, in which the body of a slain enemy was served up.<sup>10</sup> However, in fiction few instances have come to my attention. Perhaps the most lurid occurs in Richardson's Wau-Nan-Gee, where the villainous Pee-to-tum and his followers mutilate the bodies of the children and devour the body of the great Indian ranger, Capt. Wells:

Squatted in a circle, and within a few feet of the wagon in which the tomahawked children lay covered with blood, and fast stiffening in the coldness of death, now sat about twenty Indians, with Pee-to-tum at their head, passing from hand to hand the quivering heart of the slain man, whose eyes, straining, as it were, from their sockets, seemed to watch the horrid repast in which they were indulging, while the blood streamed disgustingly over their chins and lips, and trickled over their persons. So many wolves or tigers could not have torn away more voraciously with their teeth, or smacked their lips with greater delight in the relish of

<sup>9</sup> The white race has always had a symbolic advantage over darker-skinned races in this conflict of light and dark.

<sup>10</sup> Alexander Henry, Travels and Adventures in Canada and the Indian Territories, ed. James Bain (Rutland, Vt.: Charles E. Tuttle, 1969), pp. 102-03.

human food, than did these loathsome creatures, who now moistened the nauseous repast from a black bottle of rum.  
 . . .<sup>11</sup>

However, as was seen in the preceeding chapter, Richardson in no way implies that Pee-to-tum's behaviour is typical, but rather the actions of a thoroughly depraved and perverted individual.<sup>12</sup>

Cannibalism was also resorted to occasionally in subsistence areas as a means of survival; nearly all the early explorers comment on the fact and observe the frequently negative social consequences. However, an unsympathetic writer like Ballantyne devotes an unnaturally long space to recounting a particularly grim tale of starvation cannibalism in order to underline his fundamental attitude of white supremacy.<sup>13</sup>

The only form of cannibalism which could be considered truly integral to religious ceremony, without the external motivation of war, was that practiced by Cannibal societies and during the Winter Ceremonies of several West Coast Indian tribes. Although by the time of white contact these were much reduced in cruelty and violence,<sup>14</sup> the fact that true cannibalism once existed seems to make the shamanism of

<sup>11</sup> John Richardson, Wau-Nan-Gee (New York: H. Long, 1852), p. 100.

<sup>12</sup> I cannot agree with Desmond Pacey that Richardson "often" alluded to cannibalism ("A Colonial Romantic: Major John Richardson, Soldier and Novelist," Canadian Literature, No. 2 [1959], p. 27). Pacey mentions its nauseating occurrence in The Monk Knight of St. John and in notes to Tecumseh, but the only other occurrence I know of is this one in Wau-Nan-Gee; three examples hardly seem to be exploitation of a theme.

<sup>13</sup> Ballantyne, pp. 50-54.

<sup>14</sup> Franz Boaz, "The Winter Ceremonial," in Indians of the North Pacific Coast, ed. Tom McFeat (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1966), pp. 187-90.

the Pacific tribes appear particularly ominous and dangerous.

It is not surprising, then, that often in Canadian romance about Indians, the archetypal struggle between light and dark becomes a literal struggle between an evil medicine man and a good white man or an Indian of recognizably Christian values. The medicine man (shaman or conjurer) of an Indian tribe was rather like all professional men in white society rolled into one: a religious practitioner foremost; somewhat of a doctor, pharmacist, psychologist, and scientist together; a magician; and often the repository of tribal lore and traditions. Few Indians had as much to lose as the medicine man did when white religion began to take over; and many writers saw in the conflict possibilities for high romance. As long as men firmly believed that the salvation of the Indian lay in the adoption of white religion and habits, the medicine man's role in romance would most probably be destructive or demonic; he would be the representative of a beguiling world of superstition, fraud, and error.

It is a truism of nineteenth-century fiction that the good Indian helps the white protagonist and the bad Indian fights him--not only in actual warfare, but through the exercise of religious power. Thus the shaman who abducts Ellen Clayton in Nomades of the West is seen as abusing his power. Similarly, in Ottawah (1847) the unpopular, self-seeking, warlike young seer, Uttermoot, not only urges his tribe to reject the white Exile and his daughter, but also advocates the worship and propitiation of the Evil Spirit. This perversion of religious belief is only part of Uttermoot's generally villainous behaviour, and he eventually plots to usurp the legitimate power of Ahtomah by bearing



false witness and by treacherously betraying the interests of his community. However, there is nothing particularly Indian about Uttermoot, in spite of the local colour. He finds his equivalent in the nasty characters of legend and fairy tale, and he bears resemblance to Unferth in Beowulf--a trouble-making type of epic and romance.

This kind of romance and fairy tale formula figure is also important in the stories of W. A. Fraser, notably his "Home-Coming of the Nakannies" (1900). The Nakannies are tragically divided into two groups: one under Day Child, who have accepted Father Descoign's teachings and are becoming successful ranchers; the other under the truly evil medicine man, Wolverine, who are swayed by the medicine man's jealousy of the priest's power. Wolverine is a consummate villain, who provokes the chief into killing his own son and his followers into massacring the Christians. Fraser makes much of their guilt, terror, and superstition in order to justify their fleeing the site of the massacre. He also makes much of Wolverine's unsavoury character, when the medicine man's bragging brings the Nakannies "home" ten years later. Ignorant of the railroad that has been built over the site of the massacre during their exile, the Nakannies are so terrified by a rumbling, hooting, fire-breathing "dragon" that they turn on Wolverine, lash him to the track, and then melt "silently into the darkness of the long back-trail."<sup>15</sup> The scene is more humorous than exciting.

However, Fraser is a lively story-teller, and like many popular

<sup>15</sup> W. A. Fraser, "The Home-Coming of the Nakannies," The Canadian Magazine, 14, No. 3 (1900), 213.

story-tellers of his day, he relies heavily on popular romance conventions--the formulae that work. The historical information he provides is merely enough to give a credible background to conflicts which are pure romance. Thus Father Descoigne is an idealized Christian missionary, just as his antagonist is a romantic exaggeration. And Wolverine seems less an Indian than a first cousin to the evil magicians and counsellors and self-seeking grand-viziers of folk-tale and saga. Only the local colour places Fraser's story in late nineteenth-century Alberta and not in a Caliph's palace in Baghdad.

The rightness and justice of the white way eventually win against the evil elements of the Indian religion in Frances Herring's In the Pathless West (1904).<sup>16</sup> It is a "bifocal" book in that half tells little anecdotes of the pioneering community of New Westminster in the years following 1858, while the half that concerns us here tells the romance of Billy, a blond motherless English boy who escapes from his brutal stepfather to go off with a kind Indian woman. Herring declares in her preface: "all I tell of the Indian life, careless in some respects as it is, cruel in others, can be verified by those who care to write to any of the Indian Agencies or Missionaries along the Coast."<sup>17</sup>

<sup>16</sup> This book is wrongly described by Gordon Roper et al. in the Literary History of Canada (ed. Carl F. Klinck [Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1965], p. 299) as "an early attempt to picture life on the plains in romance form." The action never moves east of the Fraser Valley in British Columbia, although pictures of Prairie Indians throughout the book are deceiving.

<sup>17</sup> Frances Herring, Pref., In the Pathless West (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1904), p. v. As well, Herring has written a sort of travel book about Indians (referred to on p. 219n). Not surprisingly, she fills her fiction with documentation of Indian life: family, laws, housing, clothing, etc. (see below, Chapter V, p. 296.)

All the same, the tribe that Billy accompanies north is never named and possesses characteristics of several Indian cultures. The worst confusion is a picture of a Sundancing brave with the attendant medicine man labelled as the villainous Kwaw-kewlth.<sup>18</sup> In order to provide conflict in her story, Herring seems to have emphasized the most violent and unpleasant elements of Northern coastal Indian practices: the cannibal ceremonies, laws to punish adultery, rape, and wife-beating, the power of the medicine man over the gullible mass of Indians, etc.

Nearly all the grim occurrences in the story are connected with the villainous character of Kwaw-kewlth, son of Bil-bil of this tribe and of a fugitive "from the cruel Blackfeet nation" (p. 179). Bil-bil is an evil woman, given to poisoning her enemies; but she is tortured and executed when suspicion for a small pox epidemic points at her. Young Kwaw-kewlth witnesses the execution. Thus motivated by a cruel, selfish nature, a desire for revenge, and a drive for power, Kwaw-kewlth uses his "courage and agility" (p. 181) and his great endurance to gain the position of medicine man. He reminds one of Pee-to-tum in Richardson's Wau-Nan-Gee, an evil force in part because he joins disruptive foreign elements to an already vicious character.

In order to underscore the evil nature of the man, Herring recounts his villainous deeds at length: in the cannibal frenzy of his tradi-

<sup>18</sup> Facing p. 231. The identical photograph appears, more appropriately, in William Bleasdel Cameron's book The War Trail of Big Bear (Boston: Small Maynard, 1927), facing p. 169. Also, since Kwaw-kewlth is an alternate spelling of the tribal name Kwakiutl, even the shaman's name is unconvincing.

tional fasting ordeal<sup>19</sup> he unwittingly devours his own toddler son; he abuses his wives sufficiently that they die, return to their parents, or, in one case, elope with a real lover; and he has poisoned just about everyone who might threaten his position, including the white husband and half-breed son of Billy's foster-mother. His is a list of horrors, within the context of Indian culture, worthy of any gothic villain (a kind of mixture of the mad scientist and perverted priest). He personifies the moral hell which surrounds the innocent Billy in the Indian environment.

To begin with, Billy's life with the Indians is happy and healthy; but this seeming paradise with a loving foster-mother and a vigorous, manly outdoor life, slowly reveals itself as evil, thanks to the machinations of Kwaw-kewlth. It is a version of what Frye calls the demonic world: "this lower world is a world of increasing alienation and loneliness: the hero is not only separated from the heroine or his friends, but is often further isolated by being falsely accused of major crimes."<sup>20</sup> Billy's white learning leads him to be charged with witchcraft, as Kwaw-kewlth feels threatened by Billy and frames him for his own murder of the chief. However, a series of totally improbable and melodramatic events discredits Kwaw-kewlth and allows Billy to return to civilization, which is clearly where the author, in keeping with

<sup>19</sup> See Boaz, pp. 180-91. The winter ceremony of the Hamatsa is also briefly discussed in Craven's I Heard the Owl Call My Name (Toronto: Clarke Irwin, 1967), pp. 116-18.

<sup>20</sup> Northrop Frye, The Secular Scripture (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1976), p. 115.

prevailing morality, thinks white boys should be.

Not a book of any great literary merit, In the Pathless West, at least in the story of Billy, uses pure romance formulae in a very unsatisfactory way. It also purports to offer a number of interesting facts about Indians, but it emphasizes only one kind of feature and in so doing distorts reality grossly. And In the Pathless West cannot really be considered a gothic romance, because it lacks the single-minded objective of creating fear and terror. The author seems undecided about what she is actually trying to do: write a fictionalized travel book about Indians, or tell about a white boy's almost disastrous meeting with the forces of darkness.

Another very black medicine man is Hatiria, chief of the Onandaga False Face society in Lighthall's Master of Life (1908). His meager courage has led him to shamanism for power and sets him against the enlightened and truly heroic Hiawatha. Lighthall is probably not being fair to the False Faces by making them unambiguous agents of the black arts and by emphasizing the grotesque masks, the speaking through serpents, the caves, fetishes, and rituals. Nor is he being fair when he claims the story contains no white men, since Quenhia (the half-breed daughter of one of Cartier's men) is fundamentally a Christian and influences Hiawatha: "my father the Spirit [the name given to white men] taught my mother that the Master of Life hateth war; that His Son is Lord of Peace; and that when wounded he smote not back, but was tied to the stake."<sup>21</sup> Although The Master of Life has basis in history,

<sup>21</sup> W. D. Lighthall, The Master of Life (Toronto: Musson, 1908), p. 31.

Lighthall has shifted the murderous villainy which really belonged to the huge and powerful war chief Atotarho to the cowardly and powerful Hatiria and has made Atotarho a redeemable man held in thrall to the evil medicine man. Lighthall does not condemn the native religion completely, but he does take an internal Indian conflict and give it a Christian-pagan focus which is not historically founded. Thus the good pacifist, Hiawatha, is indirectly Christian, while his opposition is transformed from a political-military leader to a religious practitioner, a demonic member of a powerful secret society.<sup>22</sup>

Bruce McKelvie's Huldowget (1926) is one of the most consciously gothic of Canadian fictions about Indians. Like Herring's book, it is set among the Indians of Northern British Columbia, but unlike Herring's book, it is a clear and single-minded romance. The Northern Pacific setting with its isolation, great mountains and forests, almost perpetual rain, and frequent gales is potentially as terrifying as any creaky old castle with its damp and rotting subterranean passages. McKelvie even introduces a derelict, rat-infested Hudson's Bay post to enhance the gothic atmosphere. The conflict is unambiguously between the Christian forces of love and order and the pagan-demonic forces of superstition and fear. Huldowget itself means Evil Spirit.

The Rev. Dr. and Mrs. David Mainwaring ("Father David" and "Mother") have laboured forty years in this remote mission, struggling untiringly against the black forces of shamanism. From the start the native rites

<sup>22</sup> For a full discussion of the historical Atotarho and Hiawatha see Horatio Hale, ed., The Iroquois Book of Rites, intro. William N. Fenton, 2nd ed. (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1963), pp. 18-38.

are portrayed negatively; the following exposition is typical of the tone of the story and also serves to foreshadow the action to come:

. . . the privacy of their abode was continually invaded by threatening shamans in fantastic garb, beating drums, shaking rattles and blowing horns to call down destructive spirits upon them. . . .

They had nearly perished when, on an errand of mercy to the bedside of one of their friends who could not altogether free himself from his old superstitious beliefs, and was gradually succumbing to the machinations of the medicine men, their blankets had been stolen. All night long . . . the gale drove sleet and hail through the chinks between the logs of their dwelling. Illness followed, and it was only the providential arrival of another missionary . . . that prevented the shamans from forcing their way into the building to practise their gruesome rites over them in their helplessness.<sup>23</sup>

But over the years Father David's faith and dedication earned him the love and respect of his Indian flock; at one point in a Christian gesture, he even turned both cheeks to a shaman's slap. But he then turned and knocked out the offender "as an illustration of the futility and wickedness of heathenism" (pp. 12-13)--a novel interpretation of the Scriptures! For Father David has a powerful physique, and like Connor's heroes, he is not averse to backing right with a little might; his physical bigness is symbolic of his moral bigness.

Against the idealized, good, kind Christian characters of the Mainwarings are set the disruptive powers of shamanism, which, as the story opens, is experiencing a frightening come-back in the area and threatens to undermine the missionaries' long labour of love. The instigator of the pagan resurgence is one Caleb Thompson, a half-breed,

<sup>23</sup> B. A. McKelvie, Huldowget (London: Dent, 1926), pp. 9-10.

whose "peculiar eyes" mirror his inner wickedness. Caleb is the son of an Indian aristocrat and an ambitious white man; he has been raised mainly in the United States and has recently abandoned his training for the Methodist ministry under mysterious circumstances. But his training has given him the ability to argue and equivocate in the white manner and thus undermine the work of the missionaries. Collishaw, the policeman in the area, summarizes Caleb's character: "he's been schooled in the guile of the white man, and retains the cunning of the Indian" (p. 87). To the Mainwarings, Caleb is simply the servant of the Evil One, who "is always seeking to restore his kingdom" (p. 87). To the young women of Fort Oliver he is sexually very attractive. To Mary Elizabeth, an old witch of a shaman's daughter (she is reminiscent of the old hags knitting and cackling at the Place de la Guillotine during the Terror), he brings back the good old days of power and intrigue. Thus Caleb combines many features of a romance villain of the gothic sort: he is very sexual, he perverts religion, and he is a disruptive outsider.

In Huldowget, as in most gothic fiction, strong faith or a firm moral position is the only real defense against the forces of evil (like the Cross against Dracula). Both Mary Cunningham, the young nurse, and Collishaw lack the firm faith to survive the assaults of Caleb. Collishaw is a rational man and a non-believer who loses in a fight with Caleb when he comes to rescue Mary. Mary herself is independent-minded and has been raised to respect the mystery and power of exotic religions. Susceptible from the start, she is reduced to hysteria over the months by a series of tricks engineered by Caleb, and



she is finally conquered by the appearance of a hideous mask at a window when she is in a weakened state. The device is a stock one of psychological torture and is familiar to any fan of midnight horror movies.

During the subsequent "exorcism" and forbidden "trial by mouse," Mary and Collishaw are saved by the almost miraculous appearance of the shadow of the Cross, followed by the timely entrance of Father David. In the wake of the demonic rituals in the musty old buildings, the arrival of the Christians is like sunshine and fresh air. Compared to the rabble led by Caleb and Mary Elizabeth, the Christian Indians (who have been praying all the while) are sane, reasonable, and humane. The nightmare descent and the dream-wish ascent of romance are as clearly defined here and in The Master of Life as anywhere in Canadian fiction about Indians. McKelvie does not confuse matters by inserting anthropology beyond what is necessary for verisimilitude. One may not approve of the basic stance he adopts, but the genre is pure; and although relatively late of its type, it is the epitome of an attitude and form which we saw mostly in fiction of the turn of the century.

## 2. The Path to Salvation

But the majority of writers are more tolerant of the native ways. Although little is said about native religions in Canadian literature of the eighteenth century, Frances Brooke has a few objective remarks in The History of Emily Montague (1769). Ed. Rivers writes to his sister after a visit to Lorette:

. . . they retain most of their ancient superstitions. I should particularize their belief in dreams, of which folly even repeated disappointments cannot cure them: they have also an unlimited faith in their powawers, or conjurers, of whom there is one in every Indian village, who is at once physician, orator, and divine, and who is consulted as an oracle on every occasion.<sup>24</sup>

Since the rest of the novel implicitly and explicitly backs a British, Anglican code of values, and since there is a rather patronizing tone to this passage, one can only conclude that in spite of her apparent objectivity, Frances Brooke was not against the Christian conversion of the Indians.

Generally, writers of the Victorian period endorsed the concept that Christianity was necessary to living a good life, Indians no exception. Fayawana of Mrs. Cheney's "Jacques Cartier and the Little Indian Girl" (1847) exhibits her moral superiority when she combines her natural goodness with conversion to Christianity and returns to preach the gospel to her own people. Similarly, beautiful, blonde Ellen Clayton in Huyghue's Nomades of the West (1850) preaches Christianity to tribes of willing Indian listeners as she migrates westward with the mad shaman who has abducted her. He permits her to do so mainly because her fascinating fairness and angelic appearance provide them with food and lodging wherever they go. The high romance of this three-volume fiction is certainly underlined by the superficial parallels to The Faerie Queene, where Una preaches to and fascinates the "salvages." Even R. M. Ballantyne saw some hope for the Indian in Chris-

<sup>24</sup> Frances Brooke, The History of Emily Montague, introd. Carl F. Klinck (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1961), p. 41.

tianity in his Hudson's Bay (1848): "there is reason to believe that the light of the gospel is now beginning to shine upon them with beneficial influence" (p. 57).

Certainly the missionaries were a major factor in the spread of civilization to the Indians, and one significant group of fictions in the late Victorian period deals with some almost contemporary missions to the Plains Indians, notably those of Father Lacombe, George and John McDougall, and John MacLean--all humane and compassionate men with respect for the people they served. The respect and affection they in turn received from their flock might be summarized in these words addressed by Chief Dan George to white men:

What did we see in the new surroundings you brought us? Laughing faces, pitying faces, sneering faces, conniving faces. Faces that ridiculed, faces that stole from us. It is no wonder we turned to the only people who did not steal and who did not sneer, who came with love. They were the missionaries and they came with love and I for one will ever return that love.<sup>25</sup>

Still, however compassionate these men were with the Indians, their missions were firmly grounded on the assumption that white Christianity would be preferable to the Indians' traditional beliefs.

One characteristic of the writer-missionaries here discussed is their great tolerance and flexibility where doctrine is concerned. MacLean, for example, can recognize true religious feeling whatever colour it assumes: "these people are often called savages by members of

<sup>25</sup> Chief Dan George, "My Very Good Dear Friends . . .," in The Only Good Indian, ed. Waubageshig (Toronto: New Press, 1970), pp. 185-86.

the white race, yet they have been taught the greatest respect for all forms of religion, recognizing these forms as methods by which men approach the Supreme Power."<sup>26</sup> And Frances Stevens, wife of a turn-of-the-century Manitoba missionary, permits a pagan medicine man to assist in the difficult birth of her child.<sup>27</sup> Many seem as concerned with the practical and social aspects of the Christian life as with the purely doctrinal; John MacLean, for example, was especially concerned in several stories with promoting the concept of the Christian marriage.<sup>28</sup>

Several stories in The Warden of the Plains (1896) show the various ways in which MacLean encourages the adoption of Christianity by the Indians. In "The Writing Stone," for example, he writes an exemplum completely grounded in the Indians' own customs but which he adapts to Biblical situations. The story points a lesson about displeasing one's god, in a way roughly parallel to the First Disobedience; but it contains dreams, taboos, and sacrifices proper to the tribes under discussion. And in spite of the stock demonic imagery surrounding the crisis, the story as a whole is a lesson about what happens when any mortal disobeys the dictates of his faith.

Two other stories in the same volume treat Christianity as the only way for the Indian to cope with the new conditions brought about

<sup>26</sup> John MacLean, "The Spirit Guide," in The Warden of the Plains (Toronto: Briggs, 1896), p. 240. John McDougall also mentions the religious tolerance of the Indian at several points in Wa-pee Moos-tooch.

<sup>27</sup> Nan Shipley, Frances and the Crees (Toronto: Ryerson, 1975), p. 36.

<sup>28</sup> See discussion above, Chapter II, pp. 43-44.

by the white man. In "The Coming of Apauakas" MacLean tells of one young Indian's message during a time of disease and starvation of the coming of Christ, or Apauakas, and ends with the same young man's death vision of the Kingdom come. Although the story is a thoroughly unconvincing piece of religious propaganda, MacLean tries to present an appealing picture of Christianity through his juxtaposition of conventional Christian gestures and conventional Indian situations.

In "The Spirit Guide," however, he is more successful in building a story to contain his message of the advantages of Christianity for the Indian. He does so through the idealized character of Running Wolf, virtually a Noble Savage, a conventionally elite young man: "tall, slim, and of noble aspect, showing his relationship to the bravest of the tribe" (p. 236). His long spirit fast has given him prophetic powers, which he uses for the good of his people; he becomes a chief "loved for his wisdom, kindness and unassuming manner" (p. 245). Running Wolf is a model of good humanity, although within the context of his culture; he is the ideal agent to persuade his people that conversion to Christianity is the wisest course for them to adopt.

Just before he mysteriously disappears, he holds a feast at which he orates the following:

. . . the history of the tribe; the story of its conquests, the records of the noble deeds of its great men, the advent of the white race and the present condition of the Indians. He depicted the future in dark colors, the gradual decay of the red men, the diseases and debauchery of the people, the corruption of the Indian politicians and the utter overthrow of the native religion. He counselled them to accept the glory of the coming day when the red man would mingle with the white race, accepting their teachings and civilizations and finding therein peace, plenty and contentment. (pp. 245-46)

In this message, MacLean gives voice to a widely held belief at the turn of the century that the Indian was culturally--even physically--doomed because, as Haycock puts it, "he is unable to survive in competitive evolution"; and, further, that the virtuous Anglo-Saxon would "raise the aboriginal to hitherto unprecedented levels of civilization and salvation, fashioned on the white model."<sup>29</sup> This attitude was squarely behind the thinking of most of the missionaries of the period, however sensitive they were to the needs of their flocks. The strong sense of conviction precludes, therefore, anything but some form of romantic resolution to the fiction, in spite of the documentary realism.

Two stories in W. A. Fraser's collection The Eye of a God (1899) concerns the mission of the great Father Lacombe (1827-1916) among the Cree and Blackfeet of Alberta. Fraser obviously assumes that Christianity is the best thing for the Indians, but he creates fictional interest by showing the Indians' reluctance to be converted. Like many missionaries, Father Lacombe has to gain the love and respect of the Indians before he can win converts; Fraser's stories tend to depict the method rather than the achievement itself. For example, in "God and the Pagan," the priest's young Indian guide is more attracted to the powerful personality of Lacombe than to the religion involved.<sup>30</sup>

Father Lacombe wins the respect of the Indians by being kind, tolerant, and strong, a true soldier of Christ. As Fraser rather contrivedly

<sup>29</sup> Ronald Graham Haycock, The Image of the Indian (Waterloo, Ont.: Waterloo Lutheran Univ., 1971), p. 1.

<sup>30</sup> W. A. Fraser, "God and the Pagan," in The Eye of a God (New York: Doubleday and McClure, 1899), p. 179.

describes him: "he, too, was a fearless brave. His bow was the Christian religion, and his arrows God's love, feathered by his own simple, honest ways."<sup>31</sup> He is brave enough to walk with a flag of peace in the midst of a Cree-Blackfoot battle, awes the combattants into a truce, and wins enormous praise and respect from all concerned. He has the practical skills to stanch a serious arterial wound which the medicine man cannot cope with. He is also the man who tells the truth, when he manages to expose the elaborate lies of Man-Who-Dreams (a powerful medicine man who wishes to discredit both Lacombe and Christianity). None the less, Father Lacombe is not averse to using a little drama and trickery to achieve a particularly difficult conversion like that of the Cree chief Sweet-Grass. Although in these stories Fraser concentrates on the character and actions of an idealized man, he works from the assumption that Lacombe's work was very worthy. However, he is more interested in telling a good tale than in arguing religion as MacLean does. He is a popular writer of his time and exhibits both its values and its tastes.

In Corporal Cameron of the North West Mounted Police (1912) Ralph Connor also follows the values and tastes of his time. He praises the work with the Morley Stonies of "old" McDougall, "the aged pioneer Methodist missionary who had accomplished such marvels during his long years of service with his Indian flock and had gained such a wonderful

<sup>31</sup> W. A. Fraser, "The Conversion of Sweet-Grass," in The Eye of a God, p. 253.

control over them."<sup>32</sup> As Cameron looks over the Stony camp at prayers he reflects:

It was . . . a weirdly fascinating but intensely impressive scene. . . . On the grassy glade, surrounded by the sentinel pines, the circle of dusky worshippers, kneeling about their camp fire, lifted their faces heavenward and their hearts Godward in prayer, and as upon those dusky faces the fire-light fell in fitful gleams, so upon their hearts, dark with the superstitions of a hundred generations, there fell the gleams of the torch held high by the hands of their dauntless ambassador of the blessed Gospel of the Grace of God. (CC, pp. 345-46)

This is certainly an idealized scene of an Indian encampment adapting to the ways of the white man, fulfilling all the most positive motives of the white man's burden.

However, Connor's own mission in the early 1890's was mainly to the white settlers, miners, and lumbermen of the Rockies. He knew Indians and had contact with them--he could not have avoided doing so--but that his mission was not directed to them particularly is clear from the focus of his Western writings. In an early book like The Sky Pilot (1899), the Indian characters are almost incidental, but the Indian religious presence is strongly felt in the character of Gwen, the daughter of a widowed Old Timer in the Sky Pilot's charge. Without the

<sup>32</sup> Ralph Connor [pseud. Charles William Gordon], Corporal Cameron of the North West Mounted Police (Toronto: Westminster, 1912), p. 342 (hereafter noted as CC). The action of Corporal Cameron takes place in the two years or so prior to the 1885 rebellion. "Old" McDougall cannot mean George, the father, who died in a blizzard in 1876; and John McDougall, who founded the Morley mission in 1873 (see John MacLean, Canadian Savage Folk [Toronto: Briggs, 1896], p. 29) would have been forty-two in 1884--hardly "aged." However, he would have been seventy at the time Corporal Cameron was written. The anachronism does not detract from the sentiment.



pure guiding light of a Connor Christian mother, young Gwen has never learned of Christ nor read from the Bible. Instead, she has been almost exclusively with her father, with Ponka her Indian nurse, and with Ponka's sons. She often goes off for extended visits with Ponka's Blackfoot relations and is skilled in both Indian crafts and nature lore.<sup>33</sup> "She is quite a pagan" (p. 113), a wild thing, bright but willful. Of course, it is unthinkable to Connor that a white girl should be raised wild and pagan; to us, eighty years later, it is his resolution that is unthinkable.<sup>34</sup> This vital, robust girl is crippled in a riding accident and is thus forced to the submissive role of Christian womanhood she has hitherto rejected.

Gwen's case parallels the situation of the Indians in Connor's work generally. The paganism of the Indian is seen as a threat to spiritual well-being; but in spite of his predilection for the romance form, Connor avoids any melodramatic confrontation between white and medicine man. Instead, he writes as a true Christian, believing that anyone can be accepted into the fold. For him, family or race is no deterrent to one's becoming a good Christian and thus a good person. This point has already been seen in his later book The Gaspards of Pine Croft (1923), where Onawata is declared to be "a good, pure-minded,

<sup>33</sup> Ralph Connor [pseud. Charles William Gordon], The Sky Pilot (Toronto: Westminster, 1899), pp. 111-12.

<sup>34</sup> One might almost denounce it as D. H. Lawrence did the blindness of Rochester in Jane Eyre; see D. H. Lawrence, "Pornography and Obscenity," in Sex, Literature and Censorship, ed. Harry T. Moore (London: Heinemann, 1955), pp. 205-06.

cultured Christian woman."<sup>35</sup> Her Christian conversion and education have been undertaken in order to make her a worthy wife for Hugh. Although the death of her husband temporarily makes her revert to pagan acts of revenge, she returns to the mission to die confessed. (Connor may, of course, be implying a lesser strength of faith in someone converted to the Church of Rome.) Onawata is clearly a romance character in a romantic fiction: she lapses into a kind of demonic state--committing arson and attempting murder--and finally returns to the pastoral fold, released from the guilt of murder, and dies a repentant Christian.<sup>36</sup>

Although E. J. Pratt frequently, like Connor, asserted the value of Christianity in controlling the destructive primitive passions of all mankind, few fiction writers of the mid-twentieth century wrote positively about the role of Christianity in the lives of Indians. In the early novels of Rudy Wiebe, however, the value of a good Christian life is once again the focus in fictional narrative. From the beginning of his writing career, Wiebe has exhibited a strong interest in the spiritual dimension of human behaviour, which he often portrays in the relationship between white and native religions. Although some of his characters carry principles and ideals beyond the bounds of probability,

<sup>35</sup> Ralph Connor [pseud. Charles William Gordon], The Gaspards of Pine Croft (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1923), p. 109. See discussion above, Chapter II, pp. 48-50.

<sup>36</sup> The idea that taking revenge requires a kind of apostasy on the part of the Christianized Indian occurs also in Sellar's Hemlock (1890). Here the title character reverts to ancient Indian torture to avenge the death (caused by racist exploitation) of his half-breed daughter.

Wiebe treats the relationship in a realistic manner, rather than in a romantic manner as Connor did, or a mixed manner, as MacLean did.

Set in 1944 in a Mennonite farming community in Northern Saskatchewan, Wiebe's first novel, Peace Shall Destroy Many (1962) questions the validity of rigid Mennonite values as dictated by Deacon Block, the leader of the community. But it also shows the positive results to Thom Wiens, the protagonist, of sharing the Christian life, as he does by teaching the Bible to the local half-breeds. Deacon Block argues blackly against Thom's practice of holding Bible classes for the half-breed children:

Our fathers always said that they had to maintain a certain distance between themselves and ungodly people. So must we. . . . You will undermine this community completely by trying to bring breeds--and Indians naturally follow--into it. They are basically different from us--qualitatively. No matter what you do for them, on the whole they remain children.<sup>37</sup>

This kind of pressure has made it difficult for Thom to accept emotionally the marriage of Herman Paetkau, a Mennonite, to Madeleine Moosomin, a half-breed. But he does so, and his mission shows positive results when one of the half-breed children, playing a shepherd in the school Christmas pageant, provides for Thom the resolution to his spiritual conflict:

Then, Jackie Labret, bending down to lead the way to the manger, stood before him. There must lie the way. Not the paths of conscienceless violence or one man's misguided interpretation of tradition. They brought chaos. But the path

<sup>37</sup> Rudy Henry Wiebe, Peace Shall Destroy Many (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1962), p. 205.

of God's revelation. Christ's teachings stood clear in the Scriptures; could he but scrape them bare of all their acquired meanings and see them as those first disciples had done, their feet in the dust of Galilee. (p. 237)

In First and Vital Candle (1966) Wiebe explores in greater depth the relation between white and native religions and opts squarely for the best kind of Christian life; but like the missionary John MacLean, he is aware of the cultural void left among the Indians when their native culture has been incompletely or inadequately supplanted by white civilization. For example, Alex Crane, the principal young Indian character in the novel, has just returned from three years at residential school and is culturally confused; he lacks a code to live by: "[he] tries to be an Indian with the Indians and a whiteman with the whites and alone he can't stand himself."<sup>38</sup> To compound his problem, he has never had the Indian youth's spirit vision. He is thus easily seduced into transgressing the tribe's moral codes, mainly by trying to force a relationship with his pretty second cousin Violet.

The missionaries in this isolated Northern Ontario community are Josh and Lena Bishop, who, along with the school teacher Sally Howell, possess a joyous Christian dedication in which tolerance, love, and humanity rule rather than the more aggressive techniques of conversion. They do not openly oppose the conjurer, Kekekose, but simply wait until he can no longer cope with the jobs which confront him; when that happens it is Kekekose himself who leads many of his people to hear the

<sup>38</sup> Rudy Wiebe, First and Vital Candle (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans 1966), p. 172.

lessons of "the Good News Man." Perhaps the Bishops are an extreme, believing that coercion of any kind is wrong and that example is ultimately the only real method of conversion. Nevertheless, their method proves successful.

As in Huldowget the action is precipitated when a basically good person of weak faith arrives in the community. Abe Ross, who has rejected the heartless rigidity of his own Presbyterian upbringing, has come to Frozen Lake as a trading agent with the Frobisher Company. The enemy of Christianity and the Frobisher Company is one Sig Bjornesen, a huge, blond, exploitive Manitoba Icelander. He is clearly depicted as a destructive influence, but being good and kind is not enough to fight him. As McKelvie showed, a genuine commitment to a code outside oneself is needed to cultivate the inner strength necessary to combat evil. The missionary tells Abe:

. . . even you, Abe, a kind moral decent man but you haven't dared believe in anything except maybe yourself. That seems possible for some; I think maybe Bjornesen was like that once, long ago, but he got to care less and less about anyone or anything--if you think at all you get discouraged with yourself and slowly it all turns sour. Now he tortures these people with their fears, for his own gain. Or more likely, amusement. (pp. 172-73)

The main Indian characters in this conflict are members of the Crane family and Kekekose, the conjurer and spiritual leader of his people. The traditional ways he represents are presented sympathetically, as in this conversation between Abe and the missionary:

"I don't know whether the spirits Kekekose says he uses are bad or good. I know that the Indians tell me in the past they did mostly useful things--like making people well or

protecting them from the windigo--and if this is mere suggestion, so what? They're still well, aren't they? If it helps them to live in the bush--"

"Then why wreck it by coming here and telling them they don't really need all they've had, that they need Jesus, about who [sic] they've never heard, or care? . . ."

"When white men come they tear old ideas apart and in the end leave the Indians nothing--because they simply don't believe what the Indians do and when every day they live out their care-nothing, faith in the old beliefs is lost." (pp. 171-72)

Kekekose himself is depicted as a good and responsible man--rather like MacLean's Running Wolf--and the missionaries are wise and sympathetic enough to recognize his real value to his people.

Unfortunately, Kekekose, and by implication his religion,<sup>39</sup> lacks the strength to combat the powers of Bjornesen, who fights with a perverted version of the conjurer's own spiritual powers. But after the dramatic resolution of the novel, Kekekose himself realizes the inadequacies of his religion and leads his people to the missionary for instruction and, later, baptism. The victory of good has been achieved and a state of social order restored when Violet decides not to marry Alex and instead to become a teacher amongst her own people.

In spite of the apparently romantic resolution, the various characters, both Indian and white, have emerged as recognizable people, not so fully developed as those in The Temptations of Big Bear (1973), but still, individuals with their own problems and ways of finding solutions. Certainly, the Bishops are a far cry from McKelvie's

<sup>39</sup> A photograph of a conjuring tent like that used by Kekekose may be found in the centre section of James Redsky's Great Leader of the Ojibway Mis-quona-queb, ed. James R. Stevens (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1972).

Mainwarings and Fraser's Father Lacombe, although their function is the same; still more certainly Kekekose is no Kwaw-kewlth or Caleb Thompson. And even Bjornesen has some redeeming features towards the end. Perhaps one could call the novel disquisitory realism, since the spiritual and social problems are talked out at some length by the main characters, instead of being presented obliquely or symbolically.

### 3. Doubts about Christianity

So far, the treatment of religion in fiction about Indians has basically affirmed the superiority of the white Christian way over the Indian way, which is either dark with fear and superstition or simply inadequate to meet the challenges which confront it. However, the eighteenth century was the age of the satirical and sentimental Noble Savages, both of which fashions criticize white values and extoll native values. Although little of this attitude appears in Canadian fiction, or even in the reports of traders and explorers of the period, one does encounter the occasional comment in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries on the limitations of Christianity in the lives of the Indians. For example, in his lightly fictionalized Narrative of a Shipwreck (1790) Ensign Prenties expresses his fears about the mercenary attitudes of the Indians who have rescued his party:

The only circumstance on which I founded my hope of better treatment from them was their religion: for . . . they were Christians, and rigid Catholics. . . . But perhaps it was this very circumstance of their communication with Christians that had inspired them with that vehement love of money.<sup>40</sup>

As Fairchild remarked in another context, the idea of civilization corrupting Indians appealed to the romantic temperament (p. 99).

During the nineteenth century, however, with the growing conviction that imperial expansion was paramount and that white civilization represented the salvation of the Indian, less of this sense of spiritual corruption was apparent. As Haycock says: "it was our duty to civilize in the Imperialist fashion these poor moribund, yet noble savages. They were debased by the whites, but whites could save them" (p. 27). Thus the criticism of civilization and its role in dooming the savage which one finds in such works as Bellegarde (1832), Argimou (1847), Ottawah (1847), and "Jacques Cartier and the Little Indian Girl" (1848) does not necessarily imply criticism of Christianity. Only in Nomades of the West (1850) does Huyghue call Christianity to account, but his vilification is directed solely at the Roman Catholic church, which is depicted as wanting to imprison the lovely Ellen in a convent and as having perverted the Christian or "praying" Mohawks so that they help the French perpetrate the atrocities at Schenectady in 1690. Similarly, the character of the Black Abbé in Charles G. D. Roberts's Forge in the Forest (1896) is a criticism of the politicking of the French Roman Catholic clergy and not a criticism of Christianity itself.

As long as "the poor doomed savage" could spend his declining years propped up by a widely respected religion, literature in general and fiction in particular did not question the validity of Christian

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<sup>40</sup> Ensign Prenties, Ensign Prenties's Narrative, ed. G. G. Campbell (Toronto: Ryerson, 1968), p. 54.



conversion. Besides, during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries strong religious feeling pervaded all of Canadian society. Nevertheless, during the 1930's a few writers began to question the assumption that white was right, in a movement which Haycock calls "social humanitarianism," as opposed to the "social Darwinism" which he sees as characteristic of the previous thirty years (p. 28). In these works the representative of white religion is not necessarily an ideal Christian practitioner--indeed, he is often weak or of questionable competence; nor is the native way seen as necessarily needing the redemption of Christianity. Even when the white way wins in the end, it is only after many real problems have been overcome or after many concessions have been made.

Jane Rolyat may describe the horrors of a life ungoverned by restraint, but the restraint offered by the church in the remote Hudson's Bay post in Wilderness Walls (1933) seems little more than a feeble gesture. Rolyat focuses her implicit criticism on the mission with its vegetable garden, the symbol of civilization. The mission is of minimal effectiveness: the Indians ambivalently allow a child a Christian burial in the afternoon and give him a pagan ceremony at night. As for the vegetable garden, Rolyat treats it with sarcasm as she discusses the plans of the mission:

And they had designs. High up on the admirable forest they would build an altar. At midnight they would go there to pray for the sins of the world. At midnight, separated by many leagues of purest air from the gross vapours of sin, they would pray for weary sinners in a world far away.

Trader MacKenzie who was holding the carrot handed it back to Frère Beauparlant in a subdued manner. A carrot from the Garden of the Lord, a carrot of spiritual growth.<sup>41</sup>

If names are significant, then the mission priest is merely a man of fine words but no action beyond the cultivation of carrots in a hostile land.

Rolyat seems to suggest that only active dedication to a code outside oneself (like Pecuchie's canoe-building) can allow one to test one's inner strength, which is the true spiritual strength of any man. The outward trappings of civilization, including the mission's Christianity, are only superficial restraints which decay gradually over the years, leaving sloth, ineffectuality, and inefficiency--or worse. Presumably, Christianity could be meaningful, but Rolyat does not show it as being so.

Franklin McDowell also seems to have reservations about the role of the church in the lives of the Indians, which he expresses in The Champlain Road (1939), a book about the last days of Huronia. McDowell calls his work a romance;<sup>42</sup> and certainly where Diana Woodville and Godfrey Bethune are concerned, the plot is quite conventional. They are fictitious characters with whom McDowell enriches his historical material, and their tale uses pure romance elements. But with the Jesuits and the Indians, events are not so simple or clear-cut. There is evidence of considerable research on McDowell's part, and his research has not revealed the clear victories and defeats of the imagi-

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<sup>41</sup> Jane Rolyat [pseud. E. Jean McDougall], Wilderness Walls (London: Dent, 1933), p. 222.

<sup>42</sup> Franklin Davey McDowell, The Champlain Road (Toronto: Macmillan, 1939), p. vi.

native world. He has reproduced the sense of actual contemporary events, of daily life cluttered with unromantic people, with compromise, petty details, and failure.

McDowell never questions the great personal dedication, heroism, self-sacrifice, and martyrdom of the Jesuits--few people do--but he does implicitly criticize the negative effect of Christianity on Indian survival. The savage customs which the Jesuits denounced and tried to replace with pacifism were essential to the Hurons' equality in warfare with the adamantly non-Christian Iroquois. The ironic relation between the physical and spiritual survival of the Hurons is frequently touched upon, and is most clearly expressed in this reflection of Father Rague-neau as the stragglers remove to Quebec:

When I came to this great river only 13 years ago, I found it bordered with Algonquin nations who knew no God, and in their infidelity thought themselves gods on earth. For they had all that they desired--abundance of fish and game, prosperous trade with allied nations, and little fear of their enemies. Since then they have become a prey to misery, torture and cruel death. In a word, they are broken and dispersed, and are as a people swept from the face of the earth. Our only consolation is that, as they died Christians, they have a part in the inheritance of the true children of God, who scourgeth every one whom He receiveth. (p. 386)

It is difficult in the late twentieth century to appreciate the missionary zeal that can take consolation in the demise of whole villages, so long as they have been baptized. Certainly McDowell does not appear to endorse the precept "better a dead Christian than a live pagan."

As for the last days of Huronia, McDowell makes these important observations concerning the surviving Hurons huddled at Ste. Marie:

In the houses of Annaotaka and his pagan clansmen was to be found the highest development of the primitive man, lingering on the border of the Stone Age, with customs and beliefs that had been preserved from the earliest days of tribal organization. In the House of Ste. Marie, with its threescore Frenchmen, was the ultimate attained by man in his climb to cultural heights, with new sanctions of conduct and a philosophy of living bearing the imprint of the Cross. (p. 307)

The war chief Annaotaka, who has never converted to Christianity, is a great man and a fearless leader; he stands well above the other chiefs of Huronia, who are variously depicted as vain or weak or less than competent, fluctuating between their old beliefs and the Jesuits' teachings. One by one they are killed or conquered; only Annaotaka and his pagans remain. Even Father Ragueneau is forced to admit: "I only wish the Christian chiefs had more of his spirit and enterprise" (p. 332). The shrewd and realistic Diana also observes how the pagan clan of Annaotaka, in barracks outside the compound, keeps its health and energy during the final winter by resorting to an indirect form of survival cannibalism, while the Christian Hurons inside the compound languish from starvation and influenza. The situation is almost the reverse of the garrison pattern: for an Indian, to enter the garrison is to be destroyed.

According to McDowell Huronia failed as a political experiment, not because of the Indians' traditional ways, but because the new faith, bringing with it a whole new way of life, weakened the very fabric of that culture. There is tragic realism in this picture, which at times expands to one of epic defeat.

Fred Bodsworth seems to harbour similar doubts about the effects of Christianity on the traditional survival skills of the Indian. All

the same, in The Sparrow's Fall (1967) the traditional codes of the Indians are depicted as spiritually wrong for Jacob Atook and Niska Nimawassa, who have had some white education and who find themselves in love. They are romance figures who must resolve a cultural conflict before they can survive and be happy. As the prettiest girl in their community, Niska has been promised to Taka Cheecho, the best hunter. Jacob and Niska know that if they marry without parental approval, they will risk repercussions from the spirit beings and will certainly be forced to live alone, outside any band or family protection.

The arrival of Father Webber of the Canadian Arctic Evangelical Mission, the first missionary in Jacob's lifetime, changes their cultural disobedience into a religious conflict and helps precipitate the dilemmas which almost destroy Jacob and Niska:

[Jacob] had always recognized that for white men to have so many wonderful things, like the little box radios and airplanes . . . their religion with its one big boss god must be much more powerful than the religion and all the little spirit people of the Atihk-anishini.<sup>43</sup>

But the black-robe is not one of fiction's more sympathetic priests; he is depicted as narrow-minded and somewhat bigoted, and he glowers at Jacob's innocent suggestion that a bear's head might help the power of the God-book on the altar: "You must not believe that witchcraft any longer! It is pagan!" (p. 72). The priest also marries Jacob and Niska without parental approval, mainly because Taka would remove Niska

<sup>43</sup> Fred Bodsworth, The Sparrow's Fall (Toronto: Doubleday, 1967), p. 70.

from Christianity: "a soul given to God must not go back! I'll show them there will be none of these pagan interferences in the work of God I have been sent to perform!" (p. 80). The illicit newlyweds elope from the community, thereby depriving themselves of community support.

The crucial religious issue hinges on the matter of killing. Moved by the children's hymn "God Sees the Little Sparrow Fall," Jacob questions the priest about God's love and predators: why do some animals, including man, kill others, while some animals eat only vegetation. Being an unsatisfactory priest, Father Webber is unable to give a satisfactory answer; and Jacob's confusion works itself eventually into the inability to kill at all, even for survival. His conversion is not strong or complete enough to cope with the dilemma: "the faith in the Manito remained firm, but the old faith, the old fears, the mystic legacy of their race, came back to take a place beside it" (p. 87). It is only at the end of a long hunt, on the brink of starvation, that Jacob finally painstakingly works out the relationship between reproduction and the balance of nature and successfully brings down a pregnant caribou.

Even though the events of the hunt have shaken Jacob's faith and even though Niska has to remind him of God's hand in all the fortune they have experienced, Bodsworth manages to treat native religious practices with sympathy and respect. The major criticism rests with an interfering priest who is more interested in conversion than people and who is ultimately unequal to his job of ministering to native peoples. Bodsworth's method here, as we have seen before, is to flesh out an essentially romantic structure with documentary realism. All the same,

the greater ambiguity of The Sparrow's Fall helps support the realism provided by the exacting documentation of life amongst the Northern Cree.

#### 4. In Praise of the Old Ways

Native religions and practices from earliest times fascinated the Christian reader, with the white supremacist emphasizing the damnable state of ignorance and the humanist the natural goodness. One of the most succinct arguments about the relative merits of the Indian as a religious being occurs in Herschel Hardin's play The Great Wave of Civilization.<sup>44</sup> Here one black-robe sees the Indian as wallowing in sin and ignorance, while another recognizes the beauty of the Indian's natural religious impulses. The second view has been widely held by Canadian writers of the twentieth century, some of whom are missionaries and committed Christians. In fiction of this sort, of course, one encounters only the best kind of Indians, just as in fiction of the negative sort, one encountered only the best kind of Christians.

The early explorers often commented at length on the religious and socio-religious practices of the various tribes with which they came in contact: for example, Samuel Hearne's observations of the Chipewyan purification rites after the massacre of the Eskimoes,<sup>45</sup> and David

<sup>44</sup> Herschel Hardin, The Great Wave of Civilization, dir. Paul Thompson, Festival Lennoxville, Centennial Theatre, Bishop's Univ., Lennoxville, Quebec, 28 July 1976.

<sup>45</sup> Samuel Hearne, A Journey from Prince of Wales's Fort in Hudson's

Thompson's description of Mandan fertility rites and the Wahbino cult.<sup>46</sup> However, most nineteenth-century writers who discuss native religion favourably focus on the abstract worship of a Great Spirit--keeping their comments within a framework acceptable to a basically Protestant audience. Thus Douglas Huyghue's good Indians are motivated essentially by a benevolence created by their close contact with nature. Similarly, Ottawa and Ahtomah of Ottawah worship a vaguely defined Good Spirit. But little else is said about native religions in the nineteenth century. They rarely form the positive side in a conflict; and where they are documented, the effect is more sociological than religious.

Of the traditional religious practices of the native Indians, few have attracted as much interest as the Thirst Dance of the Cree (the term Sun Dance is used by the Blackfeet and American Plains tribes). Most Christian missionaries discouraged--some even condemned--the Sun Dance as a pagan ceremony which only encouraged the bloodshed and violence of the old ways; but some, like John MacLean, regretted the loss of manliness, pride, and independence which the old rites inspired. John McDougall gives a detailed and sympathetic description of a Thirst Dance in "Wa-pee Moos-tooch" (1908), depicting it as an important event in the religious and social life of the Plains Cree, a way of making braves and propitiating the Evil Spirit that causes disaster:

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Bay (London, 1795; rpt. Amsterdam: N. Israel, 1968), pp. 204-06.

<sup>46</sup> David Thompson, Travels in Western North America, 1784-1812, ed. Victor G. Hopwood (Toronto: Macmillan, 1971), pp. 173-75; 178-81.



. . . we make vows, and we offer sacrifice, and when mid-summer time comes, we gather our people and build a great thirst dance lodge, and all who have vowed fulfil their vows by fasting and thirsting and punishment of the body, and constant petition.<sup>47</sup>

McDougall does not refer to it as a "pagan rite," but as a "great religious festival" and the chief medicine man as a "high priest," not as a "practitioner of mummery" (pp. 288-96). The tone is positive and the whole ritual is treated in detail and with respect. The morality that McDougall depicts lies in the devotion, the reverence, the loyalty, the humanity, and the courage which impel all good men, whatever their background. White Buffalo himself is portrayed as a very noble and spiritual person: "to him everything that was good came from the Great Spirit" (p. 323).

W. D. Lighthall more explicitly writes "aboriginal romance" in The Master of Life (1908) and aims to depict the "reverent side" of the Indian's nature.<sup>48</sup> The title itself is the name by which the Iroquois in the story refer to the deity which controls their lives. The village of Hochelaga, on the present island of Montreal, is perhaps the most Edenesque picture in all Canadian fiction featuring Indians. The romance begins with a harvest festival, with lovely young girls enacting the Spirit of the Bean, the Spirit of the Squash, and, most important, the Spirit of the Corn. (The descriptions of the dancing and rituals

<sup>47</sup> John McDougall, "Wa-pee Moos-tooch" (Calgary: Herald, 1908), p. 20.

<sup>48</sup> W. D. Lighthall, The Master of Life (Toronto: Musson, 1908), p. v.

are reminiscent of things one reads concerning the European peasantry of former times.) The scene is idyllic, with the "Mysterymen" taking an active part and a great feeling of reverence prevailing. The community as a whole is sensible of the gratitude due the Master of Life.

But Eden has a serpent, or two in this case: first Black Wolverine, the jealous and vindictive young Algonquin who eventually drives the Mohawks from Hochelaga; and Hatiria, the Onondagan False Face chief who stands in the way of the Iroquois league of peace. The Mohawk's "paradise" is regained through the endeavours of Hiawatha, an ideal and idealized young chief whose revolutionary notion is to unite the warring Iroquoian tribes into a league of peace. Gifted with great physical prowess and mystical powers, he travels from tribe to tribe promoting peace and understanding. Eventually his antagonists are overcome and the league is realized:

No Nation shall oppress the other, nor move it against its will; ye shall be a Chain of Silver.

In wampum shall the story be kept, and never shall it cease from your memories--the tale of the day when ye founded the Peace. (p. 258)

Lighthall thus portrays in the reputedly most warlike of Indian tribes the universal religious sense of peace and order.<sup>49</sup>

By contrast, the religious festival in Servos's Frontenac and the Maid of the Mist (1927) focuses on stagey and dramatic features, although every effort is made to portray the festival in a positive way.

<sup>49</sup> In reality, both Lighthall and McDougall tend to focus on universal human virtues, especially those which are important in Christianity, rather than on more distinctively Indian virtues.

Much emphasis is put on the real enthusiasm of the candidates for the title of Maid of the Mist (a girl who goes over Niagara Falls as a sacrifice to Manitou); but the actual contest is more like the finals of the Miss America Pageant than like anything remotely religious.

The primitive religious sense that pervades O'Hagan's Tay John (1939), however, is both authentic-feeling and sympathetic. It is generated by the intimate picture of the Shuswap Indians presented in the first section of the book. Here is recounted the legendary early life of the yellow-haired half-breed who becomes known as Tay John (tête jaune). O'Hagan portrays the community with great sensitivity, stressing the high moral values of the tribe. Their spiritual craving is also shown in their reverent attitude to Tay John, whom they believe to be their yellow-headed Messiah.

But Tay John disappoints them. When he goes for his youthful spirit trip, he does gain a name from it, but he fails to answer a voice which challenges him. He tells the leaders of the community:

"There was a word. There was a voice. I heard speech in the trees. It called me further than I had gone. Still I turned my face from it . . . lest I go so far I would not come back. I feared, and I stayed."

At this the men wondered, and among them were those who sorrowed. . . . Others, remembering his birth, were afraid that he might still go from them and leave them, fearing that the darkness of the earth, where he lived before they knew him, had stained his spirit.<sup>50</sup>

However, Tay John does seem to have some connection with spiritual

<sup>50</sup> Howard O'Hagan, Tay John, introd. Patricia Morley (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974), pp. 50-51.

primitive forces. Many years later when Jack Denham first encounters Tay John, he sees the half-breed's hair almost as a halo: "it seemed to shed a light about him" (p. 84). And Father Rorty, ignorant that Tay John is his nephew, is as frightened by Tay John's magnetic power as he is by Ardith Aeriola's sexual attractiveness: "I must get away from him as well. Familiar to me, yet strange is that man as if we had met somewhere before. . . . I burn. I, a priest, who only this afternoon wanted more than anything else I could do to stand before you, a man" (p. 214). Then in a gesture of supreme priestly arrogance, Father Rorty tries to punish himself by emulating the agonies of the crucified Christ and dies in the attempt. Father Rorty seems to be the exact opposite of his philandering, sometime evangelical brother Red Rorty; neither is a complete human being--indeed one can see them as the two halves of a personality divided between the spirit and the flesh and yet each craving the missing half. There is definitely a romantic assertion here that true religion requires a union of the spirit and the body and that to deny the one or the other is ultimately destructive. Hagan's position here is like that of many of the recent Canadian writers whose works were discussed in the preceding chapter; but he makes his statement a generation earlier, and still twenty years before Sheila Watson crafted her enigmatic story of the primitive spirit of the coyote and the double hook of darkness and glory.

Also infused with the mystery of the primitive is Margaret Craven's I Heard the Owl Call My Name (1967), which treats an almost ideal relationship between a young Anglican priest and his Kwakiutl parishioners on Kingcome Inlet, British Columbia. Ignorant of his terminal illness,

the young priest has been sent by his bishop to the most difficult parish of the diocese because he has "so short a time to learn so much."<sup>51</sup> Thus in this remote northern coastal community, where fundamentals count, he learns "what every man must learn in this world. . . . Enough of the meaning of life to be ready to die" (p. 124). Although he is presumably the spiritual leader of Kingcome Inlet, it is Mark who learns the really important lessons in the story.

There are no demonic forces to combat; instead, there is a romantic sense of the mystery of nature. And there is a sense of regret at the passing of the old traditions, even of those normally discouraged by the Church. The old winter hamatsa ceremony is now one innocuous dance. The potlatches are just big parties, without the prestige and great gift-giving of former times.<sup>52</sup> Only the old people speak the ancient ceremonial Kwákwala language, and gradually the old ways and spiritual values are being lost, symbolized by the loss of a family ceremonial mask to an exploitive white man.

The main Indian characters in the story are nearly all of the coastal aristocracy and are still the leaders of the community. The relationship between the priest and these people is an ideal one of mutual giving and respect. Keetah and Jim see Mark in their cultural terms as "the swimmer," the salmon, a spiritual part of themselves and a symbol of life and renewal in the book. The very old Marta Stevens,

<sup>51</sup> Margaret Craven, I Heard the Owl Call My Name (Toronto: Clark, Irwin, 1967), p. 3.

<sup>52</sup> For a detailed reminiscence of the Potlatch, see George Clutesi, Potlatch (Sidney, B.C.: Gray's, 1969).

one of the grandmothers of the tribe, ultimately becomes Mark's native spiritual guide. In her great wisdom she sees the progress of his disease and gives him the greatest respect when she confirms his doubts about his health. The story as a whole concerns spiritual completeness and acceptance of life; it also shows that there is really little difference between the true Christian mission and the life wisdom of the Indians.

But white religion is not sympathetically depicted in The Vanishing Point (1973), where the primitive sense of life and death serve to show the inadequacies of white religion. The all-white evangelical show of the Rev. Heally Richards is good entertainment, but is indirectly shown to be a form of prostitution<sup>53</sup> and is quite unequal to the task of healing old Esau's consumptive body. No more effective is the insipid Rev. Dingle, who has never had the respect of his flock and has for years said "bullshit" in Stony when he thought he was expressing thanks.<sup>54</sup> But like Craven, Mitchell also regrets the passing of the old ways. At the funeral of old Esau Rider Carlyle Sinclair observes that the spiritual life represented by the old "Storm and Misty" of Esau, a man with Sun Dance scars, "died with him" (p. 374). The old ways disappear with the old people, and nothing can bring back their relevance to the Indians' life.

Rudy Wiebe, however, is able to portray the extent of the tra-

<sup>53</sup> Donald R. Bartlett, "Dumplings and Dignity," Canadian Literature, No. 77 (1978), pp. 79, 80n.

<sup>54</sup> W. O. Mitchell, The Vanishing Point (Toronto: Macmillan, 1975), pp. 174-75.

ditional religious spirit in his historical novel The Temptations of Big Bear (1973). He depicts in realistic depth the spiritual dimension of Big Bear's unsuccessful attempt "to prevent the destruction of the things they [the Indians] value in an old way of life that is being pushed aside to make room for a brave new world."<sup>55</sup> Big Bear is chief of a large following of Plains Cree; he has a strong attachment to all that is best in the traditional ways; he refuses both baptism and treaty. All the same, at Fort Pitt in 1876, he claims to be peaceful and obedient to the Queen:

She is our Mother under The Great Spirit. Good. Under the Spirit as missionary McDougall there says? Or the other one says, Lacombe? Or as I say? I throw back no man's hand, but I say I am fed by the Mother Earth. The only water I will be touched by comes from above, the rain from The Only One who makes the grass grow and the rivers run and buffalo feed there and drink so that I and my children live. That we have life!<sup>56</sup>

His faith is anchored firmly to the precept that "no one can choose for only himself a piece of the Mother Earth. She is. And she is for all that live, alike" (p. 28); or as later stated: "the proper way to live with the Earth is to give each one the right The First One gave every one man. Let every man walk where his feet can walk" (p. 200).

As a young warrior Big Bear received his vision, his song, and as his Spirit the greatest warrior Spirit of the Plains Cree--Bear. His

<sup>55</sup> Allan Bevan, Introd., The Temptations of Big Bear, by Rudy Wiebe (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1976), p. xiii.

<sup>56</sup> Rudy Wiebe, The Temptations of Big Bear, introd. Allan Bevan (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1976), p. 23.

sacred bundle, Chief's Son's Hand, records all the deeds Big Bear has since performed: "His breath stood in his chest like power and he was in the perfect life of his vision and of his exploits guided surely by the sacred bundle, the exploits hideous to every enemy of the River People" (p. 183). But in the council tent following his 1884 Thirst Dance, Big Bear's son Little Bad Man makes the necessary gifts to request his father to pass on the sacred bundle. When Big Bear fails to do so, the bundle then focuses the power conflict existing between the old chief, firm of faith and intent on preventing bloodshed, and the son, in quest of glory, like all young men (p. 37).

This scene is essentially religious and is a crucial and symbolic one. Big Bear knows his son's aims and is tempted. But even as he hesitates, he feels his warrior power draining away and feels the metaphorical rope around his neck (the one he earlier felt during the treaty discussions):

The desire of his son, the desire of the People facing the danger of this new day pushed him: Little Bad Man was the son, now it was right, here were the proper gifts, now it was right to pass Him on with a prayer. Bear? He was praying, Bear? He could not feel Him, no warmth on his chest, no good weight of Him on his soul against the back of his neck. All he suddenly felt as Thunderbird spoke down to him from blue sky was a slow inevitable tightening around his neck. (p. 183)

However, his power is enough still to prevent an ugly incident during the arrest of He Speaks Our Tongue (the young warrior who allegedly assaulted a farming instructor). In spite of the disintegration Big Bear perceives around him, his prayers prevent that one rifle shot that would have precipitated a debacle (p. 192).



Even Big Bear's last buffalo hunt is accorded spiritual significance, for at that time he has his vision of the fountain of blood which he cannot stop. The vision fulfills itself on April 2, when Big Bear stands powerless to stop the slaughter of the Frog Lake residents. He roars out for the young warriors to stop, but he goes unheard. His strength as a leader, the spiritual strength which sustained him and his people, is lost.

Big Bear's deep faith in The Great Spirit, his personal Spirit, and his love of the Mother Earth have kept him from signing treaty and shackling his band to a reserve, have guided him to keep his vow to hold his Thirst Dance in 1884, and have allowed him to keep faith with those whites to whom he has promised loyalty and friendship, in spite of the rebellion of his younger men. As well, just before his capitulation, he awes young Kitty MacLean with a native legend about The First One, as direct and moving as a parable of Christ's--a story told by a defeated great Indian chief to a young white girl on the threshold of adolescence. Finally, Big Bear's Great Spirit sees him through his trial as he speaks for himself after the verdict: "I always understood that it pleased the Great Spirit for men to do good" (pp. 396-97). It leads him to ask for pity on his erring people and for the help of white men who have destroyed the Indians' freedom. In his final days in prison, he prays to the Only Great Spirit and before lying down to die feels the "warm weight against his soul" (p. 415), that weight he lost the day in the council tent.

Big Bear may or may not have been all that Wiebe depicts him as; few heroes are in the flesh what they are in the telling. Wiebe has

built him as the hero of a tragic culture epic<sup>57</sup> in which the cultural life is seen as inseparable from the religious life. Edgar Dewdney's letter to Sir John A. MacDonald comments on the importance of Big Bear's leadership:

I believe Big Bear realizes that red moral power, once mustered would outweigh any other kind of power we would willingly apply and that the strongest moral stand they now can make is to unite under his leadership. . . . He is a complete untouched pagan. To sit on the ground there in his lodge is to face a man who seemingly contains so complete an assurance of and confidence in his own self-ness. . . ." (p. 117)

The diplomatic Crowfoot and the Catholic Sweetgrass, praised by John McDougall (p. 43), pale beside Big Bear. These other chiefs, so often hailed as "the good sort of Indian" seem like sell-outs beside the stocky, aging Big Bear, clinging to spiritual values, a moral code, and a way of life rapidly becoming anachronisms in the face of Victorian progress.

The focus on the spiritual life of someone not of his own race, religion, or time, is very enterprising of Wiebe, especially since all the characters in the book are actual, none invented. Although it is an heroic tale, the effect is symbolic realism; we are frequently made aware of the small person inside the hero. Big Bear is neither two-dimensional nor exclusively allegorical.

The white flood of civilization overwhelming Big Bear reminds one of the ancient Jews conquering Canaan, first taking Jericho and then

<sup>57</sup> David Williams specifically notes an elegiac similarity to Beowulf. See "The Indian our Ancestor: Three Modes of Vision in Recent Canadian Fiction," Dalhousie Review, 58 (1978-79), 315.

subduing the regions and kings around. In a few recent Canadian novels the Jericho image merges with the garrison image that Frye has discussed. The white race, as a chosen people, armed with the righteousness of the Lord, break down alien garrisons in order to establish their own. Certainly Josh Bishop, the missionary in First and Vital Candle, conquers for the chosen people, albeit unaggressively.

In David Williams's Burning Wood (1975) the Jericho image is used quite consciously and differently. Young Joshua Cardiff listens to sermons on Jericho, takes trumpet lessons, and eventually breaks down walls separating him from the primitive, yet desirable, life that the Indians represent. Like Wiebe's Mennonite novel, Peace Shall Destroy Many, The Burning Wood is set in a strict religious community in Northern Saskatchewan, close to a native community (in this case an Indian reserve). Here the Cardiff family live a strict fundamentalist life in which the nearby Bible Camp (which borders the reserve) plays an important part. The family has been in the area since great-grandfather Bran Cardiff, after Batoche, hacked out his bush farm north-east of Saskatoon. But Bran Cardiff was a womanizer, "running from one squaw to the other barely stopped before he was off again running to another."<sup>58</sup> It was his affair with the chief's wife that got him axe-murdered; Joshua's grandfather was witness.

Thus to grandfather Cardiff Indians are unequivocally bad, and his

<sup>58</sup> David Williams, The Burning Wood (Toronto: Anansi, 1975), p. 74. Although Williams's article "The Indian our Ancestor" focuses on Laurence, Mitchell, and Wiebe, it helps to explain the spiritual role Williams assigns to the Indians in his own novel.

family must constantly resist their moral pollution: "those Indians brought out the worst in my dad with their drinking and fornicating . . . . He would have been all right if it hadn't been for them" (p. 72). Then his son Joshua (young Joshua's uncle) was drowned by a Cree youth he was trying to save. The Cardiffs have legitimate grievances against Indians, but nothing can justify the horror and contempt with which they and their peers view any association with the neighbouring Indians, whom they consider filthy, lazy, and degenerate. To Ivan, the visiting missionary, "Satan walks among them" at night when they drum (p. 32). To the Cardiffs and their fellow believers, the Indians represent a moral hell. And to Joshua's Aunty Bee, Joshua himself is as damned as the Indians and his great-grandfather: "you're just like they say he was. Why don't you run away to the Indians too and leave us here in peace" (p. 2). Ironically enough, his Aunty Bee's words prove prophetic. The book concerns the decision of young Joshua, like Huck Finn (whom he admires), to go to hell (p. 16). Two or three generations earlier, however, this situation would not have been treated ironically.

From the beginning of this quest novel, young Joshua is different, mainly because he is totally bald. This fact makes him an easy target in his family and among his peers. But the casual Indian workers on the Cardiff farm are fascinated by his baldness, see it as a God-given condition rather than as a blight, and name him "Scalp-by-Manitou." But most importantly, Joshua is different from his white peers in that, from the start he has responded to the drum beats from the reserve in a positive, vital way: "they were slow and reassuring, like the sound of one's heartbeat. . . . They coursed through his ears like blood pumping,

serene and constant and unknowing' (p. 28). They speak to him as they spoke to Vincent Reid and to Conrad's Marlow; but in the 1970's to respond is not to fail morally: it is to achieve a new level of awareness and a real, full life.

The conflict in The Burning Wood is a religious one which must resolve itself in the sexual, social, and spiritual unity of the individual. The white religious community is seen as exploitive (farmers prostituting the earth), full of hatred and self-concern, guilt-ridden, stingy, inhospitable, intolerant, and prurient (pp. 118, 120, 158, et passim.). By contrast, Joshua sees the vitality in the Indians' eyes and can feel Lulu's touch bringing him to life. He is impressed also by Thomas's hospitality and cordiality and feels guilty about being ashamed of Thomas at the Bible Camp (p. 125). He sees the great love of Chief Coming-day for his invalid wife and is later moved by the depth of his grief when the old woman dies.

But most significantly, the Bible Camp is contrasted with the Sun Dance. From a sermon on Achan's sin at Jericho (Joshua, Chapter 7)-- the preacher showing them the way to hell, as Thomas puts it (p. 126)-- the two boys escape to the Sun Dance. At first, the noise, the ordinariness, the stolen drum all disappoint Joshua; and Coming-day, whose Sun Dance it is, notices the disappointment. Thereafter, it is the old chief who becomes Joshua's real spiritual mentor and who shows him the responsibility of being one's own person. He also reveals to Joshua a depth of humanity Joshua has never seen before. And the dance itself becomes the culmination:

He [Coming-day] was singing now in the low-high wail which was not like the call of souls in the church, crying singly for mercy. It was like no human cry at all, nothing to be understood by human ears, but something risen from the dirt to sing terribly the sun. (p. 142)

He later tells his father, "it was like church there at the Sun Dance" (p. 147).

The religious quest is achieved when Joshua later returns to the reserve and learns his final lesson from Coming-day, who is mourning for his wife. The old chief gives him some fairly conventional advice about courage and selflessness; but he unconventionally asks Joshua to help him die, "help yerself out as much as me" (p. 194). What his final words are that Joshua never wanted to hear, we do not learn; but the young man is able to break out of the garrison his family has laboriously constructed over the years.

Joshua has thus moved into real manhood, giving up family and heritage, but not himself. He is both Indian and white; he has been raised by his real father, Richard Cardiff, to be educated and responsible; he has been taught by his spiritual father, Coming-day, to know where that responsibility lies--not in the hell-fire doctrines of evangelical fundamentalism with its exploitive "hatred and self-concern," but in the recognition of love and human vitality, the real source of religion. The new life promised by Coming-day is achieved in Joshua's awareness of the mystical relation between the sun and the earth and is confirmed by the almost sacrificial death of Thomas Singletree. Clearly David Williams depicts his Indian characters in the manner of modern primitivism, as symbols of the parts of life men must rediscover in

order to be whole.

The religious life has been important to a large number of Canadian writers, no matter what particular version of religion they have personally endorsed. Many have written of their own religious experiences with Indians, and these works are often marked by a high degree of understanding and humanity, backed by realistic detail, a grasp of the vagaries of everyday life, and little antagonism to the native religion. But writers over the years seem fairly evenly divided as to whether or not conversion to Christianity is a good thing for the Indians, although earlier writers like MacLean and Connor tend to be more positive than later writers like McDowell and Bodsworth. And Rudy Wiebe, who in his early works depicts conversion as desirable, eventually appears to question the value of Christianity for Indians in The Temptations of Big Bear.

There are, however, a few works which depict the blackest aspects of native religious practices. In nineteenth-century romances such as Ottawah and Nomades of the West the perversions of Uttermoot and the mad medicine man are not so much a matter of character and religious conviction as plot devices. The remaining works, all of the early twentieth century, are unmistakably romance in genre, focus on the powerful shamanism of some of Canada's most complex Indian cultures and tend to be gothic in character. Even Frances Herring, who tries to add realistic detail beyond what is needed for atmosphere and plot, nevertheless focuses on the more violent and melodramatic features of the society. Obviously these authors feel strongly about the prevailing

concern of white society to suppress the superstition and "black magic" which some missionaries saw as characteristic of these powerful shamans and to replace the damnable darkness with the reasonable doctrines of Christianity.

The group of narratives which endorses Christian conversion for Indians, but which treats the Indians' own customs with a fairly respectful objectivity are written mostly by men who have at one time been missionaries or seriously involved in religion (MacLean, Wiebe, and Connor, to a certain extent). The least sympathetic depiction of a shaman comes from a non-missionary, W. A. Fraser, whose conflicts tend to appear more like literary derivations than expressions of real experience. All the works in this group, except those of Wiebe, must be considered popular romance. And even in the much later First and Vital Candle, although it is a realistic novel in most respects, the victory of the Bishops in converting Kekekose must be considered a fairly romantic resolution to that particular conflict in the novel. The distinguishing feature of this sub-group of fiction is a high degree of social realism which comes mostly from the authors' fairly extensive first-hand knowledge of native peoples.<sup>59</sup> The degree of objectivity seems to be in direct relation to the authors' personal knowledge of the Indian ways.

Works in which the author focuses on doubts about the value of Christianity in the lives of Indians are not many, and, except for some

<sup>59</sup> MacLean wrote several early anthropological studies of Canadian Indians; and Rudy Wiebe spent a summer in Northern Ontario researching First and Vital Candle.



very early remarks and some nineteenth-century criticism leveled specifically at the political role of the Roman Catholic Church, the fiction is all post-1930. This date suggests both a reaction to the unquestioning acceptance of Christianity at all levels of society and the influence of the rise of realism in fiction generally. Even though the three works by Rolyat, McDowell, and Bodsworth must ultimately be considered romance in genre, they do not wish to soothe and comfort as did the popular romances of the preceding three decades, and they are either realistic in their perception of the unpleasant realities of a social experiment or in their almost painstaking documentation of a way of life.

The fullest and most durable group of narratives dealing with religion in Indian life is that in which the Indian's religion is depicted as a positive natural force intimately bound to his culture as a whole. This sympathetic and idealistic portrayal is implicitly present in the Noble Savage conventions of nineteenth-century romance and continues in the works of McDougall and Lighthall, where native religions are depicted as part of the universal religious impulse. The theme continues to attract predominantly romantic treatment, probably because of the allegorical implications of much of the fiction, the degree of idealization, and the frequently subjective and psychological focus of the conflict. Even the conscientiously realistic novel The Temptations of Big Bear approaches the romantic most closely in the spiritual dimension of the title character, whose tragic human weakness just prevents him from being a kind of cultural super-hero like McDougall's White Buffalo. Nevertheless, Wiebe, like Craven in I Heard

the Owl Call My Name, idealizes the intimate connection between the symbols of the Indians' natural religion (sun and salmon respectively) and the culture itself.

Since the publication of Tay John (1939), but most significantly in the past twenty years or so, writers have begun to depict native religious beliefs as a kind of primitive cure for the spiritual wasteland of twentieth-century rational materialism. The depiction is essentially romantic, but it goes well beyond the idealized simple Manitou of the Noble Savage and takes on a sexual dimension which connects this topic with that concerning love relations. In Tay John, The Vanishing Point, and The Burning Wood it is hard to separate the sexual part of life from the religious and spiritual part, largely because modern writers are less concerned with dogmatic Christianity than with a generalized religious impulse, and because a meaningful sexual life is often depicted as inseparable from a valid spiritual life: wholeness is holiness--the credo of the new romance.

## Chapter IV

### Red-skins and Red-coats: The Fighting Indian

Possibly the image of the Indian which comes most quickly to mind, thanks to Hollywood a few decades ago, is a large band of Apaches, Cheyennes, or Sioux suddenly appearing over the crest of a hill in full war regalia and whooping down on a small fort or wagon train, which is saved only by the timely arrival of the cavalry. And yet such an image is virtually absent from Canadian fiction. In the many works examined for this study, there is only one wagon train fight, and that is presented from the point of view of the Indians, who are out to destroy whisky and steal guns along the infamous Whoop-up Trail.<sup>1</sup> No women and children are attacked, only a group of unscrupulous traders. On the whole, the fighting Indian is not one of the dominant characters in Canadian fiction, and where he does occur, the fiction is mostly historical, with the emphasis frequently on the efforts to avert war or on the psychology and methodology of warfare.

A good deal of this emphasis on the psychology and anthropology of warfare is present in the few fictional treatments we have of Indians fighting amongst themselves in the period before white contact. How-

<sup>1</sup> See Norma Sluman, Blackfoot Crossing (Toronto: Ryerson, 1959). A wagon train of supplies is also captured by Poundmaker's Crees in Wiebe's story of 1885, "The Fish Caught in the Battle River," in Where Is the Voice Coming From? (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974), pp. 125-33. However, the story mainly concerns the narrator's preparation before and captivity after the attack; there is really no fight involved.

ever, these pictures are not numerous and tend to be idealized and romanticized. Because Canadian writers are generally concerned for fact and documentation, especially in realistic literature, they doubtless feel unable or unwilling to attempt a realistic depiction of a period for which they have so little reliable information. As a complication most of the records available treat the Indian culture at a time when some white influence was already felt.<sup>2</sup> This chapter will begin with a brief look at fiction which depicts the fighting Indian in his traditional role as the representative of a warrior culture.

But from the seventeenth century on, documentation is relatively abundant; by far the largest group of fictional narratives about the fighting Indian concerns the colonial period, from the settlement of New France in the early 1600's to the Northwest Rebellion in 1885. However, even here the Indian is not usually seen as a wanton villain out to destroy white settlers; only the massacres at Lachine (1689) and Frog Lake (1885) have become popular subjects for exhibiting some of the Indians' more violent behaviour.<sup>3</sup> As well, writers tend to try to

<sup>2</sup> For example, the struggle for supremacy in the fur trade, as well as for horses and firearms, is generally conceded to have had a strong impact on Indian territorial claims from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries. See E. Palmer Patterson II, The Canadian Indian (Don Mills: Collier-Macmillan, 1972), pp. 57-60; and D. Bruce Sealey, "Indians of Canada: An Historical Sketch," in Indians without Tipis, ed. D. Bruce Sealey and Verna J. Kirkness (Agincourt, Ont.: Book Society of Canada, 1974), pp. 9-37.

<sup>3</sup> The depiction of the murderous "ignoble savage" which pervades American literature, especially of the nineteenth century, is not common in Canadian fiction at all and seems to be related to the frequency and popularity of captivity narratives in the United States. Although captivities did occur during the Canadian frontier period, their number is negligible by comparison. In a recent series published by the

explain the motives for war and to emphasize the diplomacy and peace-making attempts of the Indians rather than the stealth and fighting.

As for the literary pressures on this type of fiction, one would expect a high incidence of romance because historical fiction does not deal with the events of the writer's immediate social context, because distance allows the writer to portray a clear-cut conflict, and because the heroics of military confrontation conventionally receive romantic treatment. However, because historical fiction at its best remains as true as possible to the documented facts of the period it depicts, one might also expect a high degree of realism. The tension between the two genres, visible in Canadian fiction as early as Wacousta in 1832, is common in historical fiction and continues to the present day. The romantic drive to take sides and depict the abstractions of human behaviour is, at its best, balanced with the factual elements of warfare and military life; at its worst it is distorted or confused or jingoistic. The centre section of this chapter will discuss in chronological order the main periods of Indian military involvement in Canadian history, as they are depicted in fiction. Each of these periods will be further

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Newberry Library--Narratives of North American Indian Captivities, ed. Wilcomb E. Washburn--of the "311 titles in 111 volumes" advertised in the publicity, the index shows only seven titles dealing with definitely Canadian captivities (two on John Jewitt, and one each on John Gyles, Alexander Henry, Father Jogues, John Tanner, and Theresa Gowanlock). Only Theresa Gowanlock's captivity by Big Bear's Crees in 1885 is likely familiar to readers of Canadian fiction, but certainly Rudy Wiebe does not use it to illustrate ignoble savage behaviour. (See Norah Story, "Captivity Narratives," in The Oxford Companion to Canadian History and Literature [Toronto: Oxford Univ. Press, 1967].) What Indian captives there are in Canadian fiction tend to be treated merely as prisoners of war.

examined in the light of literary history.

However, direct military confrontation is not the only way in which the white man and the Indian fight. With the founding in 1874 of the North West Mounted Police, the purely military figure of law and order was gradually replaced by the para-military figure of the Mountie. From the beginning, the Mountie became the centre of a kind of Canadian culture myth, which has been supported or attacked by writers through the years. Idealized, he becomes a romance hero; ridiculed, he is the subject of satire; and viewed dispassionately, he is just another man in uniform doing a job. His job has often been to control the Indians, and so he is usually the figure the modern fighting Indians must contend with. The last part of this chapter will examine the struggles between the Indian and the Mountie subsequent to the suppression of the 1885 Rebellion.

### 1. Fighting Other Indians

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries little fictional attention was paid to the wars between various native peoples, although the theme occurs in some non-fiction: for example, Samuel Hearne, the explorer, gives a graphic account of the gratuitous massacre (1771) of the Coppermine Eskimos by a band of Chipewyan Indians;<sup>4</sup> and David Thompson records tales of battles between various Blackfoot tribes and

<sup>4</sup> Samuel Hearne, A Journey from Prince of Wales's Fort in Hudson's Bay (London: 1795; rpt. Amsterdam: N. Israel, 1968), pp. 152-58.

their neighbours.<sup>5</sup> In fiction the anonymous author of Ottawah (1847) depicts unconvincing battles between the Beothuks and both their traditional enemies, the Micmacs and the Eskimos. These battles serve merely to provide adventure and to depict the struggles between good Indians and bad, in a way typical of Cooper.<sup>6</sup> Even the methods of warfare are not distinctively Beothuk, but instead generalized Eastern North American (war implements, warrior stoicism, etc.) and were probably inspired by the author's own sojourns with the Indians which he mentions in his Preface.<sup>7</sup>

However, even in Ottawah the conflict is somewhat influenced by the presence of white people, as is the case generally in Canadian fiction of the nineteenth century. It is not until the twentieth century that a few writers undertake to describe the Indians' fighting within the total context of their culture. One such work comes from an unlikely source--a missionary. John McDougall's 'Wa-pee Moos-tooch' (1908) chronicles the life and martial skills of the title character, an exemplary young Plains Cree, and at the same time tries to explain the reasons and justifications for inter-tribal war. At all times McDougall stresses White Buffalo's enlightened distaste for bloodshed, but he also points out the necessity for the aspiring young chief to

<sup>5</sup> David Thompson, Travels in Western North America, 1784-1812, ed. Victor G. Hopwood (Toronto: Macmillan, 1971), pp. 191ff.

<sup>6</sup> Louise K. Barnett, The Ignoble Savage (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1975), p. 89.

<sup>7</sup> Ottawah, the Last Chief of the Red Indians of Newfoundland (London: Appleyard, [1847]), p. iii.

prove himself in battle in order to earn the loyalty and respect of the tribe. Perhaps McDougall is also emphasizing the pacifist ideal when he contrasts the practices of the warlike Plains Cree with those of the more peaceful Wood Cree, among whom bloodshed is rare and scalping alien.<sup>8</sup> The picture on the whole is extremely idealized, in spite of a fund of anthropological information; the actual fighting arts are justified as a necessary part of the cultural life of the Cree, and White Buffalo is romantically victorious in all his fights with the hated Blackfeet.

The traditional conflict between Mohawk and Algonquin forms the opening sequence of events in W. D. Lighthall's The Master of Life (1908). There is detailed description of the battle strategies and fortifications used by the Mohawk in their unsuccessful attempt to repel the invading Algonquins under the vindictive Black Wolverine. But the battle is not an important part of the romance as a whole, which is meant to depict "the chivalrous and reverent" aspect of the Indian character.<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless Hiawatha early voices his support of the traditional war ethic of his people:

I was thinking how like the night is to a river, and the red dawn to a Mysteryman, and the sun to a victor in battle, and how quiet is twilight, and how pleasant are swift hunting and racing and archery and listening to the adventures of renowned chiefs; but more than all, how the greatest joy would be war. We of the Sacred Island are dishonored for want of enemies. In the spring I will give a feast to the

<sup>8</sup> John McDougall, "Wa-pee Moos-tooch" (Calgary: Herald, 1908), pp. 261-86 et passim.

<sup>9</sup> W. D. Lighthall, The Master of Life (Toronto: Musson, 1908), p. v.



young men, and call on them to follow me to the Town of the Rock, and there we will form a party to take up the hatchet against the Toudamans, the enemy of the Stadaconas. In that way I shall bring honor upon our town, the mother and leader of the Men of Men. (p. 29)

Such manly motives for war are very close to those espoused by Wa-pee Moos-tooch and, really, by any "right-thinking" young man, English or colonial, of the decades preceding the Great War.

This military idealization sometimes extends to the women; Onata, Hiawatha's mother, instructs Quenhia: "the tribe lives by brave women as well as by brave men, and the bravery of a woman is to give her men to war" (p. 48)--an attitude widely held at the time the book was written. McDougall, however, like poet Pauline Johnson, sees the woman as capable of independent heroic action: both Nagos of "Wa-pee Moos-tooch" and Ojistoh, the title character of a poem, manage to murder their would-be abductors.<sup>10</sup> Such actions are vastly less sentimental than the more conventional poses assumed by the female characters in The Master of Life.

Interestingly, neither Lighthall nor McDougall is concerned with the violence of warfare, although they both recognize the cultural imperatives which lead to war. Their good Indians are latent pacifists who need only the opportunity to exhibit their pacifist values. Their bad Indians are those who stand in the way of peace, like Lighthall's Black Wolverine (the Algonquin) and Hatiria (the Onondagan False Face chief). Hatiria, especially, is depicted as a demonic enemy of the

<sup>10</sup> McDougall, p. 225; E. Pauline Johnson, "Ojistoh," in Flint and Feather, 5th ed. rev. (Toronto: Musson, 1917), pp. 13-15.

Iroquois Confederacy, a man who will do anything to save his position of power. His characterization helps to make The Master of Life one of the purest expressions of the romance form in Canadian fiction about Indians. This world of sixteenth-century Indians, ostensibly before the coming of the Europeans, is truly a romance world apart, untouched by daily trivia; the characters, all Indian, are stylized good and bad.

Equally romantic in conception is Robb's Thunderbird (1949), which attempts to depict pre-contact conflict between the old-time Mohawk and his Algonquin neighbours near modern Kingston. But even here there is some white influence, in that the reason for the battle is the Mohawk capture of a young Viking lad who is a valued prisoner of the Algonquins. A limited tension between romance and realism appears in this book: the preparations for battle, the distrust of captives, the type of fortification, the methods of warfare--all these details are given. The battle is realistically portrayed in that one always feels its small scope and terrible immediacy. Otherwise the book is fancifully romantic to the point of improbability.

Of all the pictures of inter-tribal warfare, only Wiebe's story "Along the Red Deer and the South Saskatchewan" (1974) realistically presents a battle failure.<sup>11</sup> A band of some three hundred Blackfeet, under the beloved and heroic Appino-kommit, attacks an apparently small and unprepared Cree camp, only to be almost decimated by a Cree counter-

<sup>11</sup> Rudy Wiebe, "Along the Red Deer and the South Saskatchewan," in Where Is the Voice Coming From?, pp. 113-23. In his article "From Document to Art: Wiebe's Historical Short Stories and Their Sources," (Studies in Canadian Literature, 4, No. 2 [1979], 115-19), W. J. Keith shows the relationship between the story and its sources.

attack from a large neighbouring camp. The story invites comparison with "Wa-pee Moos-tooch" in that the battle strategies, motives, and psychology are very similar. However, the differences between early twentieth-century romantic idealization and later twentieth-century realism are marked. Not only does the romantic reversal never come in Wiebe's story, although there are several points where it might have, but the descriptive passages criticize the folly of attacking while there is snow and freezing weather and emphasize the gory details of blood and spilled guts. Still, Wiebe points out, as McDougall did, the cultural rationale behind the perpetual warring between the Cree and Blackfeet.

## 2. Fighting the Settlers

Although the French under Cartier and de Roberval made attempts at settlement in the early 1540's, I have found no fiction about Indian warfare at this time beyond the purely Indian wars mentioned in The Master of Life. Hunter-Duvar's drama De Roberval (1888) features an Indian attack near the end, but the period does not seem to have that mixture of exciting incident and good documentation which inspires the writing of fiction in Canada. Most writers look instead to the well-documented seventeenth century for the raw material of fiction. And, thanks in good measure to the Jesuit Relations, there is an accessible fund of detailed information about seventeenth-century Indians.

The period of New France is not only a favourite one for writers of historical fiction, it is also the bloodiest period in white-Indian

relations in Canada. The expansion of the English and French empires in North America and the struggle for supremacy in the fur trade led to much warfare and to the adoption of Indian allies. Interestingly enough, in fiction concerning the Indian wars at the time, English-Canadian writers almost all side with the French cause. Only when the French regime begins to collapse do writers shift their loyalties to the British. In either case, the good and bad Indians are respectively the allies and enemies of the side being supported.

At the centre of many of the bloodiest scenes are the Iroquois. The Confederacy of Iroquoian tribes, dating from the sixteenth century, was a highly organized military-agricultural society in which martial prowess was refined to a grim degree. I say grim because one of the proofs of martial excellence was the ability to withstand extreme pain. Enemies were thus subjected to elaborately painful tortures, the most refined being reserved for the most worthy enemies.<sup>12</sup> The unworthy were usually dispatched more quickly. Needless to say, the fictional interest of such events is very great because they are novel and exciting.

Of the Iroquois, the Mohawk had the most fearsome reputation. Huyghue depicts his Micmac as being in awe of them and shows Christianized Mohawks to be the perpetrators of the bloody descent on Schenectady in 1690.<sup>13</sup> They were the most easterly of the Five Nations

<sup>12</sup> As noted in Franklin Davey McDowell, The Champlain Road (Toronto: Macmillan, 1939), p. 356.

<sup>13</sup> Douglas S. Huyghue, The Nomades of the West (London: Bentley, 1850), I, passim.

and the earliest to become embroiled in the colonial wars. The Iroquois were mainly allies of the English, though more out of hatred of the French-Huron alliance than through love of the English.

One of the earliest adventure romances about this period and depicting fighting Indians is Blanche MacDonell's Diane of Ville Marie (1898). The author seems to have done some research into the history of Montreal in 1690, but her knowledge of fighting Indians is slight and her treatment derivative. They are formula adventure romance Indians, colourlessly grouped as either allies or enemies, both given to a gruesome style of warfare: the burning of Iroquois prisoners by the Indian allies of the French is alluded to;<sup>14</sup> tortures of prisoners are described; and the "horrible fate" of captive women as Indian wives is discussed (p. 26). The Indian warriors themselves are variously described as "tall and stalwart", given to whims, possessing "expressionless features", and possessed of ferocity "cultivated as a virtue" (pp. 34, 70, 75). But on the whole, the fighting incidents seem inserted to give adventure interest to a book about the title character. Blanche MacDonell adds nothing to our literary appreciation of the fighting Indian as a character.

More convincing and better developed is the escape and recapture pattern of Sanford's The Iroquois Trail (1925). The feats of strength and cunning by which the captives in Diane of Ville Marie liberate

<sup>14</sup> Blanche Lucile MacDonell, Diane of Ville Marie (Toronto: Briggs, 1898), p. 115. The same burning is mentioned by E. M. Granger Bennett in Short of the Glory (Toronto: Ryerson, 1960), p. 177, and anachronistically by Philip Child in The Village of Souls (Toronto: Ryerson, 1948), p. 44 and introd.

themselves are replaced by a different romance convention--that of Indian complicity in the escape of the hero. An Indian woman's love, the admiration of Indian warriors, and a coincidental attack from enemies of the Iroquois suffice on different occasions to save Guilbert de Keroual from torture and death. The Indians here, notably the Iroquois, are enemies to be feared and avoided, but the physical agonies of their tortures are not elaborated upon; even the martyrdom of Brébeuf and Lalement (1649) is merely reported and has a second-hand lack of immediacy about it. Although Sanford has clearly used the Jesuit Relations as a primary source, her Indians in their stealth and sneaky attack patterns seem derived from other fiction.

Much more psychologically complex, Child's The Village of Souls (1933) concerns a slightly later period in the history of New France, the 1660's. Fighting with Indians as such occurs only rarely in the book, and when it does, Child seems to have made a definite effort to avoid the obviously conventional by presenting several view points about Indians. For example, early in the book, he contrasts the perception of Lys, who is unfamiliar with Indian warfare, with that of Jornay, who is experienced. To Lys the Indians' painted faces are grotesque, their bodies graceful, and the whole effect bestial and sinister; but Jornay summarizes: "the paint? . . . they put it on to hide their youth or their age; sometimes to hide their fear. Cruel as snakes, of course, but they're human enough."<sup>15</sup> With such a statement Child is endorsing a realistic approach to his subject by emphasizing

<sup>15</sup> Child, p. 50.

the knowable and human rather than the mysterious and inhuman characteristics of the assailants.

But Child does use the Indian threat to create psychological terror, to provide an impressionistic backdrop to the careers of a small group of white people searching for themselves through the terrible wilderness. The early scene in which the fugitive Anne joins Jornay, Lys, and Titange is one of the few in which the Indians assume clear features and distinctive characteristics, and here the depiction is clearly demonic. Titange recognizes one of four Oneida warriors who come to reclaim Anne as Piquêre de Guêpe (Waspsting): "he'd killed a priest and put on his robe with a sheet over it for a surplice and was holding a mock funeral service over the priest--what was left of him. Satan need not be ashamed of that one!" (p. 50). More typical, however, are the shadowy Mohawks who at one point try to burn out Jornay and his party from a cabin; but even here the focus is mainly on the emotional turbulence of the escape.

On the other hand, Child implicitly endorses a Noble Savage concept when Jornay discusses the "civilized savages" where he was raised in the Cours de Miracles in Paris, savages worse than any Iroquois he has met (p. 127). Indian writer D. Bruce Sealey complains that white writers ignore the atrocities committed within white society of the period;<sup>16</sup> such a complaint cannot be leveled at Philip Child.

One of the fullest and most fascinating pictures of the mid-seventeenth century fighting Indian is found in F. D. McDowell's The Champlain

<sup>16</sup> Sealey, pp. 13-14.

Road (1939), the "romance" of the collapse of the French political-religious experiment in Huronia,<sup>17</sup> which was discussed at length in the last chapter. Like an epic, it treats the heroism of tragic defeat. Indeed, the heroic and pagan Huron chief Annaotaka takes a final stand against the Iroquois which reminds one of Byrhtwold's famous heroic moment in the Anglo-Saxon poem "The Battle of Maldon" (ll. 312-13).

Annaotaka, War Chief of the Cord Clan is one of four heroic characters in the story, together with the Very Reverend Paul Ragueneau, Father Superior at St. Marie; Godfrey Bethune, Captain of the Musketeers; and Diana Stanley, a copper-haired frontier girl raised by the Iroquois and claimed by them to be the daughter of the Sun War God. Whether male or female, pagan or Christian, French or English or Indian, the heroes possess the same virtues: selflessness, personal bravery, and the ability to think clearly and act decisively. On the other hand, the Hurons collectively are shown in various stages of personal weakness, self-interest, sloth, and inability to function as a community.<sup>18</sup>

Much is made of the political inefficiency and the collective flaws which result in the fall of Huronia. The slack defenses by Enons, sub-chief of the Cord Clan, result in the early destruction of one village. Shastaretsi, as grand Chief of the Hurons, has no real power

<sup>17</sup> Maurice Desjardins reports that this book and its author helped influence E. J. Pratt to write Brébeuf and His Brethren and that the two men often discussed the subject. Pratt was apparently familiar as well with the work of Philip Child; see "A Study of E. J. Pratt's Brébeuf and His Brethren," M. A. thesis Toronto, 1968, p. v.

<sup>18</sup> See above, Chapter III, pp. 188-89 for McDowell's discussion of the vitiating propensities of passive Christianity amongst a people whose survival depended on aggressive military skills.



and is given to empty words and the voicing of mass opinion: "so ineffectual was the Huron communal system of government that it was impossible to delegate supreme authority to any leader even in a time of gravest peril" (p. 8). Frequently referred to as "rabbits" or "women," the Hurons lounge in poorly guarded villages amidst filth and potential disease; their lives are in no way idealized.

By contrast, the Iroquois are highly organized and well-motivated by hatred of the Jesuits and a desire to exterminate other Iroquoian tribes outside the Confederacy, thus to ensure the fur trade for themselves.<sup>19</sup> The Iroquois are not just enemy Indians, but cruel conquerors. As Godfrey observes of the essential cruelty shared by all the Iroquoian tribes: "it was not war that prisoners should be burned in slow fires or mutilated in helpless agony. To kill in the heat of battle he understood, not the diabolical acts of cruelty practised impartially by Hurons and Iroquois upon helpless victims" (p. 8).

The realistic picture of a nation dying tragically in its apathy, incompetence, and divisiveness, takes on allegorical overtones and becomes the romance McDowell claimed to be writing (p. vii), as Annau-taka adopts the truly heroic white girl Diana and disowns his treacherous, selfish daughter: "she was a perfect example of the national characteristics at their best and at their worst" (p. 91). The breakdown in a family, with the adoption of the white girl and the polarized personalities of the Huron father and daughter, can be seen

<sup>19</sup> W. L. Morton, The Kingdom of Canada, 2nd ed. (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1969), pp. 34-47; see also Sealey, p. 15.

as symbolic of the causes of Huronia's downfall. The historical detail is ample and credible and provides an interesting analysis of a political tragedy.

McDowell won a Governor General's award for The Champlain Road in 1939, as Pratt was to win one for Brébeuf and His Brethren in 1940 and Alan Sullivan for Three Came to Ville Marie in 1941. It is interesting that this renewed interest in political weakness and disciplined, savage military strength should come at the beginning of World War II. It is almost as if McDowell and Pratt had cast the strong, aggressive, military Germans in the role of Iroquois. That Pratt could hear the cry of an Abyssinian child in the scream of a bird brought down by a prize cat, and that he should chronicle in verse the mass evacuation from Dunkirk,<sup>20</sup> reveal his close interest in the political scene of his day and its relevance to universal concepts of the primitive and barbaric. Certainly his Iroquois become the personification of the savage potential in all men, a potential which can be displaced or controlled only by committed Christian faith.

One could read The Champlain Road as a kind of allegory on the passivity of the non-Axis nations in the face of Nazi expansion and religious intolerance--such items filled the front pages of newspapers for years preceding the formal declaration of war in 1939. The cruel tortures described by Pratt and the barbarous murders of settlers described by Sullivan would be eagerly read by a country at war and feeling

<sup>20</sup> E. J. Pratt, "The Prize Cat" and "Dunkirk," in The Collected Poems, ed. Northrop Frye, 2nd ed. (Toronto: Macmillan, 1962), pp. 72, 300-09.

vulnerable. I do not wish to belabour the point, but it seems more than accidental that three Governor General's awards in the first three years of the war went to works dealing with an earlier war; and in all three the Iroquois are as ferocious and merciless as anywhere in Canadian literature.<sup>21</sup>

Three Came to Ville Marie is not so memorable as The Champlain Road and is much more clearly a formal romance. Like Village of Souls it contrasts Old and New France during the late seventeenth century. It is a romance of love and heroism in a setting of adventure and political intrigue. But where Child's novel was marked by an intensely personal and impressionistic mood, Sullivan's contains surface action and graphic detail. The Indian action concerns mainly the Iroquois attacks on the French settlers, culminating in the Lachine Massacre of 1689. The Indians are also involved in the politics of New France, and Sullivan features the double-dealing of the historical chief Kondiaronk, the Rat, whom historian Morton calls "the ablest, wisest and most sophisticated" of the Huron chiefs (p. 79), and whom Sullivan, more

<sup>21</sup> This conclusion is supported by comparison of these works with others written earlier on the same subject or by the same author. For example, Sanford's Trail of the Iroquois (1925) lacks both the barbaric Iroquois which Pratt and Sullivan depict and the sense of allegory which McDowell conveys. Similarly, Sullivan's earlier Brother Blackfoot (1927), a juvenile romance set in the United States, depicts the Indians as doomed Noble Savages, with the young Blackfoot hero making a successful translation into the white life he has always craved. Young Apau, the Weasel, is far closer to Parker's Lali Armour than to the Iroquois of seventeenth-century New France, in spite of the great warring tradition of the Blackfeet. An American anthropologist, George E. Hyde also writes negatively of the Iroquois in his Indians of the Woodlands: "Hitler's fanatical Nazis would have hailed them as brothers." (Norman, Okla.: Univ. of Oklahoma Press, 1962), p. 87.

poetically, calls "the Machiavelli of the northern forests."<sup>22</sup>

The Indians appear almost exclusively in their military and political roles here, mainly as enemies. The Iroquois are depicted as ruthless and formidable enemies, for whom killing the French meant killing all the French, including the women and children, and brutalizing their bodies. (One of Sullivan's favourite graphic details is the disembowelled pregnant woman). It is against the Iroquois that the protagonist Paul Lorimier must prove his real courage. One such test is the Lachine massacre, of which Paul and his party are the sole survivors. But the Indians that they fight off during the night are merely faceless, formless, deadly assailants, "wild, naked, demoniac figures" (p. 287), totally without individual character. Sullivan is working within the minds of the white protagonists and elaborates with emotional impact on the horrors of the next morning's scene, with its mutilated bodies and devastated farmsteads. The acts themselves are historically verifiable, but the emotional assault moves them into another level of fiction.

Only when Paul and his old friend Jules (husband to Jacqueline) are captured during their abortive pursuit of the attackers do the Indians begin to come into some kind of focus. They are explicitly described as extensions of the forest: "almost they must have incorporated themselves in its immortal growth, have relinquished their human shape and even now be listening, watching, waiting, in the guise of tree,

<sup>22</sup> Alan Sullivan, Three Came to Ville Marie (Toronto: Oxford, 1941), p. 204.

bush and mossgrown stump" (p. 323). They take on some of the elements of the wilderness personified, the threat to a garrison, a theme which goes back to Richardson.

On the whole Sullivan's characters, both white and red, are quite stylized, depicted with only enough detail for verisimilitude. But in the character of Kondiaronk, Sullivan attempts to go beyond romantic recounting of nightmarish events into the more realistic domain of analyzing political motives. At first, Kondiaronk appears as a conventional "subtle savage," psychologically astute and a master of strategy, who advocates stealth and spying and surprise. As Sullivan says: "by nature a deceiver, by instinct double-faced, his was a dangerous trail, and it took brains to follow it" (p. 212). But through the words of Kondiaronk and The Hairy One, the reader also learns of the treachery and double-dealing of the French and of The Rat's firm belief:

He had learned that his compatriots when dealing with the white man always lost in the end, and beneath his tawny skin burned the contempt that all Indians felt for the white intruder. Treaties might be signed, wampum belts exchanged, gifts bestowed and promises made, but enmity, however openly disavowed, did not die, and the hatchet so often buried rested in no permanent grave. (p. 205)<sup>23</sup>

The council at which he presents his strategy is as real and convincing as Pontiac's famous interview with Governor de Haldimar in Wacousta.

<sup>23</sup> Rudy Wiebe gives very similar words to Sitting Bull in The Temptations of Big Bear: "Even the best white men . . . can at last be nothing but bad for People" (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1973), p. 102.

The effectiveness of Sullivan's characterization is even more marked if one compares it with Servos's Kondiaronk in Frontenac and the Maid of the Mist (1927). Here the subtle Machiavellian becomes a simple-minded formula villain:

. . . The Rat . . . was a wily half-breed Huron, who possessed, in addition to a profound knowledge of wood-craft, an unscrupulous character. . . .

In two ways The Rat could be relied upon implicitly: One was against the Iroquois, and the other was when he was paid enough gold, provided no one paid him more.

His facial beauty had not been enhanced by the fact that his left eye had been gouged out in a battle with the Iroquois. . . .

The remaining eye had seemed to be doubled in power and malignancy, so he was to all intents and purposes as malevolent as he ever was.<sup>24</sup>

And yet all this build-up becomes little more than gratuitous character assassination, as The Rat is used merely to track an escaped captive.

E. M. Granger Bennett's Short of the Glory (1960) also deals with the events of the Lachine Massacre and the ensuing tensions of King William's war. However, the Indians in the novel become merely the subject of a balanced series of arguments, more reminiscent of those in The History of Emily Montague than in other fiction dealing with the time of Frontenac. First Bennett presents the theological view, common in New England, that the Indian was a subject of the Devil.<sup>25</sup> Then she presents the friendly attitude of the French to their Indian allies and

<sup>24</sup> Launcelot Cressy Servos, Frontenac and the Maid of the Mist (Toronto: Hal de Gruchy, 1927), pp. 224-25.

<sup>25</sup> E. M. Granger Bennett, Short of the Glory (Toronto: Ryerson, 1960), p. 51.

their fear of the hostile Iroquois. Finally, she presents the sympathetic attitude of the Baron La Hontan, a good friend of Kondiaronk and the real-life author of Dialogues Curieux entre l'auteur et un sauvage de bons sens qui a voyagé (1703). What Mrs. Bennett appears to be doing, and possibly for a teen-age audience, is presenting an advocate for each party embroiled in the troubles of the time--English, French, and Indian--in order to be as fair as possible to all sides. Thus the fighting Indian becomes more a subject of philosophical debate than a real warrior; and the book serves to emphasize the great pressure of mid-twentieth century realism as well as the great range of attitudes and depictions which seventeenth-century New France inspired in Canadian fiction.

The events surrounding the fall of New France have also inspired a certain amount of fiction, and one of the most active locales is Nova Scotia of the 1750's: with Monckton's conquest of Fort Beauséjour in 1755; with the machinations of that political priest, the Abbé Le Loutre; and with the fall of Louisbourg, the pride of New France, in 1758. Earliest of these is Douglas Huyghue's Argimou (1847), which begins with the fall of Fort Beauséjour. A rather anachronistic "tri-colour" flying over the Fort early in the story<sup>26</sup> makes the historicity of the narrative immediately suspect. However, the extremely stylized nature of all the characters and incidents makes such concern for realism almost immaterial. As the Acadians and their Indian allies fight to

<sup>26</sup> Douglas S. Huyghue, Argimou, by "Eugene" [pseud.] (Halifax: Morning Courier Office, 1847), p. 3.

the last, Huyghue is lavish with stock heroic phrases:

But Argimou and a body of his bravest warriors scorn to turn their backs upon the enemy, and are resolved to yield their station only with their lives. . . . It was a gallant sight to see a mere handful of warriors keeping the whole force of the enemy at bay; and among these, conspicuous from his stature, and the wampum band with its simple plume adorning his brow, nor less by the lightning thrust of his long blade, Argimou stood encircled by his followers. . . . Yet resistance was in vain: one by one the Micmacs are pierced with the bayonet, and the interior of the blockhouse is filled with eager enemies pressing each other forward in the crowded space. Argimou alone remains, like a grim tiger, with a wall of corpses around him, and bleeding from numerous wounds. (p. 12)

It is a classic description of its kind and is rendered more conventional still when a young white officer, Edward Molesworth, steps in: "let us take him alive, he is far too brave to die" (p. 12). The life-debt thus incurred,<sup>27</sup> Argimou becomes the guide as the two young men go to the rescue of their young women. One of the few aspects of the narrative which has any claim to realism is the rather accurate depiction of the geography of southern New Brunswick and the use of the Reversing Falls as the setting for a dramatic canoe chase at the end. Otherwise the work is pure stylized romance.

<sup>27</sup> A very short story of 1830, "The Hurons.--A Canadian Tale" by John Galt (Fraser's Magazine, I, No. 1, pp. 90-93), gives a more realistic version of a last stand: "Such unsurpassed heroism moved the admiration of all the French, and La Porte ordered that last warrior to be spared. But the Huron would not accept the boon. His arrow was ready in the bow--he raised it--took aim--and it quivered through the heart of La Porte. He himself sunk at the same time under the swords of every Frenchman who was near enough to inflict a blow" (p. 93). The story ends with mention of all the burials necessary. In a romance, according to Frye, there is little concern or sensitivity allotted to the non-survivors (The Secular Scripture [Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1976], pp. 134-35).



The potential in romance for slick formulae is particularly well exemplified by Charles G. D. Roberts in The Forge in the Forest (1896), also set in Acadia. It features the machinations of a formula villain, the "Black Abbé" La Garne, who is a thin disguise of the actual Abbé Le Loutre, the powerful French priest in Acadia who incited the Micmacs to attack the English.<sup>28</sup> In the story romance conventions of the most simple-minded sort prevail, and La Garne's Indians are vaguely characterized as his "red sheep" when they almost mindlessly kidnap an English woman and child and pursue the would-be rescuers. Roberts obviously did not get his reputation from such a work, which is the most facile kind of formula writing.<sup>29</sup> As Gordon Roper et al. summarize: "Roberts's writing probably is at its weakest in these historical romances. The actions are episodic and repetitious; the emotional atmosphere is that of the light historical romance so popular in the nineties."<sup>30</sup>

Acadia is the setting also for Raddall's Roger Sudden (1944), a work which is rich in historical facts and details of the period 1749-1758 and which contains several historical personages of the time (e.g. Le Loutre, Wolfe, Richard Uniacke, etc.). The story concentrates mainly on the fights and tensions of the last decade of French control in North America, and it exhibits as well the energy and sense of proportion

<sup>28</sup> In the Oxford Companion Norah Story calls the characterization "a patent libel" (p. 716).

<sup>29</sup> Also formulaically handled are the attacking "Indian Devils" in Roberts's Around the Camp Fire (London: Harrap, 1906), pp. 315-29. They are villainous, greedy men who would attack for "fools gold."

<sup>30</sup> "Writers of Fiction 1880-1920," in Literary History of Canada, ed. Carl F. Klinck (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1965), p. 322.

which characterize the best historical fiction of the 1930's and 1940's.

As Leitold justly points out, Raddall has painted the Indians in a realistic and documented way: "not a group of noble savages or a nineteenth-century literary convention but, like the Acadiens, an exploited and oppressed race caught up in a dynamic struggle in which they have no stake."<sup>31</sup> This aspect is not altogether clear until the final section when the debilitated, ragged Micmacs have congregated near Louisbourg, urged there by the fanatical Abbé Le Loutre. Their numerical weakness is emphasized by the Acadian trader Gautier: "all the Micmacs in the peninsula did not number more than two thousand and at most could not put more than four hundred warriors on the warpath. 'And . . . only a prophet--or Le Loutre--could get them all together at one time!'"<sup>32</sup>

Although early in the action the Micmacs attack a party of men clearing land at Dartmouth and scalp them, Raddall is scrupulous about laying blame where it belongs and in pointing out parallel violence among the whites. Raddall attributes the vogue for scalping to white vested interest: Gorham's Rangers could receive twenty-five pounds from the British for an Indian scalp (their regular pay was a shilling a day plus keep).<sup>33</sup> Raddall does not underplay the cruelty and terror of

<sup>31</sup> J. R. Leitold, *Introd., Roger Sudden*, by Thomas H. Raddall (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1972), p. v.

<sup>32</sup> Thomas H. Raddall, *Roger Sudden*, introd. J. R. Leitold (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1972), p. 139 (hereafter noted as RS).

<sup>33</sup> On the subject of scalping, anthropologist Douglas Leechman is also hesitant: "it is difficult to determine whether the whites or the Indians were the first to introduce the custom . . . but there are many

Indian warfare: the attack on Dartmouth is sudden, unprovoked and bloody; the women's torture of Roger as he runs the gauntlet is described in detail; and Roger's Acadian interpreter, Gautier, tells of other cases of slow torture. But the emaciated group gathered near Louisbourg ten years later is a far cry from the energetic people who decide to keep, not kill, Roger Sudden. At this point Raddall wants to emphasize the ruthlessness with which white interests exploited the Indians' native methods of guerrilla warfare rather than the brutality of the Indians themselves.

In His Majesty's Yankees (1941), which deals with the ambiguous position of Nova Scotia in the American Revolution a few years later, Raddall also deals with the wooing of Indian allies to the opposing sides of the battle and treats the subject with his usual realistic sense of proportion:

History loves great battles, the tramp and color of armies,

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points still unsettled. It does seem certain that the Iroquois practiced scalping, and it may have spread to the central Coastal Algonquians, possibly at just about the time of European settlement. It is definitely determined that the custom was by no means universal." ("The 'Red Indian' of Literature: A Study in the Perpetuation of Error," Diss. Ottawa 1941, pp. 185-86).

As well, in His Majesty's Yankees (1942), Raddall credits the French with being the first to buy scalps, and depicts the Rangers, both white and half-breed, as rough and violent men. As one former Ranger says: "Governor Cornwallis paid up to fifty guineas for a prime bit o' Micmac hair in the old days. The price depended on the state o' his settlers' nerves. When things got quiet the value went down--and us rangers loafed on the king's rations. . . . Then the Injuns 'ud raid a sawmill on the Dartmouth side or cut up a party o' redcoats out for fuel or a townsman fowling outside the palisades. Up went the price o' hair--and off we went!" (Thomas Raddall, His Majesty's Yankees [Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1942], pp. 24-25; hereafter HMY ).

the thunder of the fleets. The struggle for Nova Scotia, the key to all Canada, was fought in a silent wilderness, in scattered and lonely settlements, on forest trails and rivers and along a thousand miles of well-nigh empty coast. It was waged by small bands of men in buckskins and homespun, poorly armed and worse supplied, against troops who were often as ragged as themselves but lacking nothing in the way of stores and arms and ammunition. (HMY pp. 313-14)

From this comment on the 1777 fighting in the St. John Valley, it is clear that Raddall is not prepared to idealize any group. The Americans and British are prepared to bribe whatever ally they can, and the Indians thus solicited are out to get the best deal they can find.

Like McDowell, Raddall recognizes the basic ineptitude and self-seeking of most men, Indians and whites. But unlike McDowell, Raddall is reluctant to present any clear-cut heroes. David Strang is brave and strong, but he is no hero like Godfrey or Annaotaka. Only François, David's loyal Indian servant, is an unambiguous good man, although there is little glory or heroism in his losing an arm in the abortive attack on Fort Cumberland. His Majesty's Yankees may be romantic in its love-story line, but it is realistic where the fighting men are concerned. Raddall's works contrast markedly with those of Roberts, and serve to underline the differences in literary taste between 1900 and 1940. Few authors typify so clearly MacLulich's contention that slick romance prevailed at the turn of the century and that the realistic novel replaced it during the second quarter of the twentieth century.<sup>34</sup>

Writers treating the Quebec front of the fall of New France have

<sup>34</sup> T. D. MacLulich, "Novel and Romance," Canadian Literature, No. 70 (1976), pp. 42-50.

little to say about Indians, partly because the white political intrigue of the period is so fascinating, but mostly because Indians were actually not much involved. John Galt's Bogle Corbet (1831) would appear to be an exception, as it gives an Indian credit for guiding Wolfe up the cliff to the Plains of Abraham. However, this is a "boy's tale" which the narrator recounts stating that it is based in youthful fancy.<sup>35</sup> It is almost pure condensed Cooper and features a canoe chase, an overland escape, a bear fight, a fight with French Indians, Noble Savage utterances, and the battle on the Plains--all in eight pages. It is in marked contrast to the rest of the book, which Elizabeth Waterston variously describes as "reductive," "anti-heroic," and "very real."<sup>36</sup> Later in the nineteenth century William Kirby features no military Indians in his Golden Dog (1877), and in 1935 John Hodgson's Lion and Lily contains only a few nameless, faceless Indians who capture the Englishman John Dieudon and burn down his farm. The only distinct Indian character is Lone Eagle, who is a highly stylized and improbable sort of Noble Savage, a loner and a pacifist, and the conventional guide and mentor to the hero.

As for Pontiac and the finale of the Seven Years War, John Richardson's Wacousta (1832) is the only good fiction on the subject. A play, Ponteach, written in 1766 by Robert Rogers of the infamous "Rogers' Rangers," was based on Rogers's own dealing with Pontiac during the

<sup>35</sup> John Galt, Bogle Corbet, ed. Elizabeth Waterston (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1977), p. 32.

<sup>36</sup> Elizabeth Waterston, Introd., Bogle Corbet, by John Galt (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1977), pp. 6-7.

siege of Detroit in 1763. However, after a fairly moving and credible first act, the play collapses into the worst and most amateurish posturings of fourth-rate heroic drama--in imitation of the theatre of the time and in total disregard of the realities of the event it depicts.

John Richardson was more skillful in reconciling history, realistic detail, and the literary conventions of revenge tragedy and gothic romance in Wacousta. His own experience with Indians was generally extensive and he was well-informed specifically on the subject of Pontiac, because of the residence of his grandparents Askin in Detroit at the time, and on Indian warfare, because of his own participation in the war of 1812, which he discusses at greatest length in his non-fictional War of 1812.<sup>37</sup> This work sets the tone for the portraits of fighting Indians which one finds in Richardson's fiction, at least in so far as they are based in documented experience and not derived from other literature. Throughout The War of 1812 he juxtaposes conflicting reports and tries to extract the reality of the situation. Nobility of conduct is praised and cowardly conduct criticized whatever the source: American, British, or Indian.<sup>38</sup> Similarly, each time he "regretfully" records an incident of Indian atrocity, he balances it with an instance of Indian magnanimity or heroism or with an instance of white barbarity or cowardice. For example, early in the account he outlines two ways

<sup>37</sup> See above, Chapter II, pp. 58-59.

<sup>38</sup> The anonymous author of Bellegarde (1832) also praises noble American conduct, as does Robert Sellar in Hemlock (1890). Like Richardson, and in spite of a fundamental antagonism to things American, both authors see the behaviour of a true gentleman and officer as a quality which transcends boundaries.

in which the Indians avenge the death of Logan, a young chief who was their first casualty--one a judicial execution and the other hysterical revenge:

The demeanor of the first party was that of a Christian tribunal, which sits in solemn judgment upon a criminal, and beholds, without emotion, the carrying into effect of its sentence by the executioner. The bearing of the second was that of a Christian mob, to whose infuriated passions a loose has been given, and who, once excited by the sight of blood know not where to set a bound to the innate and aroused cruelty of their nature.<sup>39</sup>

Similar balances can be found throughout the history.

At the beginning of Wacousta the Indians appear to be stock figures of romance warfare, but as the action develops and the reader becomes caught up in the point of view of those in the garrison, the Indians begin to provide an emotional dimension, a true gothic horror, which more conventionalized Indians lack. Here "devilish" and "diabolical" are not empty epithets, but part of a total demonic horror which engages the reader's whole attention.<sup>40</sup> The distant war-whoops, the rip of the scalping knife, the crunch of a tomahawk in a skull, the hush of anticipated ambush: these are the ghastly realities of Indian warfare that heighten the emotional tone, and they were also the actual elements of Indian warfare which Richardson knew from experience.

Also more realistic than romantic is the general depiction of the

<sup>39</sup> John Richardson, Richardson's War of 1812, ed. Alexander Clark Casselman (Toronto: Historical Publishing, 1902), p. 31.

<sup>40</sup> Carl F. Klinck, Introd., Wacousta, by John Richardson (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1967), pp. xii-xiii.

Indians in Wacousta as enemies, not as villains. Richardson goes to some pains to remind us of this fact, as Madeleine objectively responds to Clara's expressed loathing of the Indians: "I do, as much as yourself, dearest Clara, distrust these cruel Indians."<sup>41</sup> She calls them "cruel" and "untrustworthy," fairly mild criticism, really, considering it is directed against people who have been killing her friends and relatives. It seems that the excesses of war, not Indians per se, are being here condemned. In times of hostility individuals are submerged in the mass, with only the leader, his advisors, and his critics emerging as individuals.

In Wacousta only three Indians emerge as individuals: Pontiac, Oucanasta, and her unnamed brother. But even here there is a difference in that Pontiac is an historical person and the other two are fictional fabrications. The bearing and diplomacy of Pontiac in his negotiations with Col. de Haldimar are those of a great chief. The scene between the two men in the council chamber is justly praised, as it goes beyond conventional attitudes to expose both the justice of the Indians' grievances and the cleverness of their planned deception. Pontiac reminds the Governor of the many times the whites have broken faith with the Indians (pp. 156-57); but the Indians do not compromise their own honour by smoking the peace-pipe and then waging war. Instead, they bring the war-pipe and feign forgetfulness and confusion when the mistake is drawn to their attention (pp. 163-64). There is much of the conventional dignified chief in Pontiac's portrait, but he loses some

<sup>41</sup> John Richardson, Wacousta (Toronto: Musson, [1924]), p. 252.



of his unambiguous greatness by listening to the treacherous counsel of his second-in-command, Wacousta, the white man using Indians for his own evil designs. Nevertheless, Pontiac comes alive in a way the young chief, Oucanasta's brother, never does; the young Indian is very vaguely and almost formulaically depicted.

Few other writers have tried to handle Pontiac's conspiracy in fiction. Capt. Marryat's Angry Snake in Settlers in Canada (1844) is a formula bad Indian renegade who is ostensibly inspired by Pontiac's vengeance against the English and who, thirty years after the conspiracy, is still fired with hatred of the English. As Kenneth Hughes justly points out, this book could have been set in any outpost of the Empire; only the local colour would have had to be changed.<sup>42</sup> The good Indians help the Imperialists and the bad Indians fight them; it is a standard nineteenth-century white supremacist view.

Only Alexander Knox, in his quasi-American Totem Dream (1973), presents a twentieth-century treatment of the period immediately following the death of Pontiac. This fiction involves a fairly conventional chase and a highly unconventional form of torture, which is in keeping with the pervasive pornography of the book. Wacousta, then, remains the only fiction of merit about the period. Conceivably Detroit's being a part of the United States accounts for the relatively limited Canadian interest in Pontiac; but perhaps Wacousta is just too good to imitate or follow.

<sup>42</sup> Kenneth J. Hughes, "Marryat's Settlers in Canada and the White Commonwealth," Journal of Canadian Fiction, 3, No. 4 (1975), 69.

The War of 1812, on the other hand, is indisputably of Canadian interest and usually brings to mind the heroic exploits of Tecumseh, Brock, and Laura Secord in Southern Ontario. However, Julia Beckwith Hart, Canada's first native-born novelist, sets her successful-settler romance Tonnewonte (1825) in New York State.<sup>43</sup> One brief episode about the War of 1812 features a band of vague, anonymous British Indians who carry off the young heroine just long enough to give the hero something to do.

By far the fullest early coverage of the war is to be found in the works of John Richardson, whose long narrative poem Tecumseh (1828); non-fictional War of 1812 (1842); and three romances--The Canadian Brothers (1840), Hardscrabble (1850?), and Wau-Nan-Gee (1852)--all deal with the period. In the three romances it is possible to see the development of the distinction between the realistic and stylized Indian in Richardson's fiction, a distinction based not only on the degree of historical authenticity, but on the degree of connection made between the Indian and the natural setting.

These features are particularly evident in The Canadian Brothers, where the Indians are not an integral part of the plot, but are instead exclusively an element of the setting and battles. The information about the Indians serves to complement that found in The War of 1812. All the Indians are historical, and are handled conventionally only in the descriptions of their picturesque groupings along the shore of the

<sup>43</sup> Mrs. Hart was resident in the United States for five years (Story, p. 346).

Detroit. The descriptions of the principal Indian chiefs, Split-Log, Round-Head, and Walk-in-the-Water, are uniquely found in this narrative.<sup>44</sup> Certainly, the Wyandot chief, Split-Log, complete with cauliflower nose, is a very real person. So too are the Indians who desert after the death of Tecumseh. However, their behaviour is certainly less heinous than that of Procter, whose poor judgment and early flight, according to Richardson, precipitated the whole debacle. Otherwise, The Canadian Brothers is an all-white story with the Indians seen only as occasional military presences, sometimes picturesque sometimes noble, sometimes funny-looking, and, in the end, concerned for their own skins. They are not formulaic, conventional, nor stylized--except for the idealized picture of Tecumseh, which is probably more a case of hero-worship than anything else.

With Richardson's later romances, Hardscrabble and Wau-Nan-Gee, the Indians are on the whole stylized--good and bad--after the manner of Cooper, whose reputation Richardson was keen to exploit to his own advantage during his American residence. Although Richardson had access to "eyewitness accounts which had an existential quality about them,"<sup>45</sup> they did not seem to inspire him with the same feeling of the interaction between setting and history which brings Wacousta to life. In the Chicago romances the Indians are more agents of plot than extensions of the wilderness and thus lack the psychological dimension of the earlier

<sup>44</sup> Alexander Clark Casselman, ed., Richardson's War of 1812, p. xv.

<sup>45</sup> David R. Beasley, The Canadian Don Quixote (Erin, Ont.: Porcupine's Quill, 1977), p. 177.

book. The only exception would be near the beginning of Hardscrabble when the Indians first attack the fishing party and the Heywood farmhouse. Here one has the feeling of the invading wilderness which characterized the tone of Wacousta. However, there is no specific reason, apart from the general unrest in 1812, given for these attacks, and so they appear less inevitable and more arbitrary; there are none of the legitimate grievances that motivated Pontiac to his conspiracy. As well, in spite of the minute detail surrounding the second attack on the farmhouse, the suspense seems contrived; and the whole scene is more reminiscent of the attack on the Hutter's lake house in Deerslayer than of the attacks in Wacousta. The lack of clear motive and the contrast between "good" Pottowatomies and "bad" Winnibagos is also characteristic of much of Cooper's Indian fiction.<sup>46</sup>

However, the realism that is present in parts of Hardscrabble is retained only in the scenes of garrison life in Wau-Nan-Gee--Richardson was too familiar with the interplay of personalities in military life ever to depict them in absolute or stylized terms. But the Indians are another issue. Even the handsome young Wau-nan-gee, who is seen as slightly indiscreet and possessing a jealous temper in Hardscrabble, is depicted in the later romance as a fully idealized Noble Savage. Along with his conventional wise-old-chief father, Winnebeg, he does all possible to protect the garrison and his friends against the schemes of Pee-to-tum. These three Indians have their parallels in Wacousta, but only Wau-nan-gee marks a development over his prototype in Oucanasta's

<sup>46</sup> Barnett, pp. 88-89.

brother. Winnebeg is neither as fully developed nor as convincing as Pontiac, and the villainous Pee-to-tum lacks any of the sympathetic motives that Richardson allots to Wacousta. Pee-to-tum is a truly exaggerated--even demonic--portrait of a romance villain, and the only Indian thus depicted in all of Richardson's fiction. He is a monster of basically literary origins and is not an integral part of the landscape, whether actual or psychological.

Further evidence of literary pressure is seen in a basic similarity between the massacre of the retreating inhabitants of Fort Dearborn and the massacre described by Cooper in The Last of the Mohicans. However, Richardson's description accentuates the violent and lurid details; the Indian behaviour is crueller and the bloodshed gorier than in either Cooper or the earlier Richardson--to the point of sensationalism. The description of the cannibal scene<sup>47</sup> shows how little artistic restraint went into some of Richardson's later writing. Actually, on a purely mechanical level, it is this imbalance between romance and realism which creates the structural shortcomings of the later Richardson. The ambiguities and objective detail in the depiction of the whites, especially in Capt. Headley's tragic decision to evacuate the fort, is at odds with the heightened virtues and vices of the main Indian characters. The Indians are far more types than the whites are. In Wacousta, on the other hand, the objective tone extends to the Indians and the romantic conventions extend to the whites, thereby creating a more balanced effect.

<sup>47</sup> Discussed above, Chapter III, pp. 159-60.

The next important fiction of the War of 1812 is Robert Sellar's Hemlock (1890), which is set on the eastern front of the war, along the present Quebec-Vermont border. Like Richardson, Sellar is interested in the Indian involvement in the war; and like Richardson, Sellar embodies his anti-American feelings in a vicious, unscrupulous American.<sup>48</sup> The Indians in Hemlock, apart from the title character, are basically depicted in very general terms as Canadian military allies possessing a particular set of military methods. Only Hemlock is treated as an individual.

Early in the narrative one expects the vigorous, manly Hemlock to be a conventional Noble Savage, sensitive and predictably skillful in all Indian wood-lore.<sup>49</sup> However, he is shown to be capable of great cruelty as he seeks revenge on the man who caused his daughter's death. When Hemlock finally does get his revenge on Slocum, it is partly an act of war in that he saves Morton (the young English soldier he is guiding) from death. But it ends as a cold-blooded act of murder, even though the reader sympathizes with the motive:

. . . with infernal ingenuity, the heritage of his tribe in the art of torture, he stripped Slocum of his clothing and proceeded to draw cuts with his knife on different parts of the body, nowhere making an incision any deeper than requisite to cause the quivering flesh to feel the full pain. (p. 48)

However, in spite of dwelling on this rather gruesome event, Sellar

<sup>48</sup> Jeremiah Desborough in The Canadian Brothers and Slocum in Hemlock.

<sup>49</sup> Robert Sellar, Hemlock (Montreal: Grafton, 1890), pp. 22-24.

does not generally present the Indian as exceptionally brutal. Like Richardson, he describes, without judging, the peculiarities of Indian warfare, implying that Indian methods are as justifiable as any.

Sellar does not condemn the torture and the scalping as vile, although Morton shudders at such acts because they are completely foreign to his upbringing.

Sellar does, however, strongly criticize American policy concerning Indians. An American General tells the imprisoned Morton: "Indians and those who associate with them are not recognized as entitled to the rights of war. They are shot or hung as barbarous murderers without trial" (pp. 60-61). As for the Indians that the Americans employ in the war, they "are not in the same category. They have embraced the allegiance of a free government; yours are wild wretches, refugees from our domain and fugitives from our justice, and now the minions of a bloody despotism" (p. 61). Thus Sellar makes very clear his patriotic and political convictions (the book itself seems to become at times a fictionalized editorial) and justifies implicitly the British use of Indians in the War of 1812 against American imperialism.

Few twentieth-century writers have treated the Indian role in the War of 1812--perhaps the nineteenth century did enough; but the great figure of Tecumseh continues to attract a certain amount of attention, in spite of Richardson's full coverage. The Shawnee chief inspired Charles Mair to a verse drama in 1886, Ralph Connor to some eulogistic passages in The Runner (1929), and Wallace Havelock Robb to a prose-and-verse treatment in 1959. Robb's Tecumtha, however, concentrates on the mystical-metaphysical aspects of Tecumseh and is so clumsily

exaggerated and idealized as to be virtually unreadable.<sup>50</sup>

As for Connor's adventure romance The Runner, the Indians depicted are secondary to the romantic adventures of the white protagonist, a Franco-Scottish youth named René Laflamme, a typical Connor hero. René's close and conventionally loyal friend is a young Mohawk chief named Black Hawk, about whom we learn very little. However, he provides Connor with the opportunity to discuss many of the abuses in the administration of Indian affairs, and he also provides a credible reason for Brock's hiring René as an intelligence runner to the Indians.

The most significant part of René's early career as Brock's runner is his trading-intelligence mission to Ohio to the Great Council presided over by Tecumseh. Like most Canadian writers, Connor cannot refrain from using all the superlatives at his command on the subject of Tecumseh; and although he only refers to Tecumseh's famous oration (p. 177), he clearly allots Tecumseh a prime position as a Canadian hero. At one point René overhears the great Shawnee chief praying and rehearsing his speech:

In the presence of the spirits friendly to his tribe Tecumseh was reviewing the tragic history of his people. He called to witness the Great Spirit of all the red men that from time immemorial this land was the Indians' land. Here their forefathers had lived and hunted as free men; here lay their bones. Step by step they had been driven by white men hungry for their land. To this land they had retreated, seeking sanctuary from the aggression of the white man long years ago. . . . It was not the red man who sought war. (pp. 173-74)

<sup>50</sup> See also Keiichi Hirano, "The Aborigene [sic] in Canadian Literature: Notes by a Japanese," Canadian Literature, No. 14 (1962), pp. 43-52.



Connor can never forbear preaching a bit in his romances, and he concerns himself here with the dispossession of the native Indian.

But Connor never shows us Indians fighting; the battles are all reported in summary. Therefore he is able to retain the picture of the abused Indian rather than having to cope directly with battlefield practices as Richardson did. Tecumseh's leadership is emphasized, his military prowess assumed. And mention of the incompetent leadership of Tecumseh's brother the Prophet only serves to accentuate the great virtues of Tecumseh himself.

During the same decade as the War of 1812, but a thousand miles west, violence erupted along the Red River in Manitoba. It came largely as the result of a trade war between the Northwest Company and the Hudson's Bay Company, a dispute which was exacerbated by Selkirk's Red River settlement. The economic complexities and the attacks and counter-attacks between the two great companies form the subject for Agnes Laut's Lords of the North (1900) and Frederick Niven's Mine Inheritance (1940). As in most fiction concerning native peoples in the early Canadian West, there are three factions involved--white, Indian, and Métis--not just the two normally found in fiction set in other locales. Usually one group will be criticized while the other two are either extolled or justified. In Lords of the North the sympathy is with the whites and half-breeds of the Northwest Company; Laut portrays almost all the Indians in various shades of black, except for the hero's two loyal Indian friends.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>51</sup> Norah Story states that Laut wrote the book to make history

The Indians, especially the Sioux, are basically depicted in various stages of warlike, undependable savagery--undeveloped formula bad guys. Laut omits all reference to Chief Peguis and his Saulteaux, who were so helpful to the Selkirk settlers in the early years.<sup>52</sup> She also blames the Indians, not the Métis, for the atrocities at Seven Oaks: "smeared with paint and decked out with the feathered war-cap . . . the presence of these sinister fellows, hot with the lust of blood, had ominous significance."<sup>53</sup> These formula villains are hardly the same Indians that Niven writes about or that are found in Indian tradition, where the Indians were completely uninvolved: "Chief Peguis, who was camped with his warriors across the Red, watched the battle and held those in check who might have joined the fight."<sup>54</sup> This Indian tradition is supported by Frederick Niven, whose Mine Inheritance is backed up by a four-page bibliography. This fiction, in which Niven uses a Hudson's Bay viewpoint, explains the non-intervention of the Saulteaux:

The Indians in the vicinity, having heard of the approaching danger, came and offered to fight for us, but our Governor,

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more interesting in school (p. 440). Since the narrator is a teen-aged adventurer and the tone is just as melodramatic as that of Ballantyne's Young Fur Traders, one may be justified in considering Laut's narrative as juvenile romance, at least in part.

<sup>52</sup> They are so depicted by Niven in Mine Inheritance and by Chief Peguis's great-great-grandson Albert Edward Thompson in Chief Peguis and His Descendants (Winnipeg: Peguis, 1973).

<sup>53</sup> A. C. Laut, Lords of the North (Toronto: Briggs, 1900), p. 328.

<sup>54</sup> Thompson, Chief Peguis, p. 11.

Robert Semple, declined their services, being unwilling that under any circumstances the arms of savages should be raised against his fellow subjects. On the nineteenth of June about seventy servants of the North-West Company on horseback, disguised and painted like Indians, suddenly invaded the settlement. (p. 298)

Niven's "fighting Indians," are quite realistically portrayed as unwilling pacifists, warriors by culture, kept in check by a strong chief who respects his loyalties. Laut's Indians, by contrast, are Victorian depraved savages, and even the best of them teeters on the edge of darkness. When Little Fellow, for example, kills the evil Sioux Indian wife and dumps her body in the river, the narrator says of his friend: "I had no reproaches to offer Little Fellow. He had only obeyed the savage instincts of a savage race, exacting satisfaction after his own fashion" (p. 435). Such a patronizing, racist statement makes Sellar's cultural relativism in Hemlock all the more remarkable for a late nineteenth-century writer.

The only period of Canadian history which has fired the imagination of writers almost as much as the history of New France is the history of the Canadian North West, particularly the second Riel Rebellion, and the colourful character of the Mountie. Between the amalgamation of the rival fur companies in 1821 and Canadian Confederation, the Canadian West was a relatively stable trading, farming, and buffalo-hunting culture, free of serious disturbance. But between 1867 and 1885 many rapid changes occurred on the prairies. In 1869 Rupert's Land was sold to Canada, and the growing Canada Movement, threatening the Métis way of life, was challenged by the first Riel Rebellion. Between 1870 and 1877, Manitoba entered Confederation, the seven Plains Indian treaties

were signed, the North West Mounted Police force was formed, and Sitting Bull with thousands of Sioux crossed the medicine line to seek asylum in southern Saskatchewan. In the meantime, the buffalo were rapidly disappearing and the C.P.R. began pushing across the prairies. In less than twenty years a whole way of life was completely uprooted. It is little wonder that frustrated Indians and Métis exploded into open rebellion in 1885.

For writers there is a mine of information about the period because of the improved communications, the widespread literacy, and the photography of the later nineteenth century. Until the present generation, writers even had access to people who lived through many of the events. For example, Solomon Pritchard and William Bleasdel Cameron, two survivors of the Frog Lake massacre, were still living in 1950. It is little wonder, then, that much of the fiction about the period is reconstructed or barely fictionalized history and biography. None the less, these works exhibit as well as any purely imaginative literature the tastes of the times and the concerns of the writer.

Indians do not figure significantly in the fiction surrounding the first Riel Rebellion, where the conflict is almost exclusively between the whites and Métis. Neither Begg's "Dot It Down" (1871) nor the first part of Collins's Story of Louis Riel (1885) has any fighting Indians. But one of the men sent out to help quell the 1870 rebellion, Sir William Francis Butler, was to have a lasting effect on Indian-white relations in the West. From Butler's reports came a strong recommendation for the establishment of what became the North West Mounted Police.

Formed in 1874, the Mounted Police almost instantly became objects of romance--the collective hero who always got his man. The Mounties have become as much a part of our Western myth as the lone marshall has of the American Western myth, and they have defined the character of the fighting Indian in fiction about the West after 1874--even when they are debunked, as they are by McNamee in Them Damned Canadians Hanged Louis Riel (1971).

Most recent writers who fictionalize the period from 1870 to 1885 research their subject with some care, so that the factual details of their narratives are basically correct and consistent; the differences lie merely in the point of view or focus assumed. The same cannot be said of earlier writers, whose work is often distorted by partisan feeling and marred by inaccuracies. Particularly guilty is journalist J. E. Collins, who adds inconsistency to his inaccuracies and prejudices. For example in The Story of Louis Riel (1885), the Thomas Scott who is manly and heroic in the scenes with his sweetheart Marie is at odds with the fractious, loud-mouthed, rather obnoxious prisoner who is eventually "executed" and for whom the reader is supposed to feel sympathy. Collins is at pains to prove that "Monsieur Riel is an impostor, although the cause which he has espoused is a holy one."<sup>55</sup> But it is difficult to believe him sincere in his espousal of Métis rights when page after page Riel is seen gnashing his teeth, hissing like a snake, or glaring with wolfish eyes. Collins's method is the most simple-

<sup>55</sup> [Edmund Collins], The Story of Louis Riel, the Rebel Chief (Toronto: Rose, 1885), p. 74 (hereafter noted as LR).

minded kind of literary hate-mongering.

He is even more inconsistent about the Indians' case. First, he seems to criticize the contemptuous attitude of political administration when the Indians complain of rotten meat:

"Let Indians eat their meat," the just Mr. Dewdney retorted; "or starve and be damned." What right has an Indian to complain of foul meat, and to say that he has been charged too high a price for it? He is only a savage! (LR, p. 135)

The irony which seems obvious in this passage is not apparent two pages further along when Collins announces that the Government's "Indian policy gives no ground for condemnation."

From this point on, Collins presents murky, exaggerated pictures of one Indian after another. At Duck Lake "one Indian would yelp like a hungry wolf who sighted his prey"; then the Indians join the half-breeds in looting and kicking the dead bodies. The Indians variously and collectively are "diabolical" and "smeared in hideous, raw, earthy-smelling paint." Big Bear at Fort Pitt is seen joyful in the prospect of scalps, as he goes to his wives, "a goodly number of which he is in the habit of keeping" (LR, pp. 140, 141, 152) to order a white dog feast. In the later book, Annette, the Métis Spy (1886), Big Bear is further described as a "blood-thirsty chief" of "murderous hordes," a "greasy, swaggering ruffian." The killing of Constable Cowan and the evacuation of Fort Pitt are amplified into a totally unhistoric stockade battle, complete with burning brands and Dickens heroically stating, "we will sell our lives like men."<sup>56</sup> In both books the Indians are

<sup>56</sup> Edmund Collins, Annette, the Métis Spy (Toronto: Rose, 1886),

condemned as cowards for not fighting the British way: "the conduct of some of the savages who received slight wounds was exceedingly ludicrous. One who had been shot, in running away, began to yell in the most pitiable way" (LR, p. 155; AMS, p. 54). Poundmaker at the sack of Battleford is depicted as a successful boaster who joins with Big Bear, Lucky Man, and "snakey eyed" Little Pine in wanton looting. Poundmaker himself is called a "lazy rascal [who] never works, but sits at home drinking strong tea, smoking and telling lies" (LR, p. 158).

There is at least one pro-white, therefore "good" Indian in Annette, the Métis Spy, namely Chief Little Poplar, unhistorically depicted as a thoroughly conventional Noble Savage: "he was descended of a long and illustrious line of chiefs" (AMS, p. 109). According to Collins, it is he who saves the whites of Fort Pitt;<sup>57</sup> but all his fellow Indians are depicted as brutes. I do not think it is possible to condemn adequately the vicious and ignorant exaggerations indulged in by Collins. Without care or research, he used second-hand report as the basis for two irresponsible romances which exploit the worst excesses of prevailing prejudice.<sup>58</sup> The events he recounts are often barely recognizable as those handled by later writers.

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p. 55 (hereafter noted as AMS).

<sup>57</sup> Collins even places Little Poplar in Poundmaker's position: the infamous attack by Col. Otter on Poundmaker's camp at Cut Knife is thinly fictionalized as an attack by Major Beaver on Little Poplar's band at Sawknife.

<sup>58</sup> Collins's irresponsibility is literary also; he lifts whole sections from the earlier book to save his time and imagination in the second.

Not much better as history, but considerably better as adventure romance is John Mackie's The Rising of the Red Man (1904), a work produced for a popular English audience and which has fewer Indians than the title would suggest.<sup>59</sup> Mackie himself served with the Mounted Police from 1888 to 1892;<sup>60</sup> but he was not out West during the troubles of 1885, and The Rising of the Red Man exhibits many of the misconceptions and prejudices which one finds in the works of both Collins and Connor concerning the details of the Rebellion. For example, Mackie makes Poundmaker and Big Bear chiefs of the Stonies, not the Cree, places all the blame on Poundmaker for the sack of Battleford, and assumes an unequivocally pro-British position with regard to the battle of Cut-knife.<sup>61</sup>

With Mackie, though, one can see the beginnings of the Canadian Mountie myth, a vital part of our peaceful vision of ourselves. As was mentioned in the Introduction, Northrop Frye describes literature in general as "conscious mythology," which can be of two types: one type "creates an autonomous world that gives us an imaginative perspective on the actual one"; and the other is "produced by society itself, the object of which is to persuade us to accept existing social values."<sup>62</sup>

<sup>59</sup> I agree with Dick Harrison's contention that Mackie's sensational episodes and sense of adventure seem derived from "the American West partly because that would be the West his readers were most familiar with." See Dick Harrison, Unnamed Country (Edmonton: Univ. of Alberta Press, 1977), p. 54.

<sup>60</sup> Harrison, p. 54.

<sup>61</sup> John Mackie, The Rising of the Red Man (London: Jarrold, [1904]), pp. 41; 47; 170-80.

<sup>62</sup> Northrop Frye, Conclusion, Literary History of Canada, ed. Carl



Writers of the second sort are almost invariably popular. Thus it is that few Canadian writers have been so popular as Ralph Connor, because few have presented so soothing a view of the Canadian myth of the "peaceable kingdom" and the basic rightness of the garrison's values, in this case the law and order of the Mountie.

A generation after Batoche and Frog Lake, Connor wrote Corporal Cameron of the North West Mounted Police (1912) and its sequel, The Patrol of the Sun Dance Trail (1914), both of which exploit the myth of the Mountie. This myth is well described by Wallace Stegner:

Never was the dignity of the uniform more carefully cultivated, and rarely has the ceremonial quality of impartial law and order been more dramatically exploited. Since the middle of the 18th century the red coat of the British dragoons had meant, to Indian minds, a force that was non- and sometimes anti-American. The contrast was triply effective now that the blue of the American cavalry had become an abomination to the Plains hostiles. One of the most visible aspects of the international boundary was that it was a color line: blue below, red above; blue for treachery and unkept promises, red for protection and the straight tongue.<sup>63</sup>

In Corporal Cameron Connor constructs a scene in which he praises precisely these virtues of the British-Canadian police: "the Police never break a promise to white man or Indian."<sup>64</sup>

F. Klinck (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1965), pp. 837-38.

<sup>63</sup> Wallace Stegner, Wolf Willow (New York: Viking, 1962), p. 101.

<sup>64</sup> Ralph Connor [pseud. Charles William Gordon], Corporal Cameron of the North West Mounted Police (Toronto: Westminster, 1912), p. 397 (hereafter, CC). The context here is a stern lesson on the equality of Her Majesty's justice to three trigger-happy Americans who go with the Police to retrieve some stolen horses.

Although a more skillful writer and apparently possessed of a more humane outlook, Connor, like Collins, evaluates Indians on the basis of their support of white values.<sup>65</sup> As well, there is an element of racism in Connor's attitude to Indians,<sup>66</sup> an assumption that it is easier to redeem a renegade white than a renegade Indian and that even a "good" Indian is capable of barbaric relapses and must be watched. The irredeemable renegade in the two Police romances is Little Thunder, a displaced Blood chief (CC. p. 377) and companion to Dick Raven the whisky trader. As a hostage of the two men, Cameron observes "the eager fierce look" on the "hideous face" of Little Thunder and fends off a knife attack from the same Indian, "who, frothing with rage and snarling like a wild animal, was struggling to reach Cameron again" (CC pp. 327-28). Little Thunder remains consistently vicious and vindictive, right up until the cattle raid which is the climax of The Patrol of the Sun Dance Trail. However, Raven has been trying to thwart the raid: "I have run some cattle in my time, but . . . a fellow who has worn the uniform could not mix in with these beastly breeds against the Queen, God bless her."<sup>67</sup> And so he dies "an outlaw, but a man," unlike Little Thunder, who, contrary to Connor's frequent practice

<sup>65</sup> Connor was not living in the West at the time of the 1885 Rebellion; thus his information and impressions would likely have come from the same sources as those of Collins--mainly the newspapers of the period.

<sup>66</sup> See Ken McLean, "Evangelical and Ecclesiastical Fiction," Journal of Canadian Fiction, No. 21 (1977-78), p. 109.

<sup>67</sup> Ralph Connor [pseud. Charles William Gordon], The Patrol of the Sun Dance Trail (Toronto: Westminster, 1914), pp. 296-97 (hereafter noted as PST).

with bad guys, remains an unredeemed and unredeemable formula villain.

In the history of the Canadian West, most people think of Crowfoot when they think of a "good" Indian; he is generally depicted as a kind of Noble Savage in his firm support of Police efforts to suppress the whisky trade. But such an attitude has not always existed. Connor's first view of Crowfoot is that of a dignified chief, to be sure; however, Connor also points out that the Police are always on their guard and consider that "Crowfoot himself is apparently all right so far, but of course no man can tell what Crowfoot is thinking" (CC, p. 378). In this comment Connor is imply echoing the popular newspaper reports which he must have read back in Ontario in 1885, for example:

It is said Crowfoot, the Blackfoot chief, intends to remain loyal, but this statement is not given much credence by many persons, who look upon the old chief as a cunning and treacherous redskin who has but little friendship for the whites and may rise at any moment.<sup>68</sup>

Thus throughout the barely averted trouble of 1884 and 1885, Crowfoot is consistently depicted by Connor as a man on the verge of forgetting his stature, chieftainship, and promises. He is described as astute and wise, his camp well-organized and disciplined, but he still needs the white policeman Cameron to remind him that he should not be led "like a little dog" by the alien Copperhead (PST p. 318). Thus to Connor he is not really a Noble Savage, because he must be kept in line by a white man.

The "bad" Indian chief in Connor's Mountie romances is an American

<sup>68</sup> The Toronto Evening News, Monday, April 13, 1885, p. 1.

Sioux named Copperhead, a handsome, persuasive man who is able to recruit a number of lesser chiefs of the Blood, Piegan, and Blackfoot tribes to the Riel cause. Part of his success lies in this encouragement of the Sun Dance, which Connor clearly considers a menace to the process of civilization. Nevertheless, he does make an attempt to explain the reasons for Copperhead's great success in recruiting assistance:

The fiery spirit of the red man, long subdued by those powers that represented the civilization of the white man, was burning fiercely within them. The insatiable lust for glory formerly won in war or in the chase, but now no longer possible to them, burned in their hearts like a consuming fire. The life of monotonous struggle for a mere existence to which they were condemned had from the first been intolerable to them. The prowess of their fathers, whether in the slaughter of foes or in the excitement of the chase, was the theme of song and story round every Indian camp-fire and at every sun dance. . . . The lust for revenge, the fury of hate, the yearning for the return of the days of the red man's independence raged through their speeches like fire in an open forest; and, ever fanning yet ever controlling the flame, old Copperhead presided till the moment should be ripe for such action as he desired. (PST pp. 194-95)

Connor seems thoroughly convinced of the essentially violent nature of the Indian in his natural state.

Typically of Canadian fiction, the villainous Copperhead is an outsider, not only from a tribe famous for its warlike attributes, but from a Republic which is actively committed to being anti-British and which has harboured the rebellious Louis Riel. Cameron's wife, Mandy, reacts to Copperhead in terms of American literature: "he's splendid. . . . he's just like one of Cooper's Indians" (PST p. 53). But however glamorous he might appear, Copperhead has the name and character of a

snake, a particularly venomous one. Like many Indian romance villains he is seen as clever, vengeful, vicious, and wiley. His gratitude to the Camerons for saving the life of his son is shown in one small reciprocated favour. Thereafter he is their enemy, although the son remains conventionally grateful.

As for the major battles along the Saskatchewan, they are merely reported. After the fight at Duck Lake "defenseless women and children" are gathered at Prince Albert safe from the treachery and hostility of the half-breeds and the "swarming bands of Indians hungry for loot and thirsting for blood." After the sacking of Battleford, Connor tells us again of "a horde of savages yelling for loot and blood." He tells us of Frog Lake, "a ghastly massacre, women, children and priests" (PST pp. 261, 264, 270).<sup>69</sup> He writes of the "Saulteaux" Chief Big Bear and his "marauding band." All of these events terrify the whites and fan the war fever of the Blackfeet. Connor's history is quite inaccurate; the romance exaggerations become merely formulaic--almost as bad as those of Collins--and in the light of later fiction on the same subject, the credibility of the works is seriously in question. And yet Connor really seems sincere when he has Mandy reply to a doctor's contemptuous attitude to the sick Sioux boy: "Is not this Indian a human being?" (PST p. 220).

There is a great ambiguity in Connor's portrayal of the Indians.

<sup>69</sup> According to an eastern newspaper like the Montreal Gazette, it was generally believed for almost two months that Teresa Gowanlock was among the victims at Frog Lake. There is no historical basis that I have found for Connor's including children.

At times he is reasonable and sympathetic; but at other times, he gives in to the clichés of popular romance. The strong morality which motivates Connor in his depiction of the best in white and Indian behaviour is spoiled by the propaganda formulae applied to the worst. No doubt this is due to the essential nature of Connor's work, which Edward McCourt summarizes thus:

. . . Ralph Connor tends to see life in terms of conflict on a simple level of physical strife. . . . Good and evil are represented in his books by hero and villain: the hero beats the villain to a pulp and the villain as often as not benefits by his beating and reforms. Even the simplest and most prosaic physical operation . . . he turns into a primitive battle in which Right and Justice invariably triumph.<sup>70</sup>

After Connor little of significance is written about the North West until Frederick Niven's The Flying Years (1942); and here the events of the Rebellions are even further removed from the protagonist, Angus Munro, than they are from Connor's Alberta residents. Angus is, however, present at Blackfoot Crossing for the signing of Treaty No. 7 (1877), an event which has kindled the imagination of many writers. The main reason seems to be the presence of the peaceful, dignified Chief Crowfoot, whom Niven describes thus:

That was a face to remember . . . strong cheek-bones, strong chin under close-set mouth, aquiline nose, eyes with puzzlement in them, the face not of a savage in the ordinary acceptance of the word but of a great man out of the Neolithic age, not without humour. He had command of himself, by the

<sup>70</sup> Edward McCourt, The Canadian West in Fiction, rev. ed. (Toronto: Ryerson, 1970), p. 31.

way he walked.<sup>71</sup>

Niven's picture is early in a long run of laudatory depictions of Crowfoot. Nan Shipley concludes her Scarlet Lily (1959) with a dramatic picture of Crowfoot at the signing of Treaty No. 7 in 1877. Also in 1959 Norma Sluman's Blackfoot Crossing contrasts the character of wise, powerful, dignified Crowfoot with that of the central character, Sikimi, Crowfoot's young, handsome, and ferocious war chief: "there was a chill aspect about [Sikimi] . . . something pitiless and predatory that bespoke the perfect fighting machine."<sup>72</sup> The great martial discipline of the Blackfeet is seen as the dual responsibility of Sikimi with his warrior skills and Crowfoot with his wise leadership. And Sikimi's decision not to fight against the white take-over is seen as the result of the love and respect he feels for Crowfoot.

In spite of the wealth of accurate, researched historical information, in both these works Crowfoot tends to be idealized as the prototypical historical Noble Savage, assuming in mid-twentieth-century fiction a role assigned a century earlier to Tecumseh. In the case of both Crowfoot and Tecumseh, the positive evaluation rests in the chiefs' cooperation with the aims of white British imperialism. Further evidence for this conclusion is found in Iris Allan's idealized biography of Major Walsh, White Sioux (1969), where she quotes Crowfoot's famous commendation of the Mounties:

<sup>71</sup> Frederick Niven, The Flying Years, introd. Jan de Bruyn (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974), p. 116.

<sup>72</sup> Norma Sluman, Blackfoot Crossing (Toronto: Ryerson, 1959), p. 38 (hereafter noted as BC).

If the Police had not come to this country, where would we all be now? Bad men and whiskey were killing us so fast that few of us would be alive today. The Mounted Police have protected us as the feathers of the bird protect it from the frosts of winter.<sup>73</sup>

During the mid-twentieth century many other fictions (often, like White Sioux, merely historical reconstructions) focus on the events on the prairies in the 1870's and 1880's. But as is noticeable in the fact that many writers focus on the peaceful Treaty at Blackfoot Crossing, fiction of the past few decades generally tends to treat the avoiding of war rather than the fighting of war--even where the 1885 Rebellion is concerned. Authors obviously enjoy expanding on the myth of the peaceable kingdom, and several begin the task of vindicating the reputations of hitherto maligned Indians such as Poundmaker and Big Bear.

Apart from Riel and Dumont, the men whose names stand out in the history of the North West Rebellion are the two Cree chiefs Poundmaker and Big Bear. William Bleasdel Cameron's reminiscences (1927) did much to improve the ugly picture of these men propagated by easterners like Edmund Collins; but still, on the fiftieth anniversary of the Frog Lake massacre, the Winnipeg Free Press, in a front page feature, called Big Bear "the crafty savage who claimed he could not control his warriors. He could shed tears and wield the tomahawk as occasion requested, however." But also in 1935, in a collection of Indian biographies, Mary Weekes could write a sympathetic account of Poundmaker, calling

<sup>73</sup> Iris Allan, White Sioux (Sidney, B.C.: Gray's, 1969), p. 97.



him a "Peacemaker."<sup>74</sup>

It was with the 1960's, though, that writers of fiction really began a serious reappraisal of these erstwhile villains and came to view them as complex, real people. Even a juvenile book like Cutt's On the Trail of Long Tom (1970) depicts Poundmaker as good and sympathetic. Writers also began to clarify the relation between the Indian and Métis involvement in the Rebellion and to treat the problems as separate, although related (earlier writers tended to lump them together). Certainly Riel tried to enlist the support of the Indians--virtually all writers agree on this point--but writers since Cameron have insisted that there was widespread Indian refusal to join the Métis fighting and that this refusal came from leaders like Crowfoot, Poundmaker, and Big Bear, and not, as Connor implied, because the Mounted Police were doing such a great job.

The first full-length treatment of one of these major figures is Norma Sluman's fictionalized biography Poundmaker (1967), a book hard to label either romantic or realistic. The historical detail seems well researched and sufficiently accurate, but the book itself seems to be little more than a biography in which Poundmaker is consistently put in a favourable light. Crozier (an important Mountie of that period) summarizes his character from the white point of view: "Poundmaker talks as straight as any man I ever knew. . . . He is not only the

<sup>74</sup> Mary Weekes, Round the Council Fires (Toronto: Ryerson, 1935), pp. 47-63. Further comment on Weekes's non-fiction on the subject may be found in Ronald G. Haycock, The Image of the Indian (Waterloo, Ont.: Waterloo Lutheran Univ., 1971), pp. 41-42.

most influential chief around here . . . but he is Crowfoot's adopted son."<sup>75</sup> Sluman's portrait focuses on his desire to avoid war. During the arrest of Ka-wee-chet-way-mot (Man Who Speaks Our Tongue) after Big Bear's Thirst Dance, Poundmaker digs the blades of his war club into his thigh to retain his self-control (PM, p. 177).<sup>76</sup> Sluman also shows Poundmaker trying to arrange an interview with Rae at Battleford, but being refused and having to watch helplessly as three Assiniboines, fresh from murdering a white settler, begin the sack of the town. She also shows him as the innocent party in Col. Otter's attack at Cut Knife Hill, as steadfastly refusing to join Riel, as genuinely shocked by the Frog Lake massacre, and as refusing to believe that Big Bear might be responsible. Finally she shows how public opinion rather than justice sent Poundmaker to prison and broken health. Sluman's Poundmaker is really an idealized Noble Savage, consistently misunderstood and a victim of fate.<sup>77</sup> But of course such a sympathetic heroic portrait is relatively easy to make of a genuinely handsome man, "the perfect example of the poet's idea of the Indian" (PM, p. 255).

Rudy Wiebe did not have such an easy subject in Big Bear, a short, stocky chief of about sixty years of age. A self-declared realist

<sup>75</sup> Norma Sluman, Poundmaker (Toronto: Ryerson, 1967), p. 196 (hereafter noted as PM).

<sup>76</sup> This dramatic incident doubtless comes from William Bleasdel Cameron in The War Trail of Big Bear (Boston: Small Maynard, 1927), p. 33. Rudy Wiebe amplifies the same detail in The Temptations of Big Bear (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1973), p. 194.

<sup>77</sup> Eyewitness to many of the events of 1884 and 1885, W. B. Cameron does not give the same idealized picture of Poundmaker, but presents him as considerably more hostile and hot-tempered (pp. 34-41).

writer,<sup>78</sup> Wiebe has taken the panorama of events and characters in the North West from 1876 until the death of Big Bear in 1888 and played out the heroic and tragic story of a great Cree chief. Only McDowell in his account of the fall of Huronia has come close to Wiebe's achievement in The Temptations of Big Bear (1973); but Wiebe, unlike McDowell, has not departed from historical events and personages as he unfolds his story of the last heroic stand of the Plains Indians. It is the elaborate, diverse epic of the last days of an heroic culture.

But The Temptations of Big Bear is not a folk-epic in prose, for it presents as well as the cultural tragedy of the Plains Indians, the consciously developed personal tragedy of the title character. Supported by letters and journals, police and court records, and Cameron's reminiscences, Wiebe reconstructs the complex personality of Big Bear and the struggle for power that preceded the Frog Lake massacre and that negated the efforts of Big Bear to avoid bloodshed.

It is really impossible to isolate Big Bear the warrior from Big Bear the religious man. As Wiebe depicts him, Big Bear has received his warrior strength as a divine gift which was given to him with his youthful spirit vision of Bear, "the warrior Spirit" of the Cree (pp. 182-83). And vows, honour, friendship, and loyalty are not taken lightly by such a man. Big Bear is to some extent a conventional wise old chief, but his denial of power to his son contains the tragic climax of the novel. The day after this denial, he feels his power disintegrating and later reflects: "there had been prayer and power and

<sup>78</sup> Personal interview, 8 February 1977.

now between the long green earth and sky something more was gone" (pp. 195-96). That "something" is the unquestioned authority over his followers: Big Bear is tragically unable to lead the young radicals in his band, but as leader must accept the responsibility for their actions.

Cameron in his War Trail of Big Bear emphasizes Big Bear's desire to avoid bloodshed and to stop the killing at Frog Lake. On Big Lie Day (April Fool's) when Big Bear and several of his men are talking in Quinn's office, Cameron records Big Bear's telling of his prophetic vision several years earlier of a fountain of blood which he could not stop (p. 55). Wiebe records this same April 1 interview in his novel (p. 226), but he also recreates the moment at the last buffalo hunt when the vision occurred. In so doing he amplifies both the vision and its symbolism:

. . . he saw through a thick crimson film Little Bad Man and Little Poplar and . . . Kingbird, all dripping red, running red in welts down their faces from the fountain squirting irresistably [sic] between his fingers. On another rise Coyote laughing openmouthed. The whole world had changed to blood. (p. 130)

The vision is realized on April 2, 1885 when Big Bear cannot stop the murders of the white men. By that evening Wandering Spirit "does the talking now" (p. 264), and a few weeks later Kitty McLean writes in her journal:

It was beastly how they treated him, his own son Little Bad Man sitting beside him in council and laughing when he walked through the camp wearing nothing but the one blanket, so shabby now, Papa had persuaded him to accept as a gift while the others were looting Fort Pitt. (pp. 282-83)

However, in 1888, after trial and imprisonment, Big Bear "journeys to the Sand Hills" knowing that Chief's Son's Hand, the gift of Great Parent of Bear, has been "kept in a clean place" (p. 413). His decision to retain power may have been partly responsible for the bloodshed of 1885, but he dies in the knowledge of his own integrity. He is truly an heroic character.

Norma Sluman mentioned the limited power of Poundmaker as chief and his inability to overrule the authority of the soldiers' tent: "the chief has no control when the tent is up and Poundmaker was not a soldier" (PM, p. 267). Wiebe's Big Bear suffers from this same lack of power on the eve of Frog Lake. The Rattlers who were barely in check the previous June are seen in full power. But "the war chief's song working them beat upon beat toward its swaying scream" (p. 225) has been preceded by a war feast full of ribaldry and joking. In spite of the brutal power hunger of Little Bad Man and the hard ferocity of Wandering Spirit, Wiebe depicts the exuberance and daring of the Worthy Young Men, who know they will have material to boast about during subsequent councils and social gatherings. But beside Big Bear's integrity, their attitudes and motives seem irresponsible, even petty--like those of football fans on the eve of the big game--and certainly a far cry from the romantic heroics of late nineteenth-century fiction.

### 3. Fighting Modern Red-coats

With the hanging of eight of the Indians responsible for murders during 1885 and the self-exile of several others, the white take-over

of the prairies was complete. Thenceforth law enforcement ceased to be a matter of organized campaigns, but became the dispensing of civil and criminal justice, mostly by the Mounted Police. Fiction about the inevitable confrontations is basically of two types: the tragic type in which the Indian is unable to adjust completely to modern ways and so is destroyed by a legal system originally meant for his protection; and the comic type, often satiric or humorous, in which white law and order is depicted as woefully inadequate or incompetent. By and large writers of both types avoid the worst excesses of romantic convention, although these do occur from time to time.

The earliest fictional example of a tragic civilian encounter between Indian and Mounties occurs in Duncan Campbell Scott's story "Star-blanket" (1904).<sup>79</sup> In spite of writing many poems about Indians, Scott seems to have written only this one story of the subject. Like his Indian poetry, however, "Star-blanket" is remarkably free of the mindless formulae and excessive sentiment which mar much turn-of-the-century fiction about Indians, especially other stories found in The Canadian Magazine.<sup>80</sup> Star-blanket is a "good" Indian who is adapting well to

<sup>79</sup> The story is based on an actual Indian outlaw of the 1890's named Charcoal. Scott changed his protagonist's name from Star-blanket back to Charcoal when he later published the story, otherwise unchanged, in the "Early Stories" section of The Circle of Affection (1947). The Royal Mounted Police Quarterly, July, 1941 tells the story of Charcoal and inspired Robert Gard to feature it in his Johnny Chinook (Toronto: Longmans, 1945), pp. 64-76, a collection of western yarns and tales. Either or both of these publications may have inspired Scott to drop the pseudonym. For a full discussion of the relationship between Scott's story and its sources see Leon Slonim, "The Source of Duncan Campbell Scott's 'Charcoal,'" Studies in Canadian Literature, 4, No. 1 (1979), 162-66.

<sup>80</sup> Some stories of this type, written between 1895 and 1913, are

white ways. His tragic outlawry develops after he has murdered his wife's lover in a reversion to old Indian ways and later when he has killed a pursuing Mountie. Although "Star-blanket" is basically a straightforward and restrained story, it does, however, feature a slightly sentimental ending, typical of Scott's stories. Here the normally kind Star-blanket, unable to complete the leap to the new culture, dies with the scent of the medicine-pole-bag in his nostrils.<sup>81</sup>

Less sentimental, perhaps, and more realistic in the tragic sense, is Marius Barbeau's Downfall of Temlaham (1928), a story freely based on the actual "Skeena River Rebellion" of 1887. Like Star-blanket, Barbeau's Kamalmuk is unable to bridge the cultural gap: Kamalmuk favours the advance of white civilization and yet is ironically destroyed by it at the end. As an anthropologist, Barbeau seems not to be satisfied with a simplified conflict, but instead explores the psychology of the two legal systems which confront each other.

Kamalmuk has unwillingly murdered a kinsman of his ambitious wife

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listed in the bibliography and are by the following writers: Jean Blewett, Esther Talbot Kingsmill, R. Henry Miner, Josette Gertrude Menard, Harold Sands, Charles Louis Shaw, Sparham Sheldrake, and A. Wright.

<sup>81</sup> Scott's restraint and achievement are underscored by the appearance in 1906 of Catherine Hayes's "Aweena", a predictable, trivial, totally unrealistic romance concerning the Wacousta-like vengeance of a Piegan chief, who has been cheated and betrayed by a white man. His Mountie captor finds him early in the story, stabbing "with venomous thrust" the "soft" earth of a fifteen-year-old grave (in late December in the prairies, please note). After being described with all the "bad Indian" phrases of the period, the old chief tells his tragic story to the Mountie, they smoke in friendship and return to a conclusion full of forgiveness and redemption. The story says nothing valid about Indians and is mentioned here as an example of true literary ineptitude.

and has settled the deed according to Tsimshian justice by the giving of gifts from his family to the dead man's family (a kind of Indian wergild). However, an indolent, yet interfering, white man will not let the matter rest and in contempt of the Indians' way insists that white justice prevail:

. . . there was little but wind in Washburn's studied grievances, no thunder in his condemnation of the trouble-makers. His censure of them rested on the mere grounds that they had tried Kamalmuk for murder in their own absurd way, and had finally absolved him upon the payment of pelts, and filthy blankets by the armful. What an indignity! Were they to be allowed to act as if the White Man's courts did not exist? Were His [sic] Majesty's officers to forget their duty to administer law and order? Washburn was now for the first time burning with an inner flame, that of the reformer. He felt within him a new sense of righteousness and racial superiority.<sup>82</sup>

The tribal justice is ordered reversed and Kamalmuk hunted as an outlaw and finally treacherously shot in the back by another unworthy white man. The chiefs at Kamalmuk's funeral reflect thus:

. . . for a long while they gazed together in mournful silence at the remains of Kamalmuk, a good man in his lifetime, a prince in his nation, one of the highest, and above all a friend of the White People, yet shot down by their emissary none-the-less for his only reward, shot most ignominiously like a slave by his owner in the days of old. (pp. 154-55)

The Queen's justice prevails, but its emissaries are viewed as narrow and unsympathetic, in marked contrast to the natives whose systems they regard with contempt.

<sup>82</sup> Marius Barbeau, The Downfall of Temlaham (Toronto: Macmillan, 1928), p. 105. The reference to His Majesty is an anachronism.



Also treating the tragic result of misunderstanding between two races is the story of the late nineteenth-century Indian outlaw Almighty Voice, the subject of Wiebe's "Where Is the Voice Coming From?" (1974).<sup>83</sup> But the story itself is less about Almighty Voice than about the writer who researches his subject and must find the source of the voice he hears. Unlike some of Big Bear's radical young warriors, Almighty Voice is a "good" Indian who unfortunately takes literally a Mountie's taunt that he will be hanged for killing a steer. It is the reader who must reconstruct the tragic implications of the bad joke, which results in several deaths, including that of the outlaw himself.

Wiebe's method is the most objective form of realism, but all three of these outlaws--Star-blanket, Kamalmuk, and Almighty Voice--are realistic in the tragic sense of being flawed characters, who kill because of their flaws: jealousy, lack of will power, and violent temper respectively. These are the timeless character shortcomings which have inspired tragic literature through the ages and which are here exacerbated by cultural differences. And although Scott in 1904 is more sentimental than Wiebe in 1974, both are important Canadian writers who have managed to avoid the fashionable excesses of their time and create memorable characters within the confines of the short story. Each of the three Indian outlaws also makes a larger comment on the

<sup>83</sup> In Where Is the Voice Coming From? pp. 135-43. The outline of Almighty Voice's twenty months as a fugitive is given by Buffalo Child Long Lance in his autobiography, Long Lance (London: Faber and Faber, 1928), pp. 268-301. The photographs mentioned in the story are found opposite pp. 273 and 288. Rudy Wiebe has personally confirmed this identification. An altogether different version of Almighty Voice's story may be found in Haycock, pp. 42-43.

inability of the Indian and his culture to survive the onslaught of white civilization in the late nineteenth century.

In 1912 Ralph Connor wrote: "to the North West Mounted Police and to the pioneer missionary it is due that Canada has never had within its borders what is known as a 'wild and wicked West'" (CC, p. 308). This cornerstone of the Canadian culture myth cannot go unchallenged, and several writers, most quite recent, show the Indian gaining the upper hand in his dealings with the Police. One unusually early example is Heming's Spirit Lake (1907). Although Standing Wolf is depicted as a good hunter and an intelligent leader, in the fashion of the early twentieth century (e.g. in "Wa-pee Moos-tooch"), he nevertheless hunts the endangered buffalo against the law and contrives to outwit the policemen who track him. Not only does he elude them in the chase, but he manages to trick them by storing the contraband hides, disguised as tent-coverings, at the trading post convent. The Mounties here are not ridiculed; but neither are they seen as the heroic symbols of the right, white, and British way. Contrary to the popular image of that time, they are presented realistically as men doing a job and not always succeeding at it.

James McNamee is one of the first writers to challenge the Mountie myth through satire in Florencia Bay (1960), where the ineffectual local policeman is disrespectfully known by the Indians of the area as "Constable Rise and Shine." He is so obsessed with the traditional role of keeping liquor from the Indians that he cannot recognize murder and smuggling right under his nose. To him a good Indian is a sober Indian, and a good white keeps the Indian that way. The picture is

ironic and satirical and is certainly not meant to be taken seriously. Since satire, like romance, need not rely for its effect on realism, the characters in Florencia Bay are sketched in an exaggerated and stylized manner rather than realistically. It might be possible to label both this and McNamee's later juvenile satire of the 1885 rebellion, Them Damned Canadians Hanged Louis Riel (1971), as black comic romances.

Also victorious in a rather humorous way are the Indians of the Namko reserve in Paul St. Pierre's Breaking Smith's Quarter Horse (1966), who are called upon to testify for Gabriel Jimmyboy, on trial for the drunken murder of a white rancher. Ol Antoine seemingly does not understand what he is expected to do as a witness in the courtroom. Instead of giving evidence, he tells at length, in his native Chilcotin language, the tragic story of the American Indian Chief Joseph of the Nez Percé, whom he professes to have known personally. Smith, the judge, and the jury are alternately so amused and frustrated by the complete lack of communication with Ol Antoine, that Gabriel Jimmyboy is acquitted: "thus does Canadian justice, blind, stupid and stumbling as she may sometimes seem, hit upon the truth more often than not."<sup>84</sup>

But the funniest of all the Mountie satires is Alan Fry's The Revenge of Annie Charlie (1973), a rollicking comic romance which spoofs both the Connor type of Mountie and the modern efficient Mountie. Annie's retarded brother, Little Boy, has killed a murderous half-breed

<sup>84</sup> Paul St. Pierre, Breaking Smith's Quarter Horse (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1966), p. 149.

in self-defense and the police have come to the reserve to investigate a murder. Although the truth eventually comes out, it requires Annie's "vengeance" on white society to make Peterson drop the murder charge. In the meantime occur some of the funniest situations in Canadian fiction about Indians (a subject habitually treated with great seriousness). Annie Charlie and her family lead the spruce, efficient, middle-class Peterson on a wild chase through the woods, to an hilarious finale in which a sweetly smiling Annie hands back a clean, pressed, immaculate uniform to a very compromised Mountie. He has no choice but to acknowledge the case the Indians present for Little Boy. Annie and her Indians are as much in control as any seventeenth-century Iroquois, except that here they achieve their victory, not with arrows or bullets or torture, but by stripping the white man of his civilized trappings and dignity--his uniform in the case of Sergeant Peterson. It is a kind of romance in which, at last, the Indian wins unequivocally.<sup>85</sup>

Not all modern contacts between the Indian and the law contain the ingredients for humorous fiction, and the Indians are frequently depicted as continuing to fight in their own way simply to maintain a sense of identity in the face of a bullying legal system and an oppressive bureaucracy. In Gordon Hepworth's The Making of a Chief (1974), for example, the police who arrest the Chief after a drunken fight on

<sup>85</sup> Another Indian intimidation of a white man occurs in W. P. Kinsella's story "Illianna Comes Home," in Dance Me Outside (Ottawa: Oberon, 1977), pp. 5-20. The narrator's brother-in-law is a stuffy young business man, whose new car, expensive suit and birth control plans are all systematically demolished when he goes to visit his wife's family on the reserve.

the reserve treat the Chief's family with absolute racist contempt: "Let's get the filthy bastards down to the station."<sup>86</sup> Once in town, the Chief's wife has her own defense when she and the children are interrogated: she keeps complete silence, with "that stupid expression she reserved for curious white people" (p. 41). It is a small battle stratagem, but it is remarkably effective in the ongoing liquor war between the RCMP and the reserve. It is one of many instances of sociological realism in a book which otherwise poses a confusing mixture of arch-bureaucracy as villain and real people as struggling victims.

Since the Eumenides scourged Electra and Orestes for revenge killing and the ancient Greeks introduced Athenian justice, Western European civilization has believed in the superiority of the process of law over direct primitive revenge. But the rational element involved in due process can and does miscarry sometimes. When this happens, men look once more to the simplicity and directness of more primitive methods. Such is the case in W. P. Kinsella's Dance Me Outside (1977) when Sadie Onewound and the girls of the reserve at Hobbema, Alberta, take the law into their own hands. It is white law and due process that give white Clarence Gaskell three months for manslaughter when he murders an Indian girl who has made fun of his sex organs. The narrator, Silas Ermineskin, observes somewhat cynically: "they only charged Clarence with manslaughter. I guess it because Little Margaret was

<sup>86</sup> R. Gordon Hepworth, The Making of a Chief (Delta, B.C.: Sono Nis, 1974), p. 14.

Indian. If she been white it would of been murder for sure. More for sure if it been an Indian guy killed a white girl."<sup>87</sup> This is the miscarriage of justice that provokes the Indians to take the law into their own hands and do to Clarence what he did to Little Margaret--a rather violent romantic resolution. It is little wonder that the young Hobbema residents tear up the culvert each time the Mounties come to investigate some crime or misdemeanor on their reserve, thereby protecting their culture and their integrity.

However, some Indians can no longer fight in any way--those who are without self-respect or a sense of identity. Such a family in Fry's How a People Die (1970) are charged with neglect by the local Mountie when their infant daughter dies. The Mountie is basically a kind person, but frustrated in his efforts to do an effective job; the family are a case of marginal survival at the best of times and have no human resources to help them cope. Lazy, drunk, and promiscuous, they have let the child die of pneumonia, aggravated by malnutrition and filth. Although Fry soon abandons the legal issue in favour of the sociology of the case, he shows both Mountie and Indian caught in a losing battle for survival, the Indian too demoralized to fight in any way whatsoever.

The fighting Indian might be expected to inspire the most romantic fictional treatment, mainly because military exploits are conventionally associated with heroic romance. But John Richardson showed as early as Wacousta (1832) that there is a great deal of unheroic reality in war,

<sup>87</sup> W. P. Kinsella, "Dance Me Outside," in Dance Me Outside, p. 22.

and that often it is hard to tell the "good guys" from the "bad guys." The conventional military man countering all odds and emerging victorious has only a brief vogue in Canadian fiction about Indians. Perhaps the reason is, as Margaret Atwood suggests, that Canadians tend to identify with victims, not with victors.<sup>88</sup> For military romance to be successful, there must be a wholehearted identification with the winning side, so that the reader wants the adversaries to fail or be defeated as the fulfillment of the dream-wish. But even when they support white values Canadian writers have rarely glorified the physical or cultural destruction of the Indian in the battle for supremacy in North America. The destruction is more often seen as an unhappy fact of life. Where possible, writers prefer to depict the "ideal of humane community" which Robin Mathews rightly sees as central to the Canadian imagination.<sup>89</sup>

Romance dominates the limited number of depictions of Indians warring amongst themselves, with the protagonist's side normally winning. However, the 1908 romance Wa-Pee Moos-Tooch includes as well extensive realistic documentation of the martial arts, while both it and The Master of Life endorse the pacifist ideal of the "human community." Only Rudy Wiebe in the 1970's shows the full extent of the realistic possibilities in war: in his "Along the Red Deer and South Saskatchewan," the protagonist's side loses heavily and the events are

<sup>88</sup> Margaret Atwood, Survival (Toronto: Anansi, 1975), pp. 35 et passim.

<sup>89</sup> Robin D. Mathews, "The Wacousta Factor," in Figures in a Ground, ed. Diane Bessai and David Jackel (Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1978), p. 297.

described in graphic detail.

In the depiction of fighting between Indians and settlers, subject matter has less control over genre and mode than do the prevailing pressures of literary practice and social attitude. Nevertheless, the idea of the humane community, the peaceful co-existence of Indians and whites, is seen as a desirable objective even in the earlier part of the nineteenth century and is visible in the depictions of the friendship of the Frederick de Haldimars and Oucanasta's family, in the mutual support of Argimou and Edward Molesworth, and in the cooperation of the four questors in Nomades of the West. In all cases war is shown to be the result of white politics or of outside interference.

The relatively limited flourishing of the unambiguous pro-white romance occurs mainly at the turn of the present century, when the progressive Victorian British Empire was at its peak and before the Great War revised the English notion about wars being won on the playing fields of Eton. Thus from the 1880's until 1914 comes a series of romances ranging from the mechanically conceived and irresponsible versions of the Riel Rebellions written by J. E. Collins, to the more skillful, but none the less biased Mountie romances of Ralph Connor (Connor is redeemed somewhat by an emphasis on outside--i.e. American--interference). The number of snake-eyed, vicious, formula Indian villains is much greater in fiction written during this period about fighting Indians than in fiction on other topics or at other times. Some books, like Laut's Lords of the North and Roberts's Forge in the Forest, are spectacular examples of romance at its most decadent.

Interestingly, the rise of realism in Canada in the second quarter



of the twentieth century brings with it some of the best historical fiction about fighting Indians. Kamalmuk's ignominious defeat is far from romantic; *Jornay in Village of Souls* may romantically end up with the right girl, but the antagonistic Indians surrounding him have as much realistic immediacy as the yowling "devils" in *Wacousta*. Also akin to Richardson in *Wacousta* is the realistic reluctance of authors such as McDowell, Raddall, and Niven to take sides in the battles they are describing. Niven is actually so scrupulous about verifying detail that his stories tend to bog down for lack of selection--a kind of uncontrolled realism.<sup>90</sup>

After the Second War, with the gradual change in public attitude to Indians generally, writers, most of them of a journalistic bent, begin to re-evaluate the Indian villains of former years. Granger Bennett's *Short of the Glory*, for example, incorporates a balanced dialogue about Indians of the 1690's into a romantic story. Other works tend to be barely fictionalized history or biography, in which described rather than living characters function as vehicles for a statement about history or anthropology. Several of these work from an assumption of "good" Indians somewhat like the old nineteenth-century Noble Savage. In spite of stated efforts to present fair and balanced pictures of Indian life, writers like Shipley and Sluman, for example, tend to simplify issues for dramatic effect; the works end up as a curious mixture of conventional romantic story full of undigested lumps of fact. Some of them, one suspects, may be aimed at a teen-aged rather

<sup>90</sup> See McCourt's discussion, pp. 48-49.

than an adult audience, a possibility which might account for the lack of subtlety. Wiebe's Temptations of Big Bear is a dramatic exception to the general mediocrity of these romances. Wiebe's realistic picture of a hero in the high mimetic mode is a carefully contrived product of a conscientiously objective method of shifting view points.

Some specific conclusions, however, may be drawn from an examination of specific incidents, characters, and motifs as they are depicted over the years. For example, the most idealized of all Indians is the Shawnee chief Tecumseh, who was consistently depicted as a Noble Savage throughout the nineteenth century and even up to Connor and Robb in the twentieth century. He is perhaps the only chief to be praised by a contemporary (Richardson) as well as by later writers. The distinguishing feature of all writers praising Tecumseh is a strong nationalistic, anti-American bias, which is logical, given Tecumseh's personal antagonism to American aggression. Chiefs such as Crowfoot and Poundmaker are rarely idealized by their contemporaries, only by later generations. In their striking good looks they are prone to romantic idealization, and Crowfoot's praise of the Mounties in 1877 contributes to the popular pacifist myth Canadians hold of themselves.

That the events of seventeenth-century New France are not handled very often in fiction prior to the twentieth century is probably because one of the most important documents, The Jesuit Relations, was unavailable in English until Thwaites's seventy-three volume translation (1896-1901), and unabridged until 1925. Realistic and documentary fiction of the second quarter of the twentieth century thus had a fund of fact upon which to focus its unidealizing eye. During the turbulent 1930's and

early 1940's seventeenth-century New France also provided a setting for fiction which suited the violence of the times--almost allegorically so in the case of The Champlain Road. Nowhere in Canadian fiction before or since are Indians depicted as so collectively ruthless as are the seventeenth-century Iroquois in this small body of literature.

Although the fiction about the fighting on the Canadian frontier has shown itself to be controlled largely by prevailing political opinion and literary practices, fictional treatment of the post-1885 contact between red-coat and red-skin has been dominated by a movement to tragic realism and to the ironic and low mimetic realism of humorous parody. The tragic stories begin with Duncan Campbell Scott's "Star-blanket" and continue through Barbeau's Downfall of Temlaham to Wiebe's "Where Is the Voice Coming From?" The humorous narratives usually achieve their effect from the unexpected victory of the Indian in a dispute customarily won by a white man, as in Breaking Smith's Quarter Horse, or by the satirical victory of the Indian over the Mountie, as in Florencia Bay and The Revenge of Annie Charlie. Only in fiction of the 1970's does realism drop the masks of tragedy and humour and become a social documentary of a police system loaded against the Indian. While Kinsella can maintain a lightly humorous tone, neither Fry nor Hepworth can keep from broad criticism of the many legal inequities confronting the Indian. At the same time, they allow no kind of romantic resolution to the conflict.

But whatever the mode or genre, the fighting Indian in Canadian fiction does much less actual violent fighting than one would suppose; often when physical fighting does occur, one is as sympathetic with the

Indians as with the whites--often more so. Rare are the scenes in which red-coated Canadians rush to the aid of distressed whites endangered by the onslaught of vindictive savages. Actually, such rarities seem to have disappeared completely when Corporal Cameron hung up his spurs and put his scarlet tunic in mothballs.

## Chapter V

### The Indian and the Community

From the earliest days of New World exploration, Europeans have been fascinated by the daily lives and habits of the aboriginal inhabitants. During the eighteenth century this appetite was further increased by a general love of travel literature. Thus explorers and traders, settlers and travellers, from the eighteenth century through to the late nineteenth century, catered to this appetite by writing and publishing accounts of their Indian friends, companions, and neighbours. In some of the earliest cases, the accounts are of first contact between Indian and white, and the information is of great anthropological interest.<sup>1</sup>

Although few of the incidents and adventures described in these works are taken up by writers of fiction,<sup>2</sup> they nevertheless provide

<sup>1</sup> For example, Hearne's record of the purification rites after the Chipewyans' slaughter of the Eskimos is the basis for Frazer's account in The Golden Bough.

<sup>2</sup> Constance Lindsay Skinner's juvenile book Red Man's Luck (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1930) pp. 198 ff., creates a fanciful version of the Piegan ambush of Thompson's party along the passes of the Saskatchewan (see David Thompson, Travels in Western North America, 1784-1812, ed. Victor G. Hopwood [Toronto: Macmillan, 1971], pp. 278-79). The ghost of David Thompson hangs over Frederick Niven's The Flying Years (introd. Jan de Bruyn [Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974]). Also Grace Campbell uses Thompson's narrative of the love melodrama of a captive woman's suicide over the body of her slain husband as background for Kinochas in Thorn-Apple Tree ([Toronto: Collins, 1942], p. 162). Kinochas, the companion of Michael Ross, is reputedly the baby of this brave couple (see also Thompson, p. 184).

essential background information for writers who have never been among the Indians, attitudes as well as facts. Some details are used more frequently than others. For example, the salmon fishery and sense of protocol that MacKenzie observed and described in his Western travels are frequently central to the realism of fiction set on the Pacific Coast. On the other hand, the waste, racism, and wrestling for wives that Hearne describes amongst the Chipewyans are almost never alluded to in fiction. The stoicism in the face of pain, which is frequently described by Alexander Henry and many other writers, is almost a truism in fiction about Indians. However, writers of non-fiction<sup>3</sup> have also observed the extreme vanity and elaborate grooming of young Indian men; these characteristics are ignored by most writers of fiction, apart from an anthropologist like Marius Barbeau, who alludes to them in his discussions of ceremonial life among the Indians.

What becomes increasingly clear is that the basic documents provide such a range of facts that a writer may use what he wishes and still consider himself basically a realist. However, as one early traveller, Anna Jameson, noted in her Winter Studies and Summer Rambles in Canada (1838), a writer's picture can "delight by its novelty and romance, and deceive even while it does not deviate from the truth."<sup>4</sup> The problem of selection is rather like that confronting the photographer who wishes to take a picture of a dairy farm: does he focus on

<sup>3</sup> E.g. Paul Kane, Wanderings of an Artist (Toronto: Radisson Society, 1925), pp. 23-24.

<sup>4</sup> [Anna] Jameson, Winter Studies and Summer Rambles in Canada (London, 1838; rpt. Toronto: Coles, 1972), II, 151.

the lush fields with their picturesque groupings of trees and rocks; does he focus on the sturdy barn and silo; does he focus on the cows chewing their cud; or does he focus on the manure dumper and the tramped mud? All these pictures are real; one cannot say that one view is more real than another. But clearly, they each accentuate something quite different: the beautiful, the practical, the domestic, and the ugly, respectively.

And so with descriptions of the Indian community or of the Indian in contact with the white community. The writer may select or emphasize the positive or negative, the grand or petty, the beautiful or ugly in either community, depending on his overall attitudes and objectives. Thus it is possible to write several quite different stories from the same basic material. However, if the writer steadfastly ignores one set of features while emphasizing another, his picture may seem false or distorted. For example, David Thompson in the early nineteenth century is sensitive to the varying degrees of cleanliness among Indian tribes and to the problems of keeping clean without soap (p. 294). R. M. Ballantyne, on the other hand, raised on the Victorian principle that cleanliness is next to godliness, accentuates the dirty condition of the Indians he encounters: in one long paragraph in Hudson's Bay (1848) he uses the word "dirty" or an equivalent phrase at least nine times to describe some Indians in front of a tent.<sup>5</sup> Thus Ballantyne's contempt communicates a distorted picture of a filthy, inferior people;

<sup>5</sup> Robert M. Ballantyne, Hudson's Bay, introd. George Woodcock (Edmonton: Hurtig, 1972), pp. 241-42.

and his great popularity meant that he conditioned many English views of Indians.

Before the coming of the white man, the Indian had his own culture, which was defined largely by the climate and geography of his environment. A few writers have tried to reconstruct the pre-contact Indian community in fiction, but logically this is a difficult endeavour because most of the records available have been made by white men. In consequence, there always seems to be some white presence, however slight, in even the earliest pictures; and by far the largest amount of fiction deals with the events since the arrival of the white man.

This chapter will look at the fictional treatment of the basic features of daily Indian life--education, family life, business, friendship, social routines, survival--both in its own right and in its interaction with life in the white community. Several subdivisions, following a somewhat chronological order, become immediately apparent: what were the traditions and values of these communities before any significant white contact; what happened to communities that could not adjust to the changes brought by the whites; in what way did the traditional values and skills of the Indians affect the white men who came in contact with them; in what way were these traditions affected when Indians tried to become a part of the white community; and what is the nature of the modern Indian community, which has been largely created and circumscribed by the white man? Each of these questions is answered to some degree in Canadian fiction, and the answers over the years



reflect the prevailing literary and social attitudes of the day.

### 1. The Traditional Community

The vast majority of Canadian writers approach the subject of Indians with some solid knowledge of their subject, sometimes through book research, other times through first-hand experience. But the interpretation of this experience is often linked to the literary tastes of the day, even in non-fiction. For example, Alexander MacKenzie's ghost writer, William Combe, was thoroughly knowledgeable about the picturesque movement of the late eighteenth century<sup>6</sup> and no doubt left a "touch of literary artifice" on his version of the Voyages.<sup>7</sup> Similarly, Ensign Prenties in his Narrative of a Shipwreck on the Island of Cape Breton, in a Voyage from Quebec 1780 (1782) mentions that the survivors of this winter shipwreck stayed a fortnight with the Indians to recuperate before returning to civilization. However, Prenties's modern editor, G. G. Campbell, has noted a discrepancy between this version and the account which Prenties sent to his superior, General Haldimand. To Haldimand, Prenties reported that as soon as the survivors recovered sufficiently they actually went to the army outpost at Sydney Harbour to recuperate. Campbell's conclusion is interesting and, I believe, quite valid:

<sup>6</sup> Combe did the text for the satirical Tour of Dr. Syntax (1809-11) which Rowlandson illustrated.

<sup>7</sup> A. J. M. Smith, ed., The Book of Canadian Prose: Volume I (Toronto: Gage, 1965), p. 87.

It is not strange that Prenties should have gone at the first opportunity from the squalor and restricted diet of the Indian encampment to the comforts of an army outpost. He was canny enough to sense, however, that the sophisticated audience he hoped to reach with this little book would relish the picture of distressed Britishers cared for by savage Indians. Army outposts were well enough known, in all conscience, but Rousseau's noble savage, in all his pristine virtue, was everywhere an object of interest and curiosity--except to those who had encountered him in the flesh. So Prenties, mindful of his audience . . . improved the locale.<sup>8</sup>

What Fairchild says of another writer may be adjusted to this occasion:

Prenties "had no real affection for Indians, but . . . realized the fashionableness of sentimental primitivism."<sup>9</sup>

The earliest work of Canadian fiction to describe the Indians in their community is The History of Emily Montague (1769), and the attitudes that Frances Brooke exhibits on this subject are almost as varied as those concerning potential love relations between Indian and white. Soon after arriving in Canada, Ed. Rivers writes to a friend in England describing Indian life in a very superficial and idealized way. He comments briefly on the drudgery of Indian life, but then continues:

I have told you the labours of savage life, but I should observe that they are only temporary, and when urg'd by the sharp tooth of necessity: their lives are, upon the whole, idle beyond anything we can conceive. If the Epicurean definition of happiness is just that it consists in indolence of body and tranquillity of mind, the Indians of both sexes are the happiest people on earth; free from all care, they enjoy

<sup>8</sup> G. G. Campbell, ed., Ensign Prenties's Narrative, by S. W. Prenties (Toronto: Ryerson, 1968), pp. 67-68. In some respects one could consider this altered account as one of the earliest pieces of Canadian fiction.

<sup>9</sup> Hoxie Neale Fairchild, The Noble Savage (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1928), p. 159.

the present moment, forget the past, and are without solicitude for the future: in summer, stretch'd on the verdant turf, they sing, they laugh, they play, they relate stories of their ancient heroes to warm the youth to war; in winter, wrap'd in the furs which bounteous nature provides them, they dance, they feast, and despise the rigours of the season, at which the more effeminate Europeans tremble.<sup>10</sup>

All the same, Rivers has yet to spend a winter in Canada; and there is no indication he has had close contact with the people he describes.

However, by September he has visited Lorette for two weeks and writes a much more reasoned essay on the Indians. He maintains Rousseau's position in praising the "liberty" and "independence" of the Lorette Hurons, but he approaches their culture in an almost documentary fashion; he examines several features: role of women, power of chief, function of powawers or "conjurers," relative absence of laws, nature of the language, absence of writing, physical resemblance to Asian Tartars, etc. (pp. 39-41). Of their character he now writes:

Their general character is difficult to describe; made up of contrary and even contradictory qualities; they are indolent, tranquil, quiet, humane in peace; active, restless, cruel, ferocious in war: courteous, attentive, hospitable, and even polite, when kindly treated; haughty, stern, vindictive, when they are not; and their resentment is the more to be dreaded, as they hold it a point of honour to dissemble their sense of an injury till they find an opportunity to revenge it. (p. 41)

Some of the information in this letter is inaccurate, according to anthropologist Douglas Leechman,<sup>11</sup> but it seems to me that Mrs. Brooke

<sup>10</sup> Frances Brooke, The History of Emily Montague, introd. Carl F. Klinck (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1961), pp. 22-23.

<sup>11</sup> Douglas Leechman, "The 'Red Indian' of Literature: A Study in the Perpetuation of Error," Diss. Ottawa 1941, pp. 120-21; 215-18.

has tried to document the realities of Indian life as she saw and understood them and to balance various views of the Indian character.

Up to this point, Rivers's youthful attitudes have prevailed, retaining much of the Noble Savage concept and the social views of Rousseau. But the mature William Fermor balances these with his comments on the hard realities of that persistent theme concerning Indians: alcohol. Fermor (and, one presumes, Mrs. Brooke) questions Rousseau's views:

Rousseau has taken great pains to prove that the most uncultivated nations are the most virtuous: I have all due respect for this philosopher, of whose writings I am an enthusiastic admirer; but I have a still greater respect for truth, which I believe is not in this instance on his side.

There is little reason to boast of the virtues of a people who are such brutal slaves to their appetites as to be unable to avoid drinking brandy to an excess scarce to be conceived, whenever it falls in their way, though eternally lamenting the murders and other atrocious crimes of which they are so perpetually guilty when under its influence.

It is unjust to say we have corrupted them, that we have taught them a vice to which we are ourselves not addicted; both French and English are in general sober: we have indeed given them the means of intoxication, which they had not before intercourse with us; but he must be indeed fond of praising them, who makes a virtue of their having been sober, when water was the only liquor with which they were acquainted. (pp. 213-14)

Drunkenness almost always is a feature of the negative side of realism where Indians are concerned. Once again Frances Brooke indicates in her balanced discussion the various directions later Canadian fiction will take in its depictions: the idealized, the sympathetic founded on experience, and the negatively critical.

One of the earliest works to feature extensive integrated commentary on native tribes is Douglas Huyghue's Nomades of the West (1850).

That Douglas Huyghue definitely believed in the Noble Savage is clear even from his Preface:

Civilization has triumphed, and the New World now owns the sovereignty of the European. The tide of emigration sweeps in a continuous surge across the vast continent of North America, from sea to sea. The last barrier of the Indian's domain is riven asunder, his most sacred right violated, his latest hope crushed.

Now I have lived in the wigwam of the Red Man; I have smoked, talked, and hunted with him; I have trusted him with money; and whenever uncontaminated by intercourse with his white neighbours, I have invariably found him to be a happy and a noble man.

I have beheld him in each phase of his simple life, and discovered how many elements of good are implanted in the natural heart, independently of culture or creed; not that he is devoid of either, for to me he ever appeared less a savage than a high-souled and religious being.

I have stood by his peaceful grave where the trees he loved wept their leaves over the bones of the forest-child, and the matlock of the pioneer had not yet unearthed them to make a highway; and the spirit of the solitude has taught me to be just to my brother man.

The following tale is associated with this extraordinary people,--extraordinary as unfortunate, for they are becoming rapidly extinct. It presents them to the reader as before their ranks were thinned, or their spirit broken by aggression. May it awaken his sympathies in their behalf, and would that it might impel the spirit of philanthropy, which is the redeeming feature of the age, to devise some plan to rescue those perishing tribes.<sup>12</sup>

The quest in the narrative is for Ellen Clayton, a white girl who has been abducted by a mad medicine man and taken on a long journey west in the 1690's. The four "knights" who pursue this worthy objective are a young German youth, a young Mohawk, an Abenaki in his mid-thirties, and a middle-aged half-breed. When the two Indians enter association

<sup>12</sup> Douglas Huyghue, The Nomades of the West (London: Bentley, 1850), I, v-vi.

with Conrad, Huyghue offers quite detailed pictures of both Abenaki and Mohawk village life, no doubt based on the experience he alludes to in his preface. In these parts he focuses on Indian domesticity, hunting, and canoe skills. His remarks on sweet female voices and the great family affection are details found in almost all objective accounts by early writers of non-fiction. But there is no dirt on the warriors' leggings and there are no scrapping dogs among the lodges--the picture is considerably idealized.

What is especially interesting is the description of the various Western tribes, notably the Dakota Sioux, as the rescuers proceed westward to the Rocky Mountains, where they eventually find Ellen. From the graphic descriptions of costume and habitat, it seems likely that Huyghue knew George Catlin's 1841 volumes Manners and Customs of the North American Indians, which would provide him with visual detail as well as verbal descriptions. It is also possible that he knew Cooper's The Prairie (1827) or early accounts of the Lewis and Clark expedition or, more particularly, the writings of Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, the early anthropologist whose travels took him to the Upper Mississippi and whose works were published in 1839. In any case, Huyghue's romance has been extremely well researched for the mid-nineteenth century, and the full descriptions create a rich and detailed historical tapestry, against which an elaborate and fairly stylized romance is enacted. The relationship between the romantic and realistic elements here is quite successful, in the way rich detail backs a medieval romance. It is a pity that clumsy rhetoric mars an otherwise fascinating blend of fact and imagination.

The melodramatic tastes of the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, as well as limited literary skills, are no doubt responsible for the inadequacies and distortions in Frances Herring's In the Pathless West (1904).<sup>13</sup> Herring obviously has a certain knowledge of Indians: she describes the manufacture of the nets used in the oolichan fishery and of baskets used for berry picking; she tells of the construction of the underground dwelling<sup>14</sup> and of a woman's preparation for the birth of a child; all are aspects of the seasonal domestic rituals of various Indian tribes. But she dwells on the more melodramatic features of the Indians' social life: the punishment by death of an adulterous couple; the suicide of a young Indian girl who was kidnapped and raped by white men; her fiancé's revenge on the whites and subsequent suicide; the fasting and cannibalism of the Medicine Man. In spite of her documentary intentions, Herring has lumped together several different sets of customs (e.g., coastal fishing practices, Interior Salish housing, photographs of Plains Indians). The attempt at balance has been overshadowed by a fascination with the melodramatic.

More coherent, better written, also more romantic and idealized is Lighthall's picture of sixteenth-century Iroquois life in The Master of Life (1908), that highly stylized tale of Hiawatha and the founding of the Five Nations Confederacy. Lighthall himself calls it "one of the

<sup>13</sup> See discussion in Chapter III, pp. 163-66.

<sup>14</sup> These underground winter dwellings are characteristic of the Interior Salish tribe, and they are featured as well in Tay John. See Diamond Jenness, The Indians of Canada, 6th ed. Bulletin No. 65, Anthropological Series No. 15 (Ottawa: National Museum, 1963), p. 354.

most fairy-like tales in history."<sup>15</sup> Life at Hochelaga is satisfying and pleasant; the peace chief views his community with contentment:

The Peace-Chief delighted in the number and comfort of his people. No poor and no greed nor avarice were known here. These fields belonged to no one proprietor: their fruits, the product of united labor, were the common property of all. None could go hungry while a handful of corn was to be found in Hochelaga. (p. 23)

This is one of the purest expressions of Rousseau's communal Noble Savage that we have. But as well in this ideal Indian community are no vermin, mosquitoes, nor hard winters, no pests in the corn fields, nor any kind of real hardship beyond the enemy Algonquins. Although Lighthall alludes to details of village life, he portrays them only in the most favourable light; typical is this evening scene:

Hiawatha's mother, Onata, bent near her, tending the pot of broth, a vessel whose flared edge and ornamental markings bore witness to her success in the woman's art of pottery. It was half buried in the ashes beside the fire and from time to time she dropped into it a red-hot stone, setting the pottage boiling from the inside. While she was cooking thus the line of fires extending down the house illumined here and there some similar steaming pot and its attendant, some group of olive-skinned maidens musically laughing over the day's work and procession, some knot of agile athletes smoking, while one recounted a bear-hunt . . . prankish boys and girls chasing about under the eyes of parents; and the watchful, beady eyes of many papposes looking down from their gaudy cradle-boards hung on the end of nearly every partition. (p. 25)

And in the characters of Hiawatha, his beloved clan-sister Quenhia, and his Onondagan foster-father, the Arrowmaker, are embodied all the most

<sup>15</sup> W. D. Lighthall, The Master of Life (Toronto: Musson, 1908), p. v.



noble of virtues; they are the epitome of the values of the community at large, during the Golden Age of the Mohawks.

Also presenting an idealized picture is John McDougall's "Wa-pee Moos-tooch" (1908), the study of a Plains Cree lad who grows in wisdom and stature to become a great chief of his people; and it is filled with detailed accounts of Cree life. The narrative traces the career of young White Buffalo from his boyhood through to his election as chief. The reader follows the young hero's interest in tribal lore, his first kill as a hunter, his first buffalo hunt, his youth meditation, his first war party, horse raids and counting coup, his courtship and marriage, further war parties, and finally his chieftainship. At each stage of White Buffalo's life, McDougall takes the opportunity to elaborate on the cultural significance of the events. For example, the war of retaliation after a Blackfoot massacre is treated calmly as the only process available at the time for exacting justice; White Buffalo reasons thus:

Yesterday he felt that the scout whom he killed deserved death, inasmuch as he had found him sleeping at his post. Today he finds the slayers and robbers with the goods on them. Horses and saddles and equipment are in this camp. Therefore this is but the meting out of common justice. Thus this young warrior-hunter reasons, and his conscience is satisfied. He is not a savage any more than other men are savage.<sup>16</sup>

Retaliatory expeditions of this sort, like the horse raids, also give McDougall the opportunity to elaborate on the scouting practices and equipment used. White Buffalo's courtship and marriage to Nagos the

<sup>16</sup> John McDougall, "Wa-pee Moos-tooch" (Calgary: Herald, 1908), p. 70.

Wood Cree enables McDougall to discuss the female Indian skills and also to compare the less warlike Wood Cree with their martial cousins of the Plains.

But above all, McDougall takes every opportunity to extoll the kind of life the unspoiled Plains Indian lives--an ideal sort of Boy Scout life, exhibiting the tough primitive virtues of Rousseau's Noble Savages: the diet, exercise, and fresh air; the sense of community well-being; and the noble idea of all sharing in the glory and achievements of natural leaders like White Buffalo. For example, in a foot race, the losers say: "it is no dishonor to be left by such a man . . . we are all Crees and we are all proud of White Buffalo" (p. 155). Even the acts of violence are justified as necessary to the maintenance of tribal ideals. Most of the sentimentalizing occurs in reference to the happy Victorian style of family life that McDougall portrays.<sup>17</sup>

In spite of its pervasive Victorian morality, "Wa-pee Moos-tooch" gives the most complete picture in fiction of the traditional Plains Indian culture before Wiebe's Temptations of Big Bear. It is a picture of the early nineteenth-century Cree, in his own remembered Golden Age, at that supreme moment when he had some white imports to facilitate his life (most notably the horse), but not enough to degrade and demoralize him. It is a romance focused on the most patrician members of the tribe, constructed on carefully selected realistic detail for the most

<sup>17</sup> An even more highly sentimentalized view of Indian family life is depicted by Fraser in The Blood Lilies (1903), where Wolf Runner's wife the Ugly One makes up for her lack of beauty and intellect by her great maternal devotion.

positive effect.

The achievement of Lighthall and McDougall is accentuated if one compares their work with Servos's Frontenac and the Maid of the Mist (1927). The religious festival that occupied the early pages of The Master of Life was certainly idealized with romantically beautiful maidens and strapping youths; but Servos's version of the gathering of the Five Nations at Oneida Lake for the Green Corn Feast reads more like a scenario for a Hollywood spectacular. The ideals of the community are so exaggerated as to transcend all bounds of credibility (only Robb's Tecumtha [1958] surpasses it in sheer weight of adjectival improbability). Certainly the "Beautiful Flower by the Crystal Spring" (Theala, the Mississaugan girl who is eventually chosen to be Maid of the Mist) bears no resemblance in her dazzling beauty and intellectual astuteness to the plain and placid Mississaugans who were neighbours of Susanna Moodie.<sup>18</sup> Although Servos preaches the superiority of the Indian over the white, he does so with little sense of fact about actual Indians and their values; consequently, the picture he presents rings as false as anything Collins churned out about Riel.

Not so The Downfall of Temlaham (1928) by Marius Barbeau, the great anthropologist and collector of folk material. In the sections which deal with the traditional Indian life, the overriding impression is of the ceremony, pomp, and protocol surrounding such events as peace deputations, the raising of a chief, and the recompense exacted for

<sup>18</sup> Susanna Moodie, Roughing It in the Bush (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1923), pp. 257-94.

murder. It is a view of a culture so complex that it can hardly be called a society of Noble Savages. The leading characters are all members of the Tsimshian aristocracy; each event in their lives has its protocol, its boasts and counterboasts, taunts and challenges, songs and set-speeches--all imparting a sense of a very formal life.

Several of these formalities are integrated into the conflict of the story, as the author tries to impart an exact sense of the meaning of the events to the Indians themselves. The outfitting of Bitten-Wrists (the puny pretender to the head-chieftainship) is as ornate an affair as any coronation: the boy wears a special garment, an heirloom headdress, and a full Chilkat robe befitting his station; he is also specially tattooed with symbolic images. Another important ceremonial occasion concerns the recompense for Kamalmuk's murder of Neetah. Here Barbeau gives the reader an interesting insight into the Tsimshian laws of revenge, namely the giving and accepting of gifts to compensate for the murder. What Barbeau does is depict the Indian aristocracy in the manner of other heroic cultures, emphasizing through example after example the ceremonial ornateness of this relatively sophisticated people. But this book, like his later Mountain Cloud (1944), about the Tahltans of the Liard River region, seems to use fiction as a light vehicle to transport a heavy load of anthropology--the reader is at times overwhelmed with information.

Also emphasizing the formality and ceremony of the Indian aristocracy is Robb's Thunderbird (1949). It is set along the Bay of Quinté (called Kente) on eastern Lake Ontario, which was formerly the home of the Kente Mohawk and is explicitly depicted as a kind of

paradise.<sup>19</sup> The story itself is as improbable and conventional a romance as one might find, but it is readable. Like Barbeau, Robb dwells on the deliberations and observances in the various ceremonial situations. At one point he explicitly notes:

The real wisdom of the Indian Council Fire rested upon three  
solid rocks of human understanding,  
The allegorical oration,  
The Achievements of the Orator,  
The Ceremonial Silences.<sup>20</sup>

Elsewhere he describes in detail the headdresses, the sacred tobacco incense and the special incantations used for each of several occasions. The love of the Viking and the niece of a chief focuses on several questions of rights and inheritance among the Mohawk. All the same, most of the realism is, once again, merely the verisimilitude of a romance in which all but one or two individuals are idealized as Noble Savages of a fairly sentimental variety.

It is only in two works of the past ten years--Alan Fry's Come a Long Journey (1971) and Wiebe's Temptations of Big Bear (1973)--that the realistic detail of the anthropology and setting are fully integrated into the narrative and that the total picture of the Indian

<sup>19</sup> The action seems to take place in the eleventh century, since the conflict surrounds a Viking lad taken captive during a battle with the neighbouring Algonquins. These Mohawks are thus the separate Mohawks some five centuries before the Iroquois Confederacy. On linguistic evidence, however, Horatio Hale maintains that the tribes were not likely separate for longer than four hundred years. See William N. Fenton, "Horatio Hale," in The Iroquois Book of Rites, ed. Horatio Hale, 2nd ed. (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1963), p. xviii.

<sup>20</sup> Wallace Havelock Robb, Thunderbird (Kingston: Abbey Dawn, 1949), p. 60.

community is only implicitly idealized. In the longest episode of his novel, Fry writes of the boyhood, courtship, and marriage of K'Anta at a time before his Athabaskan village had any significant contact with whites. K'Anta reminds one of Wa-pee Moos-tooch; he is a superior young man, raised by intelligent and concerned parents, who are themselves natural community leaders. Although K'Anta's eventual marriage to Xetsi is romantic (she is the girl he obviously should marry), the story itself is almost pure novel of manners. K'Anta has no disastrous winters to survive, no demonic medicine men to outwit, and no great battles to fight; he simply has to secure the girl whom he wants to marry and who wants to marry him. Through this courtship Fry gives the reader an interesting view of Athabaskan marriage traditions of the late nineteenth century: hunting rights, bride service, dowries, social contact, etc.--all Indian equivalents to the issues of fortune, dowry, and family which comprise the novels of Jane Austen. The action itself is concerned with the individual's function in the community, with social status, with property rights, with inferior mercantile morality, with misguided paternal authority, with the vulnerable status of women, with social observances and taboos--all the realistic fabric of community life. And as fiction it entertains, with the facts well-integrated into the story line.

Realism of quite a different sort prevails in Rudy Wiebe's The Temptations of Big Bear, largely because it is tragedy, not novel of manners. Wiebe reconstructs for his readers sense impressions of Cree daily life. He aims at the kind of total picture McDougall gave in "Wa-pee Moos-tooch"; but because Wiebe is writing in 1973 out of the

realistic tradition whereas McDougall was writing in 1908, out of the romance tradition, the results are quite different. Everywhere in Wiebe's Indian camp one is confronted by smells and textures and images of the life cycle (all of which come across positively rather than negatively). Actually, the kind of detail he uses is rather like the kind Auerbach describes as realistic in the works of Gregory of Tours.<sup>21</sup> Graphic details abound. One shares the taste of hot, freshly killed buffalo liver dipped in gall, the dribbling of hot fat, and the lip-smacking; one feels the close contact of people in the lodges and hears their grunts and snoring and breathing; one is aware of the proximity of horses and dogs, manure and worms, love-making and defecation. And above all, one feels "the complete circle of living and solid sweet immovable and ever changing Earth."<sup>22</sup> All of this could well have been treated negatively (there is plenty of precedent, for example, in the Jesuit Relations and the Wanderings of Paul Kane), but Wiebe has tried to reconstruct the Indian point of view about the realities of his life rather than to stand as an observer criticizing or justifying ways which seem alien. The portions dealing with the Indian camp form a total picture by means of juxtaposed sense impressions focused on an earthy and elemental style of living.

<sup>21</sup> When Kingbird's raiding party is spying on the Blackfoot camp, they must be very cautious while a Blackfoot woman urinates close to them; this graphic detail is similar to one recorded by Auerbach in which a horse stales in front of fugitives in hiding; see Mimesis, trans. Willard Trask (1953; rpt. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1957), p. 76.

<sup>22</sup> Rudy Wiebe, The Temptations of Big Bear (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1973), p. 51.

This general picture is supported by certain features ascribed to various key characters. For example, Big Bear himself is seen, in addition to his spiritual and heroic roles, as a sensual man; and from his reflexions on his four wives, one learns certain details of Plains Cree marriage customs and division of labour. Of his sons, Little Bad Man is the most brutal and is seen early in the book mounting a young woman stallion-style at night, leaving her, after his need is eased, rolled over in a crumpled heap. The lack of anything approaching affection in the act supports the image almost universally observed of the real Little Bad Man's unpleasant character.<sup>23</sup> Young Horsechild is the child in the book: first, the small child who eats till he falls asleep (p. 59), then the tough little kid who slings pebbles and listens to stories of his elders' exploits, and finally the youth who stays with his father to the end--a normal boy and a loyal son. Of all the sons, Kingbird contributes most to the sensual realism of the novel. He is seen in many sexually focused scenes; and he embodies as well the Indian youth's view of Indian life, most notably the excitement and pride involved in horse raids and battles.

The portrait of the Indians is full, complex, and often subtle. There are people the reader sympathizes with more than others; but in the manner of realistic literature few characters show clear-cut virtues and short-comings. Even Little Bad Man has some credit due to him for making the correct overtures to his father for the medicine bundle and

<sup>23</sup> His photograph also shows him to be an ugly, brutal-looking person; see William Bleasdel Cameron, The War Trail of Big Bear (Boston: Small Maynard, 1927), facing p. 88.



the power. Kingbird is a likable, eager young man, but he cannot keep his pretty pregnant young wife out of a white man's bed. Horsechild can be a pest, but he is also a strength to his father in hard times. The other young men are brave and daring, but also prone to unthinking, almost mob-like responses to exciting situations. This is a community of variable human beings whose culture so close to the earth is brought alive through Wiebe's impressionistic technique, the limited point of view, and the lack of editorial comment.

In all of these traditional communities described, however, we are aware of a state of native Indian culture superior to what exists today because of the white man, either implicitly or explicitly a kind of Golden Age of cultural identity. But in these works the reader is often aware of the beginning of white changes, even if they consist only of soap, sails, and fine carving by a Viking boy in Thunderbird, or daring horse raids in "Wa-pee Moos-tooch." But in others, white influence is already marked: K'Anta's prospective father-in-law is rich from trading with the Tlingits, who are middlemen in the white trade from the Pacific Coast; and only a treasured rifle suffices to buy Xetsi from One Without Teeth, the ridiculous old bachelor; part of Kamalmuk's problem in The Downfall of Temlaham is his belief in the superiority of white ways while his wife is a staunch traditionalist; in the course of The Temptations of Big Bear the staple of the Plains Cree, the buffalo, becomes all but extinct and the culture can do nothing but collapse.

Works such as these which focus on a vanished way of life are usually elegiac and cannot help but contain much that is idealized,

with the blame cast on white intrusion and on the stupidity or cupidity of white individuals. Barbeau is the most explicit when he contrasts the behaviour of "the least mannerly of the white people" with the dignity of the Indians at the inquest into the death of Kamalmuk (p. 154). The episode, says Barbeau, "forms the last page of the Downfall of Temlaham, the earthly paradise of old" (p. 162).

## 2. Cultural Genocide

Many writers of historical fiction have depicted the negative effects of white civilization on the social fabric of the Indian community as a whole. Indeed, most of the nineteenth century was convinced that the native Indian was a doomed specimen, an attitude which, according to Haycock, persisted until about 1930.<sup>24</sup> It was simply assumed that plagues, liquor, and restricted hunting grounds would kill them off, or else they would be culturally absorbed. A work like Helen Hunt Jackson's A Century of Dishonor (1881) certainly confirmed this belief, especially in the United States. But Canadians were also well aware of white responsibility in the decline of the Indian. Douglas Huyghue, for example, frames his "old romance" Argimou with a description of the subsequent life of Argimou and with an account of the general disintegration, death, and degradation of the Indians between the time of the story's action (1755) and the time of writing (1847).

<sup>24</sup> Ronald Graham Haycock, The Image of the Indian (Waterloo, Ont.: Waterloo Lutheran Univ., 1971), pp. 1-27.

Huyghue is one of the earliest Canadian writers to parallel the destruction of the woods by the hand of greedy progress with the destruction of the Indian by the disease and alcohol of greedy men. The book closes with Argimou, the last warrior, "at the burial-place of his nation" weeping at his wife's grave before leaving to go West. The doom for the Indian prophesied by Argimou's aged predecessor at the start of the story is thus fulfilled.<sup>25</sup>

The most aggravated case of cultural genocide in Canada is, of course, the extermination of the Beothuks of Newfoundland. The tragedy of that unhappy people has recurred sporadically as a subject of literature, including three fictional narratives: the anonymous Ottawah (1847), The Vanished Race (1927) by Arthur English, and Riverrun (1973) by Peter Such. The three works in themselves almost constitute a capsule survey of one hundred and twenty-five years of Canadian fiction.

Of the three, Ottawah is the most romantic and the least historical. Writing barely twenty years after the death of Shawnadithit in 1829, the author is still unsure that the Beothuks really are extinct: a few "may yet survive to confine themselves to the unexplored districts of the island, where they may still live in their native freedom and primeval simplicity."<sup>26</sup> Thus instead of chronicling the last years of the Beothuk as a people, he describes the loss of political power and

<sup>25</sup> Douglas S. Huyghue, Argimou by "Eugene" [pseud.] (Halifax: Morning Courier Office, 1847), p. 72.

<sup>26</sup> Ottawah, the Last Chief of the Red Indians of Newfoundland (London: Appleyard, [1847]), p. iii. A full discussion of the narrative may be found in E. J. Devereux, "The Beothuk Indians of Newfoundland in Fact and Fiction," Dalhousie Review, 50 (1970-71), 350-62.

sets the work early in the seventeenth century. The early skirmishes of the Beothuk with the Europeans had deprived them of the advantages enjoyed by their traditional enemies:

. . . they were fast dwindling away, before the united efforts of the Eskimoh, who possessed the continental shores of the strait of Belle-Isle, and were still in their native strength, and the Micmacs, who, though not natives of the island, had got possession of its southern districts, aided by the English and French fishermen, who had hunted them, and destroyed them, more wantonly than they would have pursued and destroyed the most savage beasts. (p. 2)

On the basis of long sojourns with Indians (probably Micmacs) and visits to Newfoundland, the author says:

. . . little more has been attempted, than to draw a few pictures of the incidents of savage warfare, and Indian social history, in a rigorous climate, and under the influence that the phenomena which the heavens and the face of the earth, and the elements in a state of commotion, exercise over the character and actions of the wild man. (p. iii)

He describes in some detail the features of Indian life which one can find almost anywhere: the revenge motive in inter-tribal warfare, the stoicism of the warriors, the council system, and the limited power of the chief (p. 77). But beyond these factual observations, the author does nothing to distinguish his Beothuk protagonists from those in any heroic fiction. Ottawah is pure formula romance of a highly sentimental variety and bears little resemblance to historical or anthropological data about the Beothuks.

The Vanished Race, however, is based on actual records of the last

years of the Beothuks<sup>27</sup> and is ornamented with several local legends and beliefs:<sup>28</sup> first, that a fair-haired girl (Rosaleen O'Connor in the book) travelled for many years with the Micmac (here the Beothuks); and second, that a few Beothuks survived to escape to the mainland. The actual story, English says, "has not been materially interfered with even where imagination has been called into play" (p. 6).

English sides with the Beothuks completely; he makes no suggestion that they contribute in any way to their own downfall, except possibly in their inability to distinguish kind whites from murderous whites. His Beothuks are people of "docile disposition" who become victims of "repeated acts of treachery and violence . . . on the part of the rude and ignorant settlers" (p. 5) and acts of pillage by their traditional enemies the Micmac. But in spite of Micmac complicity in helping exterminate the Beothuks, English gives the white man the major credit, for guns and fur pillaging are ultimately aspects of white influence. One of English's frequent authorial intrusions (and typical of his attitude and diction) goes thus:

Dream on, child of destiny, dream on thou poor Beothuck,  
little do you know that you are to witness the extermination  
of your race. You can be no match for the cupidity of the  
rapacious white man and the murderous proclivities of his

<sup>27</sup> Both Such and English use a 1915 work by J. P. Howley, which Such claims is the only real source of information on the Beothuks. See Peter Such, Riverrun (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin, 1973), p. viii; and Arthur English, The Vanished Race (Montreal: Garand, 1927), p. 13.

<sup>28</sup> English appears to be a student of Newfoundland history. Another of his books, Ogygia (1930), tells of a nineteenth-century search for treasure left by the Irish Celts before the migration of the Beothuks to the island.

ally--the Micmac. Soon your race will be no more, and murder at last satiated, shall mourn too late her abominal [sic] crimes. They shall send offerings to you in a vain effort to propitiate and establish peace with the last pitiful remnant of your tribe, but too late. (p. 70)

Focusing as he does on Rosaleen (or Emamooset as she is known by the Beothuks), English does not need to develop the Indians' characters in the way Such does. As Rosaleen-Emamooset adapts to the Indian way of life, she observes and learns from the Indians in a way typical of outsiders; but the details are commonplace, familiar to anyone who has read even lightly in Indian studies. English really creates an idealized Noble Savage figure with no intrinsic literary life: "abounding happiness was the lot of those simple people whose every want was supplied by nature" (p. 90), and who have "never been known to kill for the lust of killing or beyond the limits of their requirements" (p. 91).<sup>29</sup> But once Emamooset is grown and married, English deals more factually with the last days of the Beothuks, presumably as recorded by Howley. In the ending, however, he returns to local legend and has Emamooset and two other women escape to the mainland. The rest of the story is pure adventure romance with a happy ending for Rosaleen. Although The Vanished Race is an improvement over Ottawah in that it has a core of

<sup>29</sup> Samuel Hearne observed wanton waste of game amongst the Chipe-wyans (A Journey from Prince of Wales's Fort in Hudson's Bay [London, 1795; rpt. Amsterdam: N. Israel, 1968], pp. 117-18). Barbeau records that disrespect for animals and wanton overkill were two of the ways in which the Tsimshian lost their paradise of Temlaham (The Downfall of Temlaham [Toronto: Macmillan, 1928], pp. 223-44). Rudy Wiebe tells me of evidence that the Plains tribes wasted the buffalo when they were numerous (personal interview). And yet glorification of a no-waste economy is one of the clichés of the idealized Indian.

historical fact, English has not had the confidence in his material to let it tell its own story, but has had to augment it with extremely conventional romance formulae.<sup>30</sup>

Not so Peter Such in Riverrun. As Rudy Wiebe did in Big Bear, Such has allowed the documentation available to provide the basis for the whole story. The rest is imaginative reconstruction rather than fictional invention. Since both Such and Wiebe adopt as well as they can the point of view of the characters under discussion rather than merely telling about that character,<sup>31</sup> they achieve a degree of verisimilitude that is distinctive in recent historical fictions.

In his Preface Such tells of the wanton slaughter of some three or four hundred Beothuks in about 1800 (p. vii), but he avoids the righteous denunciations indulged in by Arthur English. The book itself tells the story of three of the last Beothuks during the years 1818 to 1823: Nonosabasut, Demasduit (his wife), and Shawnadithit (the last survivor). The action goes from a Beothuk theft of a white boat through to the reflections of Shawnadithit alone in a white man's house.

There is a familiar fictional Indian character in old Wothamisit, the much-loved wise man of the dwindling community, who warns against the treachery of the white man. But unfamiliar in Indian fiction is the

<sup>30</sup> Given his later speculation in Ogygia that Indians are a decadent rather than a primitive society and that the Beothuks "represented a degraded civilization" (Arthur English, Ogygia [Ottawa: Ru-mi-lou Books, 1930], p. 49) one wonders how much of English's idealizing in The Vanished Race is sincere and how much is mere iteration of oppressed Noble Savage formulae.

<sup>31</sup> As Iris Allan told about Major Walsh and Norma Sluman told about Poundmaker.

fear which infuses every action and which accompanies the demoralization of a race struggling for its very existence. This emphasis makes Such's picture realistic more in its psychological intensity than in its physical detail. Still, the reader is supplied with plenty of realistic detail about everyday life and much of it appears to be distinctive to the Beothuk: the deer fences for the caribou hunt, the red ochre smudging snow and birch trees, the drink of hot blueberry juice, the dirt and cinders on the head of a mourning woman, the taboos of consanguinity, etc. But the realism lies mainly in the record of the pain and panic of a people who know they are doomed and who can no longer support traditions because their numbers are so few. Starvation is rampant because there are too few people to hunt caribou with deer fences. Couples are barren and discouraged. Children die early, often along with their mothers. Shawnadithit has no one to marry her except her uncle. And even friendly approaches by whites end in bloodshed and death. At each turn, fate deals the Beothuks the worst possible blow; the narrative is really an elegy in prose, but an elegy that dwells on few glories, only the certain knowledge of cultural obliteration.

Another early cultural destruction was that of the Hurons, whose near-demise was also caused by the combined efforts of the whites (the Jesuits virtually killed them with kindness) and the encroachment of the native enemy. Thanks largely to the Jesuit Relations, which has had major influence, virtually all writers of fiction about the Hurons and the seventeenth century echo the descriptions and judgments found in the Relations. I have not encountered a single book which idealizes the Huron community in the way Lighthall and Robb idealize that of the



Iroquois, whose culture was quite similar. Since Brébeuf and his brethren considered the Hurons lascivious and superstitious, the men unreliable, the camps filthy, the lodges unbearably smoky, and the food barely edible,<sup>32</sup> writer after writer of historical fiction has elaborated on these characteristics of the Hurons, sometimes even extending the observations by analogy to other immediate tribes.

For example, in The Trail of the Iroquois (1925), Sanford suggests that Miratik's keeping her virginity is an uncommon thing for an Iroquois (she is thus worthy to be a potential partner for the young white hero). The French women observe the filth in the alleys between the Huron lodges, a breeding ground for disease.<sup>33</sup> In The Village of Souls (1933) Child has Lys dying in a stifling smoky, verminous lodge, totally without privacy:

The filth of this life was invincible; neither air, fire, nor water was the element in which every soul in that hut moved--but smoke. Smoke choked their lungs and writhed before their eyes in a blue haze, it made their eyes weep. . . . As in hell so here the existence of a private soul safely shut away in one's recluse fastidiousness was almost an impossibility, for the coarse rhythm of savage life--birth, mating, sickness, death, racing by without disguise or pretence--was as grossly near as the smoke.<sup>34</sup>

But the fullest treatment is undoubtedly to be found in The

<sup>32</sup> S. R. Mealing, ed. The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1963), pp. 22-56.

<sup>33</sup> M. Bourchier Sanford, The Trail of the Iroquois (Toronto: Longmans, Green, 1925), pp. 23-24.

<sup>34</sup> Philip Child, The Village of Souls (Toronto: Ryerson, 1948), p. 158.

Champlain Road (1939). Here in spite of a romantic fictional plot, McDowell constructs a complex picture of a dying culture. Godfrey the Musketeer reflects on the ineffectual communal style of government, the "generous latitude" in the love life of the Indian women, and the state of the villages:

He pictured Huronia as he had seen it . . . villages with unguarded palisades . . . long bark houses, roofs rounded to meet at a central opening . . . clan arms rudely painted above the vestibule entrance . . . the sign of the Bear, Cord, Rock or People Beyond the Morass . . . groups of maidens laughing and lounging in filthy alleys . . . old women squatted in the dirt grinding corn . . . naked brats crawling in dust and refuse . . . that was Teanaostaiaë, Keeper of the River, largest village in Huronia.<sup>35</sup>

The picture is not an attractive one.

As the narrative progresses, McDowell presents an increasingly complete, basically realistic picture of the physical environment and life of the Hurons, both Christian and pagan. The reader can see the cornfields and the palisades, learns of the tortures and the belief in the Thunder Birds (p. 19), of the sweathouses and the staple food sagamite ("an unappetizing mess of ground corn, boiled without salt, served exceedingly thin and seasoned sparingly with pieces of dried fish or meat" [pp. 35-36]), and of the simplicity of household effects: "Bark houses were easy of construction and family possessions--fur robes, skins and rude pottery--were meagre. When a village was destroyed by fire migration was simplicity in itself" (p. 43). Neverthe-

<sup>35</sup> Franklin Davey McDowell, The Champlain Road (Toronto: Macmillan, 1939), p. 8.

less, this simplicity is not that of the Noble Savage.

As we have already seen (Chapter III), McDowell also contrasts the Christian and pagan Indians at St. Joseph, showing the disease and apathy of the former, the vitality and sense of purpose of the unspoiled pagans. In doing so, he really amplifies the kind of attitude presented by Raddall, Begg, Rolyat, and others, who show the greater vitality and dignity of the traditional or natural Indian over the despair and demoralization of the "civilized" Indian.

The complex social groups of the Plains buffalo cultures have been amply illustrated by McDougall and Wiebe; but few cultures came to such an abrupt and irreversible end. With the virtual extinction of the Indians' traditional means of livelihood came the compulsion to choose and settle on reserves. Some Indians, like Crowfoot and Sweetgrass, adjusted peacefully; others, like Big Bear, held out or ultimately went to war. As well, liquor (almost always in the picture of the demoralized Indian) is nowhere so evident as among the Plains Indians, especially those of the southern Canadian prairies, who were victims of the trade on the Whoop-up Trail. This rot-gut and its effects were a major impetus in several important events of the 1870's, and killed the Indian mother of Tahnea in Sluman's Blackfoot Crossing (1959). Although the story illustrates many facets of life among the Sioux of Sitting Bull and the Blackfeet of Crowfoot in the mid-1870's, this "romance" ends dramatically with the loyal and unyielding Sikimi and his small band heading off to the mountains to live as traditionally as possible near the sacred hot springs and to abandon all the demoralizing influences of white civilization.

But Wayland Drew's Wabeno Feast (1973) might intimate the results for Sikimi and his followers. A traditional life totally independent of white influence and technology is also the aim of Miskabenasa's band in the eighteenth-century journal part of The Wabeno Feast (1973), and yet their effort must have failed ultimately. No specific reason is given, but the implication is that most men are basically not strong nor brave enough to sustain real freedom and independence. The opening and closing passages of the book, set in the near future, concern an old Indian called Charlie Redbird, who is described in a degree of realism which is thoroughly repellent: a foul, vomit-covered derelict who "spread stench and squalor like a mist. . . . the years of shoepolish, perfume, and Sterno had eaten his brain like cheese and left him beguiled by visions."<sup>36</sup>

But of the eighteenth-century groups represented in the journal Charlie Redbird is not descended from the quarrelsome drunken Indians around the Frog Lake Post, with their prostituted, harridanish women; nor from the mad religious cult of the wabeno, destroying and mutilating themselves and nature by fire and fervour; but from the happy, contented band of Miskobenasa, living the true Noble Savage life, natural and uncorrupted, aloof from the temptations of white civilization. This conclusion comes with a shock of despair for the reader as Charlie Redbird watches the canoe of Paul and Liv Henry disappear into the labyrinth of the northern waterways:

<sup>36</sup> Wayland Drew, The Wabeno Feast (Toronto: Anansi, 1973), pp. 1-2.

Then, desperate, he seized from among the fragments of charm a name which he believed might once have been his own, although he could not be certain, so overgrown with whiteman's raillery had it become. He raised his arms in a gesture of both greeting and farewell, both command and supplication, and he spoke this name softly outward, letting the wind cradle it from his lips like a child and a promise.

"Miskobenasa!" (p. 280)

Drew's conclusion has all the horror of the kind of science fiction which avoids the romantic resolution; it is as negative a picture as any in Canadian fiction of man's inability to live in harmony with nature: no one, it seems, can escape from the destructive powers of "progress." It is a destructive principle which was seen as early as the works of Huyghue.

### 3. The White Alien

Between the traditional and modern Indian communities come certain changes in the relationship between the white and the Indian. When the white man first went into the wilderness, he needed help. He had to learn the kinds of skills and values which would fit him for life away from his sustaining civilization. He usually did so by forming a friendship with an Indian or an alliance with an Indian community. In real life there are countless examples of Indian guides and protectors: Samuel Hearne would never have reached the mouth of the Coppermine without Matonabee; Alexander MacKenzie might never have completed his northern journey without the diplomatic skills of English Chief; Alexander Henry would never have survived the events surrounding Michilimackinac had Wawatam, his self-appointed foster-father, not intervened

on his behalf; Ensign Prenties would never have survived his shipwreck, whatever he felt about Indians, without the assistance of his Micmac rescuers; and Susanna Moodie's family would have had even harder winters without the hunting skills and reciprocated kindnesses of their Indian neighbours.

In fiction these relationships become extremely stylized and usually focus on a single Indian character, who becomes a Chingachgook-Tonto sort of faithful friend and companion or guide and mentor. Although in Canadian literature he never becomes a kind of archetype as he does in American literature,<sup>37</sup> he nevertheless appears frequently, most often as some version of the Noble Savage. Apart from their trained skills as trackers and hunters, these characters nearly all exhibit the advantages of life close to nature, as envisaged by the followers of Rousseau; they are less impulsive and yet are less hampered by sophisticated reasoning when decisive action is required. They are almost always loyal, either because they owe the white man a life-debt or because they simply recognize him as a good man and worthy of loyalty. Some merely teach the white man the practical skills needed in the woods, while others actually provide moral guidance as well. In any case, they almost always represent a figure of stability in the white person's adjustment to the wilderness or in his recognition of primitive values--almost a surrogate parent.<sup>38</sup> And since the Indian guide figure

<sup>37</sup> Leslie A. Fiedler, The Return of the Vanishing American (London: Paladin, 1972), pp. 110-20 et passim.

<sup>38</sup> David Williams explicitly makes this connection in The Burning Wood (Toronto: Anansi, 1975).

is almost always the same sex as the white protagonist, there are no sexual overtones. He is one of the most consistently stylized characters and is most often a chief or closely related to one--elitism once again.

Bellegarde (1832) may be a modified Noble Savage in his dealings with the world at large, but he is thoroughly conventional in his relationship with Eustace de Courcy, his rival. Not only does he save de Courcy's life, but he becomes his loyal second in battle and nobly defends the fallen American soldiers from the scalp lust of his less worthy companions. Similarly, Argimou loyally repays Edward Molesworth by guiding him to his beloved Clarence, who in turn is protected by the idealized Waswetchcul. And in Nomades of the West Conrad could never have found Ellen without the selfless, intelligent, and noble company of Salexis (the Abenaki) and Sewantus-Walie (the Mohawk) who saved Conrad from the stake and who is described as a "pure son of the forest, noble in lineage as in instinct" (II, 253). What is interesting to note is that sexual rivalry seems to increase rather than decrease the bonds of loyalty, a fact seen also in Richardson, where Oucanasta rescues Madeleine de Haldimar and in Wau-Nan-Gee, where the title character does all he can to save Ronayne and Maria.

Perhaps because of the pervasive feeling of white supremacy during the nineteenth century, the assistance given by the Indians is mostly physical: either a rescue from imminent death, or a demonstration of practical skills from which an intelligent white man cannot help but learn. Even though the Indian is depicted often as a sentimentally moral person, he is rarely seen criticizing the white protagonist or

offering him moral advice. (Bellegarde does glare at de Courcy when the young officer plies the Indian paddlers with too much wine, an action which eventually results in the canoe's capsizing. Similarly, the conventionally athletic, genteel-looking, taciturn, quick, and intelligent Ohguesse, a minor character in Ingraham's Quebec and New York (1843), is a skillful carriage driver and is shrewdly critical of his white passengers' chattering during a chase across the frozen Chaudière.<sup>39)</sup>

With the twentieth century further variations occur, although many writers still use the conventional life-debt as a plot contrivance: Wolf Runner and his son in W. A. Fraser's Blood Lilies (1903) help Malcolm, the Scots protagonist, to win his dog-sled race after he found them lost in a blizzard. Since they had originally been bribed to mislead Malcolm, their debt of gratitude is doubled; and one or the other shows up at crucial times throughout the rest of the narrative, with the lad saving the show at the end. Similarly, Copperhead's son in Connor's Patrol of the Sun Dance Trail remains loyal to the Camerons in spite of his father's treachery. Even as late as 1946 this figure re-emerges as Noah Teaboy in Charles Clay's formula adventure romance Muskrat Man.

But the life-debt eventually becomes less of a plot crutch, and writers rediscover the Indian who is loyal because he wants to be. Such a one is Nika, the extremely idealized servant to La Salle in Gilbert Parker's The Power and the Glory (1925). His fidelity and

<sup>39</sup> [J. H. Ingraham], Quebec and New York, 2nd ed. (London: A. K. Newman, 1843), I, 224-26.



intuition save La Salle's life on several occasions, and La Salle learns to rely on his judgment: "Nika had instincts, and these were all-important";<sup>40</sup> he "was a good judge of devotion" (p. 123); and "there was between these two a perfect respect" (p. 122). Even near the end, the men who kill La Salle must first get rid of Nika, who senses tragedy near. All the same, in spite of the large role he plays, Nika is really a two-dimensional character, a guide to human nature as well as wild nature and the embodiment of all the intuitive virtues of the natural man.

With the flourishing of realistic literature, in the 1930's and 1940's especially, writers are less inclined to idealize the Indian companion. Philip Child in Village of Souls (1933) even creates two that are the opposite of ideal: Titange, Jornay's ironically named companion, is depicted as a violent and treacherous man, a thoroughly vicious half-breed; and Joseph Membertou (the servant to a friend of Jornay's) is a man with an expedient sense of loyalty and no pride, although he is never violent or treacherous.<sup>41</sup> Less melodramatic, Kinochas in Campbell's Thorn-Apple Tree (1942) may be a dependable fur-trading partner to Michael Ross and faithfully nurse him through the small pox, but he wastes no tears or sentiment over the fate of his former sweetheart. Will Bird also depicts a realistic friendship in Here Stays Good Yorkshire (1945) between Launcelot Crabtree and Joe

<sup>40</sup> Gilbert Parker, The Power and the Glory (Toronto: Copp Clark, 1925), p. 80.

<sup>41</sup> Child, pp. 133-34.

Paul, the Micmac who teaches him to hunt. The relationship is in no way idealized; it is a logical outcome of Launcelot's personality; and it is a good, honest relationship that serves to balance the dishonest, unhealthy one between Tristram (his older brother) and the Indians. A female version occurs in Bennett's A Straw in the Wind (1958), where the half-breed Jeanne very conventionally assists her French cousin Isabelle to escape from a besieged fort and later find shelter. Her character is modified when she comes close to killing their mutual enemy in a fit of primitive passion.

Gradually through the twentieth century the figure of the Indian mentor becomes more important. An early example is Lone Eagle in Hodgson's Lion and Lily (1935). A two-dimensional character, he appears at three critical points in the hero's career, always with a little sermon, quite atypical of the conventionally taciturn Indian: e.g. "You will do well to ride that tongue of yours on a curb, John Dieudon. Have you not heard our Indian proverb--'You are master of the silence but the speech is master of you.'"<sup>42</sup> He is a mechanical figure, a deus ex machina, about whom nothing rings true. He marks a strong contrast to Niksista, Crowfoot's aunt in Sluman's Blackfoot Crossing, a credible character whose role is integrated into the central conflict: "she was one of those powerful and unusual women who sometimes appeared among the prairie tribes, approximating in time the status of a medicine man."<sup>43</sup> She is the logical person to school the Sioux half-breed Tahnea

<sup>42</sup> John C. J. Hodgson, Lion and Lily (Montreal: Renouf, 1935), p. 50.

<sup>43</sup> Norma Sluman, Blackfoot Crossing (Toronto: Ryerson, 1959), p. 92.

(and the reader) in the female dress and manners of the Blackfeet.

But with the literature of the 1970's appears the most interesting and best developed version of the Indian companion and tutor. Alan Fry's Come a Long Journey (1971) describes a hunting trip down the Yukon River from Whitehorse to Dawson and is ornamented by stories told by Dave, an old Yukon Indian, to his white companion, the narrator. The white is no novice to the North; he is an experienced outdoorsman and familiar with Indian ways. But he is highly sensitive to the subtleties of his relationship with old Dave, whom he likes and admires; it is important to him that he be accepted completely, in no way play the cheechako. The slight plot of the framing story concerns the various tests of manhood and self-sufficiency which the narrator must undergo, until on the last page the two men unaffectedly and sincerely refer to each other as "brother." At all times the narrator is aware of his tenuous acceptance by the North and its Indian personification, Dave. And Fry completely avoids the temptation to sentimentalize.

As a man adept in the traditional skills of his people, Dave has been happy to stay with the old ways. He is an exceptional hunter and his wife an exceptional woman in her domestic skills. He is an exemplary guide and a good friend, whose weakest character trait (in keeping with Fry's observation of the general Indian character) is an inability to assert himself and say no forcibly. It is a failing which nearly cost Dave his life as a young man and which the narrator comments on:

If you don't know the people you might not understand that. They are the most easy-going people in the world. They'll say yes when they really think no, just to get along. . . . That's the way it would go, trying to have Dave make a

decision or assert himself in some way. And yet here was a man who'd been making useful decisions all his life. He'd never have survived otherwise.<sup>44</sup>

Such a passage is typical of the reflexions on Dave's character throughout the book. They prevent the relationship from ever appearing unnatural or exaggerated.

The white man who survives in the wilds is one who has learned wilderness skills or has been helped by the representative of the wilderness--the Indian. In modern times this wilderness may simply be an Indian reserve or the unconscious part of a man's psyche, as in Mitchell's The Vanishing Point (1973). Here the mentor is Archie Nicotine, the most fully developed comic Indian character in Canadian fiction. His role is explicitly to satirize white civilization; but as he is not immune to its pressures himself, he falls far short of being a Noble Savage in the traditional sense of the word. For years Archie has travelled to the city to get rings and a carburetor for his truck, and just as often he has been jailed for drunkenness instead and been bailed out by Carlyle Sinclair. Archie also shops around for religion, has nodded in on nearly every evangelical denomination, and is currently obsessed with the idea of having Heally Richards, the faith healer, cure old Esau's tuberculosis.

As well, Archie is as talkative at times as Indians are reputedly taciturn. No Indian in Canadian fiction can match Archie's eloquence: on the subject of white abuses he plays a kind of "white man's victim"

<sup>44</sup> Alan Fry, Come a Long Journey (Toronto: Doubleday, 1971), pp. 36-37.

with ease and verbosity, whether the subject be white-faced cattle or his obsessive concern with good white luck and bad red luck. In a way, Archie epitomizes all the irritations and frustrations that Carlyle encounters at Paradise Valley: the Indians' desire to have white advantages without white disadvantages, their drive to earn money for the things they want, but their lack of drive to see a project through. These are persistent frustrations to Carlyle until he finally resigns himself to them--with a little help from Archie.

Herein lies Archie's most serious role in the novel. He is a very practical advisor to the idealizing Carlyle. For example, when the children will not come to school, Archie suggests withholding the benefit checks. When Harold Lefthand fouls Carlyle's water supply, Archie explains that this is Harold's revenge for Carlyle's having forced little Gatine Lefthand to school by the seat of his pants. When Carlyle gets nowhere threatening and arguing with Harold, Archie delivers a swift kick to Harold's crotch and evens up a score of his own. Carlyle reflects on this exhibition of justice:

He suspected he had just been given an important insight. Harold Lefthand did not care at all whether or not Carlyle knew that the horse manure had been deliberately flipped into the water supply. It was enough that there was an evening-up, that Harold had done it, that Harold knew it.<sup>45</sup>

But Archie's most important piece of "justice" where Carlyle is concerned occurs when Archie tells Norman Catface to stop selling Victoria

<sup>45</sup> W. O. Mitchell, The Vanishing Point (Toronto: Macmillan, 1973), p. 176.

and then backs up his demands by slicing the pimp's face from mouth to ear and sending him to the hospital. It is not pretty justice, but it serves its purpose of getting Victoria off the streets, as Carlyle's attitude has been unable to.

But the relationship between Archie and Carlyle works both ways; and, co-incidentally, Archie manages to get his rings and carburetor and his truck working the morning after Carlyle accepts Victoria as a lover. Archie has stopped his whining about white luck and red luck at the same time as Carlyle has come to grips with his own human nature. Archie's final announcement that he will not have to impose on Carlyle for a ride any more, can be read two ways: Archie no longer needs to be dependent on the white man, and Carlyle no longer needs his garrulous, abrasive mentor. But Archie's most important function was to guide Carlyle and Victoria together, thus ensuring Carlyle Sinclair's survival as a human being. It is a 1970's version of the trek through the woods.

#### 4. The Indian Alien

Whether romantically, or satirically portrayed, the white in Canadian fiction is almost invariably better off for his experiences in the rural Indian environment, for learning Indian ways, or for adopting Indian values. The same cannot be said of Indians who come into the white urban environment. This phenomenon is really a part of the pastoral and Noble Savage conventions: if the aboriginal or natural man is noble because he retains traditional or simple ways, then it follows

that he should be less noble--even ignoble--if he loses or abandons them because of white influence. Certainly, the Indians around the urban centres in Canadian fiction are individually and collectively depicted as "less attractive or in some way or ways inferior to some more remote peoples."<sup>46</sup> As well, the rural Indians living in proximity to white civilization are subject to the same kind of negative depiction. This inversion of the pastoral motif usually results in a form of realism: incidental if the Indians are minor characters, structural if they are major.

With the exception of Frances Brooke in the eighteenth century, who refused to be sentimental about the role of alcohol in the demoralization of the Indian, most early writers of Canadian fiction in the nineteenth century are content to be both guilty and sentimental in their expression of the white man's complicity in the fate of the "poor doomed savage." As we have seen, Douglas Huyghue was especially prone to this kind of posturing, but even Richardson in a non-fictional essay can speak of Indians who "bore too many of the characteristics of semi-civilization, to render them either classical or interesting."<sup>47</sup>

But after Confederation there appears a small but steady number of works which aim at a realistic portrayal of white society and which feature Indians in peripheral roles. Unlike the Indian love stories of the time, which are usually romantically stylized, these minor Indians

<sup>46</sup> E. Palmer Patterson II, The Canadian Indian (Don Mills: Collier-Macmillan, 1972), p. 98.

<sup>47</sup> [John Richardson], "A Trip to Walpole Island and Port Sarnia," The Literary Garland, NS 7 (Jan. 1849), 23.

are usually bluntly depicted as demoralized and even degenerate. For example, in Begg's "Dot It Down" (1871) a crowd gathers outside the walls of Fort Garry to watch "a miserable lot of creatures" who "shuffle" and "drone" through a medicine dance. Mr. Meredith comments on how unlike they are to the Noble Savage of literature, and he recounts the following spectacle to which he was witness:

I saw a villainous-looking old rascal of an Indian parading down the road, in front of the hotel, minus everything but his shirt (and that in tatters); on each side of the old scoundrel was a squaw, both, as I learned, claiming him as their lord and master. The persons of the two women were about as much exposed as the man, and the three, it is needless to say, were hopelessly drunk.<sup>48</sup>

George Wade counters with the conventional romantic contrast, that "the uncivilized Indians who live around the settlement are of a very inferior class to those found generally in the North-West" (p. 90).<sup>49</sup>

A few years later in The Golden Dog (1877) Kirby briefly shows us the half-civilized, wholly demoralized Indians who lounge along the shore of the St. Lawrence.<sup>50</sup> These natives in their resemblance to Conrad's listless coastal Africans exhibit the almost universal fate of the native who has outlived his usefulness to the colonizing power and has entered a period of what Patterson calls "irrelevance" (p. 107).

<sup>48</sup> Alexander Begg, "Dot It Down" (1871; rpt. Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1973), p. 90.

<sup>49</sup> Jane Rolyat echoes Begg's image of the Indian when she depicts Roger McLachlan's "People" in The Lily of Fort Garry (1930) as noble and fine-looking and the Indians around the Fort as a scruffy lot.

<sup>50</sup> William Kirby, The Golden Dog (Toronto: Musson, n.d.), p. 337.



The theme is consistently visible in the contrast between the civilized and uncivilized Indian.

Both the irrelevance and the contrast are to be seen in Herring's In the Pathless West (1904): the intriguing Indianness of Hai-dah's people (the ones Billy lives with) versus the urban deculturization of the Indians who hang around the dance hall and trading post at New Westminster and get drunk. Most of the women are little better than prostitutes, and the white men who take them as wives are contemptuously called "squaw men." Herring does not elaborate on the town Indians, but her picture is obviously quite similar to that described by Begg-- certainly far from a romantic one.

Even the once-heroic Iroquois of the Brantford area fare no better in fiction set in urban Southern Ontario. Mrs. Murchison in Duncan's The Imperialist (1904) airs nearly all the prevailing prejudices of her day on the subject of the local Indians:

You can never trust an Indian. . . . Well do I remember them when you were a little thing, Advena, hanging around the town on a market-day; and the squaws coming at the back door with their tin pails of raspberries to sell, and just knowing English enough to ask a big price for them. But it was on the squaws we depended in those days, or go without raspberry preserves for the winter. Slovenly-looking things they were with their three or four coloured petticoats and their pa-pooes on their backs. And for dirt--!<sup>51</sup>

Nor does Duncan in any way idealize the social function of the Indian men, whose political "relevance" is limited to the number of their

<sup>51</sup> Sara Jeanette Duncan, The Imperialist, introd. Claude Bissell (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1971), p. 242.

votes which can be bought at election time. They are depicted as belonging to a "low" social class, and as being physically barely distinguishable from the rural dwellers around them:

. . . [the Indian] had taken on the signs of civilization at the level which he occupied; the farming community had lent him its look of shrewdness in small bargains and its rakish sophistication in garments, nor could you always assume with certainty, except at Fox County fairs and elections, that he was intoxicated. (p. 242)

At the same time, however, Duncan echoes the "romance of distance" motif when she writes: "out in the wide spaces of the West he still protects his savagery" (p. 243)--an attitude barely commensurate with the reality of the West in 1900.

The theme continues, this time set in historical Nova Scotia. In His Majesty's Yankees (1942), a book full of facts and details about the history and culture of the Micmacs,<sup>52</sup> Raddall depicts the demoralized Micmacs outside Halifax on the eve of the American Revolution and contrasts them with Peter Dekatha and his son François (servants and friends to the narrator), who have traditional skills and reasonable independence. The urbanized Indians are a sorry, dirty, verminous lot:

These were not like our country Indians. A motley crew dressed in the castoff rags of Halifax town; squaws in tattered red or dirty white petticoats, and once-fine gowns that had passed from mistress to maid and from maid to squaw by way of the rag bag; men in old red army coats and grey blankets, all sorts of smallclothes, and one or two in greasy

<sup>52</sup> Interestingly, the ample notes and explanations of Indian ways have almost entirely been eliminated from the later juvenile version of the book, Son of Hawk (1950). The simplification noted earlier about books for youth still seems to prevail in the mid-twentieth century.

buckskins. One or two of the women looked wholesome under the winter's dirt, but without exception the men were bleary-eyed wretches, sodden with the cheap rum of the truck houses. The whole place was an offense to the eyes and the nose, for the slush about the wigwams was foul with the winter's easings of humans and dogs and stank the March wind.<sup>53</sup>

These ragged creatures are later in the book subjected to political pressure to take sides during the Revolution. The buying of loyalty and allies by the British and the Americans is seen as just another aspect of the demoralizing process which began with the French regime and which Raddall portrays again in Roger Sudden.<sup>54</sup>

The first piece of realistic fiction to feature Indians as central characters is Mazo de la Roche's Possession (1923), and one of the sub-themes concerns the deculturized agricultural Indian. Apart from the gossip which Derek's relationship with Fawnie engenders, the Indians meet quite despicable treatment from the average farmer of the area. Grace Jerrold very sweetly says: "we have taken their land, and civilization demoralizes them."<sup>55</sup> And yet the Jerrolds have ploughed under their fruit so that they will not have to be bothered with pickers, Indian or otherwise. Many of the farmers will not hire Indian pickers at all. When Derek's neighbour Chard lures away Solomon and his family with higher pay, he proceeds to work them as if they were machines, not human beings. Later, when Solomon is too ill to work, he is returned

<sup>53</sup> Thomas Raddall, His Majesty's Yankees (Garden City, N.Y. Doubleday, 1942), p. 108.

<sup>54</sup> See above, Chapter II, pp. 106-10.

<sup>55</sup> Mazo de la Roche, Possession (Toronto: Macmillan, 1923), p. 80.

to Grimstone, not in a carriage befitting a human being, but in a fruit wagon like a load of produce. Mrs. Machin too treats Fawnie as sub-human, insulting her to her face and giving her coarse, patched bed-linen when Fawnie comes to stay at Grimstone.

By the 1950's writers of fiction really begin to become interested in the "Indian problem." Almost all of them depict the Indian's struggles in the white community, and few allow romantic resolutions to the plot. Hugh Garner's "One - Two - Three Little Indians" (1952) is an especially poignant example of a good man, an Indian, who is forced to caricature his old traditions and put up with the ignorance and intrusions of white people. As his wife flirts with white men and runs after a shabby version of the white life, Tom is left to nurse his dying infant son. There is considerable realism in the description of the life in the trailer camp and the futility of Big Tom's hitchhiking, but there is implicit allegory in his tuberculosis and his son's death: they can both be seen as the death of the traditional Indian way.

Although considerably less depressing and eventually reaching an optimistic conclusion, Evans's Mist on the River (1954) realistically presents many of the problems the Indian must confront when dealing with the white community. At the fish cannery where the Indians work there are unwritten rules that Indians do not go to the area where the whites live and that whatever whims white management has supersede whatever an Indian might say, however qualified that Indian may be. The Indians are quite clearly mere labourers and second-class citizens. In Prince Rupert, the nearest city, the modern Indian encounters the various attractions of the urban life and usually suffers accordingly. It is a

place where Indian girls almost inevitably end up as prostitutes, where a few drunk and violent Indians ridicule their brothers, the "stick Indians" (a kind of Indian hayseed), where simple and inexperienced Indians crave the shoddy, gaudy shop merchandise that whites ignore, where Indians try to imitate white ways, only to be rejected with racist remarks such as that of cousin Dot's landlady: "you know how it is with them,"<sup>56</sup> or to be jailed like Bert Silas for imitating whites too much and in the wrong way (he has been rolling drunks).

Dot, who left the village for the coastal towns many years earlier, is the main spokesman for the defeated urban Indian point of view. She enumerates the instances of rejection which lead finally to the inevitable:

The Chinks will let you work in their cafés, and the second class hotels will use you for a chambermaid. . . . Did I say use you? The guys that try to paw you round and get you into their rooms! If you're a native girl there is only one thing they want from you and they keep at you till they get it. Then comes the time when you figure you might as well get a little of your own back. And you do. (p. 46)

This is perhaps the most explicit passage about the urbanized Indian in the book. Other abuses are treated more allusively and with restraint, a feature of Evans's basically realistic method. However, one never suspects a lack of commitment to the Indians, even though he does not take a radical stand.<sup>57</sup>

<sup>56</sup> Hubert Evans, Mist on the River (Toronto: Copp Clark, 1954), p. 244.

<sup>57</sup> The sensitivity of Evans's attitude and book is especially notable when one sets it beside Norman Newton's Big Stuffed Hand of

Since racial prejudice is a fundamental reality in the Indian's inability to function in the white community, it is understandably the central theme of much fiction in this section. Although it was treated objectively as long as the Indians were not major characters, the potential for the sentimental or idealized is always present. No writer of fiction has treated the problem of the Indian in the city with the sense of frustration that Ryga communicates in his Ecstasy of Rita Joe, the tragic drama of Vancouver's Indians. Instead, some fiction writers tend to simplify issues by presenting idealized Indian characters who are above reproach; in doing so they weaken the sociological impact of their work.

Two such books are Fred Bodsworth's The Strange One (1959) and Nan Shipley's Return to the River (1963). The essential romance structure in both cases allows a clear-cut confrontation between good Indians and bad white society. The simplification is especially acute in the case of Shipley's Nora Hawk, an obviously superior young person, who goes through an odyssey of unprovoked racial problems in Winnipeg before returning to her river community and a hopeful future with her Métis lover in Northern Manitoba. With Bodsworth's beautiful, intelligent Kanina Beaverskin, the instances of undeserved race prejudice are many,

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Friendship (1969), a romping, improbable satire on nearly everything Canadian, including race prejudice, and set also in Prince Rupert (fictionalized as Port Charles). Here the Indian ghetto, nicknamed Wounded Knee, is treated fairly sentimentally considering the tone of the rest of the book and the reality of the situation it describes. Only the racial snobbery and over-defensiveness of the educated and aristocratic Indians Stanley and Mercy Maxwell allow Indians to receive satirical attack.

but he does keep a sense of proportion by featuring kind and unprejudiced people all along, even though not enough to tip the balance in Kanina's favour. Bodsworth may be accused by some people of overstating the case of white antagonism, but it is probable that radical Indian spokesmen would find it understated. In any case, Bodsworth sets up white prejudice as almost a romance villain against which Kanina is helpless; her problem is resolved, at least temporarily, only when she decides to love Rory.

A rare picture of an Indian who has retained her traditions and integrity in white society is that of Mme. Dey in Cutler's The Last Noble Savage (1967). Mme. Dey is a Caughnawaga woman who has lost her Indian status by marrying a white and who lives in the Laurentian town where the narrator spent his summers as a child. His recollections are sufficiently modified that the real Mrs. Dey becomes virtually a literary ideal:

The woman I write of may well be the last noble savage to be described by an eye-witness. She does not fit into the sociological theories we use to classify our native Indians and make them manageable or, at least, to excuse our inability to manage them. Not only did she survive in the 20th century by her ancient Indian skills and values, but she shamed that world, showing up the hollowness of many of its most dearly-held pretensions about itself.<sup>58</sup>

But behind these conventional Noble Savage attributes is a picture of dispossession and white lack of concern, which the woman survives with strength and good will. She survives in the way Patterson claims is

<sup>58</sup> Ebbitt Cutler, The Last Noble Savage (Montreal: Tundra, 1967), p. 6.

typical of modern Indians: by using just as much of white civilization as suits their real needs and otherwise being true to their Indianness (pp. 169-70). Mme. Dey believes "that if the tribe remained true to its birthright, it would own everything back again" (p. 39). The narrative itself, which is quite sentimental, is more realistic than her faith.

##### 5. The Modern Indian Community

One of the most interesting and varied groups of fictions about Indians, all written within the last twenty-five years, focuses on the modern Indian community and on the very real conflict for the residents between the old and new ways. Earliest of these is Hubert Evans's Mist on the River, which endorses, as W. H. New suggests, "a 1950's white liberal position."<sup>59</sup> The conflict, essentially between the old traditions and the new white ways, is realistically presented through the character of Cy Pitt. In the course of the novel, the reader meets a variety of distinctive people: the Pitt family, old Paul and his granddaughter Miriam, Caleb the lay minister, and Bert Silas, to name the most important. These are Skeena River people, of the same culture which Barbeau describes in The Downfall of Temlaham; and Cy's conflict bears some resemblance to that of Kamalmuk, but without the tragic dimension.

<sup>59</sup> William H. New, Introd., Mist on the River, by Hubert Evans (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1973), p. v.



Although a commoner, Cy is in love with Chief Paul Leget's granddaughter, whom he eventually marries. Paul represents the old ways; he is a prickly, unyielding, aristocratic old man who steadfastly and with some hostility resists white influence on himself, on Miriam, and on the tribe in general. Old Paul would be a Noble Savage, except that he is too recognizably a stubborn old man. While he expresses many important ideas about old values, he is also depicted as interfering, prejudiced, and superstitious. He is a realistic version of the wise old chief figure; but at the same time, unlike many chiefs in modern realistic literature, Paul retains his dignity, sobriety, and authority.

Aside from Miriam, all the traditionalists in the novel are of an older generation, like Cy's widowed mother Melissa and his uncle Matt; so to the conflict is added the realism of the generation gap. Melissa is a strong, good woman who embodies most of the traditional female virtues we have seen elsewhere in fiction about Indians: she is a hard worker, a good provider, and a concerned mother. However, she is suspicious of and prejudiced against many white ways, and Cy is powerless to argue against her prejudices. However, in her kindness and willingness to raise an illegitimate baby, Melissa reveals a human dimension to the traditional Indian ways that is missing among whites; this dimension is part of the kind and loving extended Indian family, with its room for everyone, which is frequently alluded to by modern writers:

. . . she could have told him [Cy] a thing a coast woman at the cannery read out to her from a big city paper--a white baby abandoned by its mother, left on a bench in a park, then locked away from loving arms in a building with other unwanted white babies, like animals on a farm. He went too much by whites, but she could tell him that some of their customs

were beyond human understanding.<sup>60</sup>

Of the five major young characters in the novel, three opt for white civilization and two remain in the village. Of the three who go to the city, only June, Cy's sister, is expected to make a success. She is adaptable and intelligent, likes the amenities of civilization, and has the confidence in herself to make a success of her chosen career. It is this self-confidence which Evans concludes is the essential ingredient for any young Indian's success in life, an ingredient lacking in the characters of Bert and Dot. All the same, neither of them, in spite of their unpleasant experiences in the urban environment, can even consider returning to village life: the door to the garrison is one way, it would appear.

Miriam, on the other hand, belongs in the village and has the native confidence to function properly there, whereas she would never succeed in the towns. She represents one of the forces pulling on Cy, and June represents the other. Cy is attracted by white amenities, by the health care and education of white civilization, and by the broader horizons and seemingly greater freedom which the white life represents. But he is also attracted by the quiet, modest dignity of Miriam and the strong sense of human values that the traditional community represents, although he never can appreciate the extreme conservatism of her grandfather. The optimistic conclusion of the novel suggests that Cy will retain the traditional Indianness of his village while at the same time

<sup>60</sup> Evans, p. 272.

introducing the villagers to the best aspects of white education, health, and economics, as he understands them.<sup>61</sup>

Cy Pitt marries a Chief's granddaughter; Nona Hawk is a Chief's granddaughter; and although there is no official chieftainship among the Ojibway of Wiebe's First and Vital Candle, the most powerful man of the community, Kekekose, is the "patriarch of the Crane family and the only remaining conjurer among the Frozen Lake Ojibway."<sup>62</sup> The central Indian characters are various members of the Crane family, mainly Alex and his cousin Violet. They are all patricians, as is so often the case with Indians in Canadian fiction. Even in realistic literature, there is a tendency to explore the lives of the superior members of the society. Perhaps this is so because, as present or future leaders in their communities, these Indian characters can best exemplify the struggle going on in the community as a whole. Nevertheless, the potential for romance is high when the elite are the central characters. Wiebe, however, faces personal limitations and internal conflicts of his characters. Violet's decision to become a teacher is treated as a commendable goal and her success in adapting white ways to her own culture seems assured. But with Alex, the moderate education he has received is seen as a handicap which has alienated him from the real

<sup>61</sup> Nan Shipley also sees a happy marriage of Indian ways and white technology in her romance Return to the River (1963). Like Evans, Shipley espouses a basically optimistic, liberal attitude in her picture of the struggles of Nona Hawk to find her place in the modern world of postwar Manitoba.

<sup>62</sup> Rudy Wiebe, First and Vital Candle (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1966), p. 120. Rudy Wiebe tells me that he spent some time in a Northern Ontario Indian community while researching this novel.

values of his community and left him without self-confidence. Thus two young people typify a major conflict in the lives of the Indians of the area.

In First and Vital Candle Wiebe deals to some extent with trade, economics and medicine as well as with education and religion (see Chapter III). In the course of the novel he offers insight into the cultural life of the relatively isolated hunting Ojibway of Northern Ontario. We learn of such traditions as the belief that evil spirits can cause illness; we learn of the alienness of the concept of marrying for love: "his [Alex's] ancestors had gotten on very well indeed for their entire buried history without finding the whiteman's idea of love at all necessary either for marriage or continued existence" (p. 220);<sup>63</sup> we also learn of the role of the trading post in the Indians' lives and especially of their need for some sort of consumer education (they tend to become addicted to uneconomical canned food). Thus the decision of the trader, Abe Ross, at the end of the novel, that all whites should withdraw from the economic life of the community, is a new kind of optimism, more in keeping with the belief that Indians can and should be self-sufficient, an idea which begins to flourish after about 1960.<sup>64</sup>

Optimism prevails as well in Craven's I Heard the Owl Call My Name (1967) as the young priest learns his lessons about life and as Keetah returns to Kingcome Inlet, pregnant by Gordon, to marry Jim. In this

<sup>63</sup> In his Great Indian Chiefs, Albert Britt states that Indians "seem to have had no sentimental or romantic ideas about women" (New York: McGraw Hill, 1938), p. 8.

<sup>64</sup> Haycock, pp. 56-89.

way Keetah keeps at least part of Gordon in the village, when it is clear that he will succeed in the white world outside. She will carry on the aristocratic tradition of the Kwatkiutl, at least as far as she and Jim are able, in spite of white education gradually obliterating the old Indian ways--the ceremonial language, the potlatches, and the winter ceremonies.

The village of Kingcome Inlet has a comfortable balance between Christianity and the traditional ways, and Craven uses selfish or exploitive whites only as points of contrast to the sympathetic character of Mark. The focus is on the fine, upright behaviour of Marta Stevens and Mrs. Hudson. None the less, liquor does present a problem, as usual. It is used to gyp Gordon's uncle out of a fine old ceremonial mask, and it is seen as the potential destroyer of Sam. Sam represents the poor and shiftless in Kingcome, descended of the slave class, and always looking for a handout. He is the first person to roll home drunk when legislation allows liquor to be sold to Indians. It is only the strong characters of the village matriarchs and of the priest that keep Sam and his sort in control.

A family out of control, however, is depicted in How a People Die (1970). Here Alan Fry departs radically from the traditional Canadian focus on the most attractive and intelligent members of the Indian community and portrays instead the losers, the people like Sam, who have never contributed to community well-being and who are the despair of all white efforts to better native conditions. The whites in the novel are themselves not paragons of understanding, but fallible people who try hard but are neither great enough nor clear-sighted enough to

provide solutions to complex problems.

Here Fry focuses on the Joseph family, whose squalid lives and sub-human habits make a pig sty seem clean and reasonable. With all the determinism and realism that constitute literary naturalism, Fry documents the repercussions following the death of eleven-month-old Annette Joseph. The thesis which Fry propounds in the novel is early expressed thus:

The trouble . . . was that the simple maxims of survival no longer apply.

Before all the paraphernalia of the modern society--medical science with its phalanx of technology and equipment and doctors and nurses, social welfare agencies to parcel out subsistence and apprehend the victims of neglect, preventive immunology to limit the ravage of disease, government housing to house those who would never have housed themselves--before all that the children of the ineffectual parents survived in such few numbers.

In an animal species living directly in the natural environment, those faulty by the standards of the species will fail to survive long enough to reproduce in any quantity. In the same way it had always come about that the slovenly people, unable to function effectively in the social and economic environment of man's less advanced communities, would bring only a few of their children to survive into adulthood.<sup>65</sup>

The naturalism is very explicit.

To Fry, as to many other writers, the main villain in the Indians' lives is unquestionably liquor, which accounts for some eighty-seven percent of Indian arrests and detentions (p. 25). It is liquor, consumed by all the Joseph family (including the small children), that saps any self-respect they might have and plunges them into an uncaring

<sup>65</sup> Alan Fry, How A People Die (Toronto: Doubleday, 1970), pp. 18-19.

oblivion in which they are unable to take any kind of responsibility for themselves or for others. The baby's mother is given sermons on nutrition, but she blandly ignores them all; no one in the Joseph household can be bothered to empty an over-flowing bucket which serves as a toilet, much less wash it; no one pays enough attention to the baby's cold to see its seriousness; and finally the night little Annette dies, everyone is too drunk to notice or care and leaves the baby to die in a mess of fecal matter barely distinguishable from the crusted dirt and scabs on her little body (pp. 13-33; 114-120).

With the paternalism of welfare and reserve life and the demoralization of liquor no one seems able to help himself. The formulae of the Indian affairs administration are inadequate. The social worker Carl, who for his brief time at Kwatsi has success with a community-run nursery school, claims that the whites must work with, not for the Indians. But even this formula proves inadequate when the villagers never get around to installing the septic tanks they wanted and which the department ordered for them.

The Vancouver press which comes to do background on the story of the neglect charge comes with the express thesis of proving how bad and bungling Indian Affairs administrators are. The press sets up the most sordid situations for their photographs and ignores any suggestion that the Indians should do more for themselves. One reporter cannot even see the point the agent tries to make when he shows her a clean, well-run Indian home that is five years older than the hovels they are photographing and yet which was built to identical specifications (p. 133).

The end of the legal case in the accidental drowning of the baby's

father simply accentuates the feeling of despair. The documentary realism here is the realism of the manure pile grown to the proportions of the mess in the Augean stables, with no Hercules to clean it up. The determinism which seems part of any aggravated social condition becomes the frustrating reality;<sup>66</sup> Fry does not even intimate that a Hercules can come in and fulfill all our wishes. Nor are there any tangible villains, only average people of limited abilities who cannot act with any real effectiveness, because there are no easy answers. But as Sealey and Kirkness justly point out, these situations are not exclusively Indian and are found in white urban slums too (p. 260).

It is difficult to remember that the Joseph family is from the same Tsimshian coastal culture as Stanley and Mercy Maxwell, which is closely related to the up-river Gitkshan cultures of Kamalmuk and Cy Pitt, and is one of several coastal societies described by Emily Carr in Klee Wyck. Part of the difference lies in the different social level portrayed. Melissa Pitt is more like the clean, cheerful woman who is ignored by the journalist in Fry's novel; she bears no resemblance to the stupid, slovenly, self-indulgent Eliza Joseph, although both are real enough people.

Although Paradise Vally Stony Indian Reserve in The Vanishing Point

<sup>66</sup> In "Fish Lake: A Case Study," D. Bruce Sealey shows step by step how the deculturation process developed in one Manitoba Indian community and reduced it from prosperous independence to dependant demoralization and a drain on the public purse (in Indians Without Tepis, eds. D. Bruce Sealey and Verna J. Kirkness [Agincourt, Ont.: Book Society of Canada, 1974], pp. 251-61). Heather Robertson also shows the cause and effect process of demoralization in her Reservations Are for Indians (Toronto: James Lewis and Samuel, 1970).



is chaotic and smelly, it too is vastly different from Kwatsi village in Fry's novel. Mitchell's imagery of excrement and sensory reaction is metaphorical rather than documentary in its intention. Missing from The Vanishing Point is the feeling of frustration and despair found in the Fry novel. Instead, Mitchell presents Indian traditions and natural things versus unnatural things and white technology. Life on the reserve is confusing, often aimless, and chaotic--the people do not have their traditional seasonal occupations as the coast Indians still do--but the white urban society is nightmarish, a great white, anti-septic cover-up of bad breath and the whiteman smell of No-watch-es-nichuh (bullshit). Therefore, in spite of the realistic detail, which is at times repugnant, Mitchell gives the Indians on the reserve the romantic victory: Paradise Valley, Sinclair included, exhibits its moral superiority over Ottawa and its systems.

The same cannot be said of Gordon Hepworth's The Making of a Chief (1974). Hepworth's Indians are clear-cut victims in Atwood's sense of the word. Their victimizer is Ottawa and the whole self-interested bureaucracy of Indian Affairs--really the white world as depicted by Red militants. And although the problems and individual incidents may be real enough, the overall effect is once again that of romantic stylization. There is no clear hero--young Albert is potentially one but never successfully exercises his revolutionary talents--but there is, unfortunately, a clear villain: a nightmare of all that is worst in white administration of Indian affairs, a service which becomes a sinecure for the incompetent and untrustworthy in all fields of administration, religion, medicine, and education. However, it seems

improbable (even if possible) that so many examples of really rotten white people can come together in one place at one time. The whole book is generically confusing; for although it certainly presents vivid, realistic pictures of many Indian concerns of the day--the role of individuals in the community, the substandard housing, the prejudices of local white people, the contempt of the police, the minimal facilities for health care--it also gives the feeling that issues have been oversimplified, even while being treated in depth--quite a paradox.

Most of the same issues appear in W. P. Kinsella's collection of stories Dance Me Outside (1977), told from the point of view of eighteen-year-old Silas Ermineskin, of the Ermineskin Reserve near Hobbema, Alberta. Kinsella, through Silas, presents a picture of an easy-going way of life in which many issues elsewhere treated with righteous indignation (from the point of view of a concerned white) are treated as part of a fabric of life to which the Indians have been raised and become accustomed. The weakness in the stories is the lack of vivid characterization, even though we learn quite a bit about Silas and his friends and family: Frank Fence-post, his best friend; Sadie One-wound, his girl-friend; Illianna, his sister who married a white city businessman; Mad Etta, the enormous medicine woman, etc. Silas himself is literate, intelligent, easy-going, likable, and probably descended from a chief, since his surname is that of the band as a whole.

The stories themselves are basically anecdotal and amusing in spite of the painful information many of them convey: the cases of death, abuse, harrassment, and prejudice--all somehow instigated by an unsympathetic white civilization which ignores justice, the right to

life, and all basic human values, values shown by the Indian family as they accept the orphaned, the retarded, and the illegitimate into their care. Although the Hobbema Indians which Kinsella depicts are probably too down-to-earth to be traditional Noble Savages, they still fulfill the satirical role of pointing out the weaknesses of white society.

Most interesting, however, for students of the Canadian imagination is the variation on the garrison theme in Dance Me Outside. Earlier books deal with the image: in Mist on the River, Paul Leget is constantly seen fencing himself in; then in The Vanishing Point there is a mutual breakdown of garrisons in the resolution as both Archie and Carlyle learn to cope with one another's culture; and in several works Indians are seen retreating behind an enigmatic wall of silence, their only protection against the verbal gymnastics of white people. But in Dance Me Outside Kinsella has depicted the reserve as a garrison, a real and modern version of fortified Quebec or Detroit. Only people who can conform are really free on the reserve. But the garrison image is explicitly physical when the Indians tear up the culverts of the road leading to the reserve so that the police, or any "white savages" for that matter, cannot come in easily and fugitives have time to make good their escape or alibis.

Of all the four themes discussed in this thesis, the Indian in the community is the theme which is most frequently treated realistically, sometimes in form, almost always in detail. However, the small group of early descriptions in fiction of Indian communities virtually

untouched by white ways are almost universally idealized and present an organized, ceremonial, and religious culture aware of its close links with the natural world; in these works there is little or no reference to the more unpleasant features of everyday life. For the exigencies of plot there is often a villain or would-be villain, usually a strong, unworthy person motivated by jealousy or lust for power. The picture is stylized; the chief characters are universally aristocratic; the message is of an idyllic, self-contained, worthy society--virtually a Golden Age. The realism where it occurs is ornamental, as in medieval romance, or anthropological.

This high degree of stylization also applies to the figure of the white man's Indian guide, companion, and teacher. Such characters are frequently depicted as having a closer relationship with nature than the white man has, and consequently as being less susceptible to or distracted by the deceptions of the white world, less complicated by the appetites and failings of the civilized world. Along with the idealized pre-contact community, the guide and mentor character is the subject which most often receives romantic or conventional treatment, and one of the most durable conventions is that of Indian loyalty because of a life-debt. By the mid-twentieth century, however, literary taste dictated a modification of the type to allow some darker and weaker aspects of character to be portrayed; and in more recent times the Indian mentor--for example, Archie Nicotine--becomes an agent of satirical attack on white society, often fulfilling an essentially romantic function in the plot while at the same time remaining a recognizable and even humorous modern Indian.

Realism is the dominant mode in the depiction of the Indian who has come in contact with the white world or whose community has been adversely affected by the white world. The central issue usually concerns the struggles of Indians to retain their identity when tempted by the values and artifacts of white civilization. The only exceptions are a few early depictions of communities which have not been able to survive the onslaught of white civilization. Of the three narratives concerning the demise of the Beothuks, all are, fittingly, tragic and elegiac in tone. However, the two earliest (1847 and 1925) rely on romantic literary formulae to a degree which is often inappropriate, whereas the third (1973) assiduously avoids such devices and tries to reconstruct a conflict from the facts available. Similarly, McDowell and others writing about the downfall of Huronia focus on some of the more unpleasant aspects of Huron village life, probably to indicate some degree of Indian responsibility in the cultural decline rather than romantically laying all the blame at the feet of white men. Only The Wabeno Feast is more difficult to label, as Drew makes a vivid contrast between the idealized natural Indian of the eighteenth-century frontier, the corrupted settlement Indian of the same period, and the derelict Indian of the late twentieth century, after the imagined industrial holocaust. For Drew the future is even bleaker than the present, and the seeds of destruction were sown centuries ago.

The demoralized urban Indian was often present or implied as a contrast to the conventional Noble Savage in romantic fiction. This contrast is also present in realistic fiction, but the focus is placed instead on the demoralized urban Indian while the idealized, unspoiled

Indian is merely alluded to. Beginning with a minor position in the novels and socially oriented romances of the late nineteenth century, this figure continues to appear in some historical fiction and finally becomes central to the conflict in some of the few true novels on the subject of Indians, such as Possession and Mist on the River. All the same, one is constantly aware of a romantic ideal which has existed or which may still exist away from the demoralization of white men.

This essentially romantic contrast between the traditional and the modern forms one side of a conflict fundamental to depictions of the modern Indian community, but most writers try to suggest a compromise between the old and new ways. Even here, though, in spite of the realistic emphasis on fact, disappointment, concession, and indecisiveness, there is a romantic note of optimism in that many of the authors focus on the best aspects of the Indian world (kindness, integrity, justice) through a depiction of the elite of that society--the aristocrats in the case of Pacific tribes, and the chiefs and community leaders in others. By depicting such individuals and focusing on their intelligent and sensitive attempts to preserve their culture while making adjustments to the rapid changes of twentieth-century society, the authors are approaching the conventions of the Noble Savage and the ideal of the pastoral. However, in the absence of an unambiguously happy resolution to the conflict, the works remain basically realistic. A few modifications do exist: The Vanishing Point, for example, is much closer to being a conventional pastoral romance, in spite of its plentiful social realism; The Making of a Chief is generically mixed between the almost gothic romance and the sociological novel; and How a People

Die is the single example we have of that special version of realism known as naturalism: "an emphatic and explicit philosophical position taken by some realists, showing man caught in a net from which there can be no escape and degenerating under these circumstances; that is, it is pessimistic materialistic determinism."<sup>67</sup>

If one turns to recent non-fiction about modern Indian conditions, one finds a strong similarity between it and the fiction just discussed. One can only conclude that current fiction writers have been conscientious in their efforts to present a faithful picture of the contemporary Indian scene. However, literary tradition exerts as much pressure as contemporary actuality, and so one finds a persistent tendency among writers to dip back into the formulae and archetypes which have proved effective over the years and thus to depict as attractively as possible the lives of the best Indian people, for whom there is a future of dignity, self-esteem and cultural confidence.

<sup>67</sup> George J. Becker, Introd., Documents of Modern Literary Realism (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1963), p. 35.

## Chapter VI

### Conclusion

It is obvious that most of the writers whose fiction is reviewed in this dissertation have strong feelings on the subject of native Indians, and that except for a small group around the turn of the present century, the majority are sympathetically disposed to the Indian people, try to depict them in a favourable way, and blame white civilization for destructive interference. But the sympathetic writers do not categorically say that all Indians are good; they often depict individuals, factions, or tribes whose behaviour is less than desirable--sometimes even downright nasty. Of the handful of writers who are fundamentally antagonistic to Indians, most have passed into literary oblivion. Apart from the purely literary weaknesses of most of their books, it would seem that the Canadian reader no longer likes to see Indians castigated in print.

Broadly, most of the popular social attitudes of whites towards Indians over the years are reflected in the fiction of the corresponding period. After an initial fascination with the exotic and alien appearance of the North American Wild Man and his wild habitat, seen in such works as The History of Emily Montague and the journals of traders and explorers, whites began to tame them both, supplanting the nomadic, pagan Indian way with the settled, Christian white way. The fact that many Indians did not or could not adjust was cause for regret; and although early nineteenth-century works such as Wacousta and Bellegarde retained a certain sense of the dilemmas of the situation, by the late



nineteenth century a kind of Darwinian sense of the "poor doomed savage" prevailed. The great irony in fiction here lies in the fact that the writer who deplores the adverse effects of white civilization on Indians normally presents a white protagonist who is aided by a sympathetic Indian. All the works of the 1840's and 1850's, including those by John Richardson, feature this element of plot and character; and all but a few during the last four decades of the century do the same. Thus, intentionally or not, writers depict the Indian as instrumental in his own decline.

However, Victorian writers seem to have been oblivious to this irony. The missionary and imperial zeal of the period may have resulted in many sharing the attitude of Robert Louis Stevenson's child speaker in A Child's Garden of Verses (1885):

Little Indian, Sioux and Crow  
Little frosty Eskimo  
Little Turk and Japaneese  
Oh don't you wish that you were me.

Thus, however fascinating the Indian may have appeared, the reader was left with the comfortable confirmation that civilization was preferable. The Victorian ideas of progress, industrialization, and the perfectibility of man, together with the new Darwinian concept of evolution, could not help but produce the belief that the white European was the epitome of civilization and that he must assume the burden of raising primitive people to his level. It was widely believed that those Indians who survived the culture shock and white man's diseases would become "red-skinned whites," would live in the white way, and that the Indian would

gradually disappear as a cultural entity. The notion lasted even into the 1920's in fiction and is particularly visible in the writings of Gilbert Parker, John MacLean, and Ralph Connor. Lali Armour of Parker's Translation of a Savage becomes a cultured English gentlewoman for whom return to Indian ways is impossible; MacLean's genial Yorkshireman in "Akspine" becomes the natural leader of his adopted band and educates them to white ways; and Onawata in Connor's Gaspards of Pine Croft denies her Chipewyan heritage to become the Christian, educated wife to a white man. Similarly, half-breeds such as Haliburton's Jessie and Begg's Nina Stone are seen as "improving" themselves through gradual assimilation into the white world. In addition, the central position of religion in English colonial societies of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries made the suppression of pagan ways, whether personal or communal, extremely important. All the same, it was believed that the converted Indian could eventually take his place in normal white society and that even marriage between a converted Indian and a white person was within the realm of acceptable possibility.

Although an expression of white guilt frequently accompanied depictions of the Indian who could not survive, for example Wanda in An Algonquin Maiden, there was a fundamental assumption that this cultural death was inevitable. It was not until the 1920's that a humanitarian element really began to modify the passive acceptance of the plight of the Indians. As early as 1923 Mazo de la Roche dealt perceptively with racial prejudice and the debased condition of the rural Ontario Indian in Possession, and a few years later Marius Barbeau showed the tragic consequences of a misplaced white supremacist attitude in The Downfall

of Temlaham. From the 1930's through to the 1960's writers increasingly focused on the problems involved in the Indian situation. For by this time it was clear that Indians had by no means died off or been assimilated, and had instead become second-rate, both in their own and white cultural terms. In historical fiction of this period Rolyat and McDowell deal with the shortcomings of religion, Raddall with political exploitation, and Bird and Shipley with personal prejudice. In contemporary fiction Bodsworth, Evans, and Wiebe try to propose compromise solutions to the problems of white-Indian relations by advocating a marriage of the best of both ways as a means of creating the best kind of life for Indians within white society. The guilt is still present--it is rarely absent from sensitive Canadian fiction--but these writers confront the realities of the Indian situation, attack unworthy whites and their institutions, and try to find solutions.

But by the 1960's there began to emerge a widespread interest throughout the English-speaking world in the plight of dispossessed peoples in general; and members of these repressed groups became active spokesmen for equality and civil rights, always supported by groups of concerned whites. The flourishing of interest in native peoples coincided with the back-to-the-land and ecology movements, so that the rape of the land and the dispossession of the Indian became almost inseparable in the minds of many fiction writers of the past twenty years. Also, as religion and social conventions played a decreasingly important part in the lives of Canadians, the Indian began to receive not only less criticism for not being like a middle class white man, but greater praise for being an Indian and for asserting his rights. Increasingly,

Indian poets and commentators became visible, and the early 1970's saw an unprecedented flowering of fiction featuring Indian characters--seven in 1973 alone.<sup>1</sup> In many cases the Indian is depicted as an essential link between the white man and nature--including human nature. In others, such as Riverrun and The Temptations of Big Bear, the authors depict the demise of certain Indian cultures.

But social trends and attitudes are secondary to the formal demands of literary structures and the emotional exigencies of cultural archetypes, both of which exert pressure on the several topics which occur. It is quite clear that romance as a genre dominates the subject of the Indian in Canadian fiction, and that romantic conventions often influence or modify the relatively few true novels. If one remembers that the novel deals with or mirrors the kind of people we (i.e. mostly middle-class whites) know and the kind of society with which we are familiar, then it is logical that fiction dealing with Indians will have some of the appeal of the alien or exotic. To a white person Indians are different: they are of a different race; most of them look different; and they have different cultural traditions. As well, for many people the word Indian still means the "wild Indian" of the frontier, a being considerably more romantic than the pioneering forebears that they idealize, and certainly more romantic than the reserve Indians who come to town to shop. The realism which one associates with the novel is consequently quite rare and occurs with few exceptions in the depiction of social interaction. The anatomy of a society, with

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix.

a rational sense of cause and effect and an absence of clear heroes and villains, is seen in the few novels we have in which Indians are central characters: e.g. the novels of Wiebe, Fry's Come a Long Journey and How a People Die, Evans's Mist on the River, Niven's The Flying Years, Raddall's Roger Sudden, and de la Roche's Possession. But even these last two possess the subjective dimension which characterizes nearly all Canadian fiction about Indians. The Indian's darker skin and apparent closeness to nature have almost always inspired the white man with basic subjective responses such as envy and fear and guilt rather than with more rational, objective attitudes.

On the other hand, a sizable group of romances tends to discuss social problems in the course of the narrative. The authors are obviously concerned about problems of prejudice and adjustment and dispossession in the relationship between Indians and whites, and they try to approach the problems in a rational manner. A realistic discussion about whether whites and Indians (or half-breeds) should marry frequently occurs throughout the one hundred and fifty years of romance on the subject. In 1832 Bellegarde realizes that although he loves Mathilda, he will never be considered the social equal of a seigneur's daughter. Throughout the nineteenth century and early twentieth century various characters, mostly along the frontier, marry Indians because both the Indian and white can be considered equals in the particular kind of society which flourishes in remote settlements. The primary criterion seems to be that the Indian be Christianized and that if the white is educated the Indian should also have some schooling. Where a larger social leap is needed, as in Parker's Translation of a Savage

and MacLean's "Akspine," it is necessary for the white or Indian to renounce his own culture completely before adopting the other. The successful bridging of the cultural gap marks these works as romance, and the easy resolutions mark the majority of them as popular romances.

Social problems discussed either seriously or humorously within the framework of conventional pastoral romance also focus on many of the painful realities of Indian-white love relations, and on the whole these are more successful as serious literature. The stylized formality of the late nineteenth-century Algonquin Maiden concludes in a fairly conventional way with a confirmation of the young hero's duty to his upbringing, but with the twentieth century a similar situation is ironically reversed in the pastoral novels Possession and The Vanishing Point and is humorously parodied in Florenca Bay and The Revenge of Annie Charlie. But in spite of the realism and humour in this group of narratives, the structure is ultimately controlled by the traditions of a romantic pastoral archetype.

Realism is also present to a limited extent in works about religion. But with the exception of Wiebe's First and Vital Candle, the realism is not that of the novel, but only a kind of documentary focus within a group of mostly popular romances. One distinctive group is by missionaries, who obviously wish to convert the Indians in their charge but who remain fair and objective about the relative merits of the system their Christianity is replacing. As well, this fiction often has a didactic character, similar to that found in the socially focused popular romances about Indian-white marriages. Further realism is to be found in the documentary foundation of such works as The Champlain

Road and The Sparrow's Fall, where a central feature of the conflict is the adverse effects of incomplete Christian conversion on Indian survival.

The significant presence of realism and realistic features in fiction concerning Indians fighting may well reflect the Canadian reputation for not wanting to take sides. With a few popular romantic exceptions, the historical fiction which treats the frontier period--from the mid-seventeenth century until the 1885 Rebellion--is marked by an awareness of the brutal rather than the heroic side of war and of the rights of both sides in the dispute. From Wacousta, with its detailed reports of both fights and diplomacy, to the elaborate diplomacies of The Temptations of Big Bear, there is a marked emphasis on avoiding war rather than glorifying it. It is possible that the sympathy which distinguishes the majority of Canadian depictions of Indians will not permit the glorification of their historical defeat. Even though some of these writers claim to be writing romance and continue to depict men of great honour and personal courage, the realistic depiction of the ambiguities, indecisiveness, pettiness, and lack of glory in war sets the fiction in a class apart. Interestingly, some of the best historical fiction falls into this category: Wacousta, Village of Souls, The Champlain Road, Roger Sudden, and The Temptations of Big Bear. All display considerable knowledge of the subject on the part of the author, either through personal experience or thorough research; and this extensive knowledge seems to preclude any enthusiastically romantic taking of sides.

Depictions of the relations between Indian and red-coat after the

frontier period also tend to be realistic, in genre as well as mode. Tragedy is the dominant mimetic mode in the depiction of the Indian afoul of the law because he cannot adjust to the new white ways completely--seen as early as 1904 in Duncan Campbell Scott's "Star-blanket," and continuing through to Wiebe's story "Where Is the Voice Coming From?" Except for Scott, writers of fiction about Mountie-Indian conflicts do not depict the white world sympathetically: either there is a tragic dimension to the Indian's failure to cope or a humorous parodying of romance formulae when the Indian wins. The humorous parody usually involves the failure of the police to bring the erring Indian to justice, but here an argument can be made for this "realistic" reversal being a new kind of romance with the traditional pattern merely inverted.

The social orientation of the novel and realism is nowhere more evident than in the general topic of the Indian in the community, particularly where the Indian individually or collectively is seen in conflict with the white community at large. In spite of the idealization of the "unspoiled" Indian, there is nothing noble about the Indian depicted as an urban problem or a helpless ward of the Indian Affairs Department. The element of social documentary is very high in these works and in a majority of them--Mist on the River, First and Vital Candle, and How a People Die--the resolutions in the narratives only partly resolve the conflicts in the lives of the central characters. All the same, one is as aware in these novels as in the idealized Noble Savage romances, of a better, more traditional way of life which is being or has been displaced. The elegiac element in tragedy is par-



ticularly conducive to this kind of implicit or explicit romanticizing.

Realism, then, is present in many ways in virtually all the socially focused fiction covered in this study. As well, certain kinds of documentation and factual detail serve to enrich or ornament the best romances over the years. However, there are two sorts of romance: the popular kind which serves primarily as relaxation and which presents a soothing kind of social mythology based squarely on the values of the ascendant class; and the kind which "gives us an imaginative perspective on the actual [world]."<sup>2</sup> There is no particular need for popular romance to go beyond the formulae that work on the author's audience; there is no need for accurate first-hand information or subtlety as long as the expectations of the (usually uncritical) reader are met. The formulaic and derivative quality of popular fiction is most notable in magazine short fiction (e.g. in The Literary Garland and The Canadian Magazine), but it is also apparent in certain concentrations of long fiction.

Perhaps the worst concentration lies in fiction from about 1880 to 1920 on the topic of fighting, when some of the least satisfactory portrayals of Indians occur in such works as Collins's two Riel romances, Laut's Lords of the North, Roberts's Forge in the Forest, Mackie's Rising of the Red Man, and Hayes's "Aweena". Even Connor must share some of the criticism, although his works are redeemed somewhat by his gift for storytelling. To a lesser extent fiction of the same

<sup>2</sup> Northrop Frye, Conclusion, Literary History of Canada, ed. Carl F. Klinck (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1965), pp. 837-38.

period on the topic of religion, such as Herring's In the Pathless West and some of Fraser's stories, suffer from the popular taste for melodramatic formulae.

There are two possible explanations for this unimaginative and unsatisfactory fiction. First, the unsettled and frontier society of the time lacked the stability needed for realistic literature of the English or European sort. The slick romance that pacifies its readers is bound to flourish when a new system is garrisoning itself and cannot afford to examine itself objectively. Without new models of romance to vitalize the genre, decadence is almost certain to set in. A second reason may lie in a fundamental decline in real interest in the Indian as a subject of fiction. As Wilfred Campbell writes in 1907 about the Six Nations reserve near Brantford: "whatever part the Indian played in the history of this continent in the past, he and his tragedy, even his picturesque personality, are no longer of interest even in literature."<sup>3</sup> Although a glance at the Appendix and the list of Indian fiction which appeared between 1898 and 1909 would seem to contradict Campbell's statement, the vast majority of these works are of the derivative type just described. One can thus conclude that the Indian had little intrinsic literary interest.

The other concentration of unsatisfactory portrayals occurs also in the topic of fighting and is made up of accounts concerning the recent frontier written by such authors as Shipley, Sluman, and Iris

<sup>3</sup> Wilfred Campbell, Canada (London: A. and C. Black, 1907), p. 163.

Allan. Here the basic problem seems to be a lack of the literary skill needed to lift the characters out of the historical and biographical facts and create something truly three-dimensional and "living." The works end up being like popular romance with great undigested lumps of history presented in an over-simplified and partisan way. The two-dimensional characters thus created are at odds with the complexity of the real issues handled.

Fortunately, the dominant romance genre in Canadian fiction about Indians has many satisfactory examples of the form and these exhibit various of the durable conventions of Western European literary practice. The most immediately and obviously important conventions are those associated with primitivism. Although aspects of primitive idealization pervade all Canadian fiction to some degree--either explicitly stated or implied by contrast--certain topics attract more idealization than others.

One of the most notable is the Edenesque imagery which colours the depictions of the unspoiled Indian community. These essentially emotional portraits of the free, natural community, unhampered by the excess baggage of modern living and uncorrupted by the goals of materialism, reflect the enviable face of the Wild Man. Such Indian communities are seen as the epitome of mankind at an earlier, simpler, and worthier stage of cultural development. The most sentimental versions are to be found in the idealized depictions written during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, most notably in Huyghue's Nomades of the West, Lighthall's Master of Life, and McDougall's "Wa-pee Moos-tooch," with the last presenting a picture extremely close to

Rousseau's concept of the ideal communal primitive. The idealization in these works ignores the unpleasantness of life--dirt, disease, hunger--unless one counts war, which was, of course, a more acceptable pursuit before 1914 than after.

Even when modern writers portray the adverse effects of white influence on modern Indian communities and realistically describe the tuberculosis, the poor sanitation, and the drunkenness, they often still work from the premises of romantic primitivism. This is seen partly in the continued focus on the leaders and chiefs in the Indian village: the paragons who appreciate and continue a valuable tradition. However, the focus changes from an idealization of the physical community at large to an idealization of individual social virtues: uncritical family love, real justice, and the rejection of materialism. These virtues are variously apparent in such narratives as Mist on the River, I Heard the Owl Call My Name, Dance Me Outside, and The Vanishing Point. The hard primitivism found in the need to survive the elements is translated in modern times into the need to survive white aggression. It is at this point that the Indian on his reserve is shown garrisoning his traditional values against the intrusions of the "white savages," as they are occasionally termed. Only Fry and, to a lesser extent, Gordon Hepworth, depict so much sordid reality that there is little room for optimism that traditional Indian values will re-assert themselves. However, in the pictures of demoralized urban Indians, even where the topic is incidental to the main action of the narrative, there is always a stated contrast between these Indians and their unspoiled counterparts somewhere else--either in former times or more remote places.

Other topics connected with the traditional community are also subject to almost the same degree of idealization. Thus the fighting skills and religious practices are also praised so long as these are part of a generally harmonious community such as those discussed above. Fighting may not be everyone's ideal of social behaviour, but when it is seen as an essential aspect of social survival or personal prestige, it is not criticized. Similarly, as long as the traditional shaman works for the benefit of his people or when the traditional community accepts the milder, simpler forms of Christianity, the same degree of blissful harmony prevails as in the totally pre-contact community. The idealized primitive, then, seems almost as much a part of our literary baggage as Adam and Eve; only for the Indian, the serpent usually has a white face and seduces with liquor and money.

The few Indian "serpents" that disrupt the serenity of the primitive community are usually individuals in a position of authority who misuse their power. Most often these characters are medicine men who create a religious conflict of romantic proportions and who use their rather extensive powers to deceive and corrupt rather than help and heal. The result is very definitely a form of gothic romance in which a perverted or self-seeking medicine man produces a series of events based on superstition, horror, and bloodshed. At times the conflict is specifically between shamanism and Christianity (as in Huldowget and "The Home-Coming of the Nakannies"), but at others it concerns the self-seeking abuse of power by a rather weak individual in an otherwise idealized primitive community (whose Noble Savage virtues are very like simple, basic Christian virtues), as The Master of Life, The Nomades of

the West, and In the Pathless West. One motif which occurs in this topic (and which extends to the topic of the fighting Indian in a work like Wau-Nan-Gee) is that of the dangerous--even satanic--outsider: e.g. Caleb Thompson, Kwa-kewlth, and Pee-to-tum. In any case, the idealized primitive community is usually threatened by a malevolent outsider of some sort, or by a weak insider resisting benevolent outside powers which threaten his authority. The genre is exclusively romance, the tone frequently gothic.

These dark romantic antagonists are partly a result of a fear for the white presence in the wilderness, in part an expression of the melodramatic tastes of the period in which they were written. But as Wild Men threatening the fragile structures of civilization, their literary roots go back to ancient times. These may be the dark creatures of caves and the underworld translated into Lighthall's Hatiria, the False Face chief; they may be practitioners of the black arts. The dark-skinned person can easily be made to symbolize the dark parts of the human spirit, to which it is spiritual death to yield.

However, such negative stylization is far less common than idealization; and even more pervasive than the idealization of the Indian community is that of the individual Indian. Most specifically he appears as the friend, guide, or mentor of a white man. He may be a wise old chief, but more likely he is young, a contemporary of the white protagonist, and appears in two specific roles: as a battle ally in times of war and as a trusted friend and wilderness guide. In the fighting theme the Indian's tracking skills and familiarity with the terrain are required by a white man, as in Wacousta, the romances of

Huyghue, and Hemlock. The Indian's special knowledge of the wilderness is a boon offered to a worthy white person. Even Bellegarde's stopping his fellow Indians from scalping the fallen Americans saves Eustace from severe punishment when he is taken prisoner; and Wau-nan-gee tries his noble best for Maria and Ronayne. From the nineteenth century on, the idealized companion continues to appear: through Parker's shrewd Nika, who saves La Salle many times; to Clay's loyal Noah Teaboy, whose Indian friends help the white man succeed in his wild fur farming; to François, who is David Strang's loyal second. A wise old chief like White Eagle also continues the policy of providing useful advice, a policy seen as early as Winnebeg, who tried in vain to advise the commander of Fort Dearborn not to evacuate.

One of the most interesting features of the whole topic of Indians is the metaphorical dimension of the relationship between individual white and Indian characters and the gradual changes in the way these stylized and metaphorical elements are presented. The Indian companion who is of the same sex as the white protagonist or in a "parental" position not only provides the white person with practical assistance; but seems to provide him with a vital link to the natural world through a form of education which will ensure his survival in the dark wilderness. And only worthy whites earn this loyalty, either through inherent goodness or by means of benevolent acts to the Indian in question. Most of these Indians are conventionally portrayed as Noble Savages, regal of bearing, taciturn, spiritual. But even the garrulous, often-drunk, stubborn Archie Nicotine functions as a modern variant of this Noble Savage and supervises the education of Carlyle Sinclair to the

wilderness or dark side of his own personality.

The Indian as the representative of the dark side of human experience is an important metaphorical application of the Noble Savage in modern times and is particularly apparent in the topic of love. In the historical fiction in which a man is saved by his love for or commitment to an Indian woman, the Indians are fairly traditional in their beauty, sensitivity, and relationship to a chief: roughly the same qualities that the nineteenth-century Noble Savage woman possesses. But there is a theme hinted at as early as Wacousta that a sexual liaison with an Indian constitutes a form of real connection to the wilderness and is the key to the survival of the white protagonist. Over and over in historical fiction of the twentieth century, the successful hero acknowledges the Indian in his life. The few Indian women who are less than conventionally attractive are very definitely part of the realist movement, but their abstract function remains the same.

The variations of the pastoral theme such as that in Possession first show this theme outside of the romance genre; here fertility, the land, and social unacceptability all combine to form the actual and metaphorical Fawnie. Even a comic romp like The Revenge of Annie Charlie depicts a voluptuous primitive character who is not going to destroy her white lover, but instead brings him to a new realization of himself. The same applies to Victoria's relationship with Carlyle in The Vanishing Point. And in all these works one of the central functions of the Noble Savage--that of showing the inadequacies of society--is centrally important. The primitive figure is no longer seen as a frontier threat, but as something of potential value. Admittedly one



might share the cynical view that Noble Savages always live somewhere else, or one might share Margaret Laurence's view expressed in "The Loons" that a lake can sentimentally be given an Indian name once the loons and other wild things are gone.

After about 1960, the freer sexual mores, the many social concerns of the day, together with a renewed interest in non-realistic literary forms, all combined to provide the right conditions for a new flowering of romantic primitivism, often of a very explicit sort. As civilized man saw the horrors to which misused reason and technology had brought his society, he sought relief in spontaneity and nature. Many recent works of fiction, virtually all connected with the theme of love, exhibit a renewed interest in the Noble Savage figure who shrewdly observes the absurdities to which rational systems and alienation from nature have brought mankind. At this point women who form relationships with Indian men also become important: for example, Laurence's Morag, Such's Marian, and Matt. Cohen's Laurel. Their role is as a source of fertility and creativity in a sterile world: the ironic world of the late twentieth century. As Northrop Frye points out, the only direction to go after irony is toward myth; and thus the Indian character increasingly assumes a role, still essentially romantic, which is closer to fertility myth than ever before. The appeal of the dark, the earthy, the non-rational--all those things which were once suppressed or kept in check--are now depicted as vital to human survival, both physically and spiritually. And the non-realistic, at times fabular, forms of contemporary fiction have been particularly adaptable to this kind of depiction, as seen in such works as Beautiful Losers and Gone Indian.

Clearly, the Indian has many roles to play in Canadian fiction, and most of them are derived from long-standing literary tradition combined with first-hand experience or knowledge. A glance at the really unsatisfactory fiction will reveal that romantic formulae, apparently derived exclusively from the author's reading of other fiction, is rather mechanically used for reasons of propaganda or light entertainment. The factual basis for the narrative is often seriously limited--to the point of non-existence in cases like "Aweena" and Fron-tenac and the Maid of the Mist. Similarly, historical fiction which collects facts without applying much in the way of imaginative shaping fares just as poorly.

The successful and/or memorable fictional narratives over the years on the subject of Indians have at least one feature in common: they usually blend both modes, in that the pure romance is either enriched by extensive, accurate factual detail, as in Nomades of the West and "Wa-pee Moos-tooch," or modified by attention to the less idealized, more ambiguous details of human interaction, as in Wacousta and The Champlain Road. As well, the romance formulae in these works go beyond the mere iteration of things readers want to hear and offer instead a deeper insight into the Canadian imagination. Similarly, those works which are basically realistic, such as Possession, Roger Sudden, The Diviners, The Vanishing Point, and The Temptations of Big Bear, also have the subjective dimension that results from the presence of durable literary archetypes, however adjusted they may be to the conflict. Interestingly, some of the really memorable literature is a little different from other works on the same theme. Rudy Wiebe's works habitually

examine the realistic side of a conflict which is normally treated romantically. Others, like An Algonquin Maiden, are memorable for their extremely formal stylization. Our most recent literature, in which the Indian becomes almost a symbolic abstraction, is still too close for a valid collective appraisal. It is possible that much of it may eventually seem merely like 1970's formulaic fiction, catering to the tastes of faded flower children.

What is clear is that the primitive mystique has been with us since our earliest literature and has informed our portrayal of the Indian. But the literary Indian is also the mixed product of our cultural assumptions, our literary fashions, our social attitudes, and our realistic observations. Of course, writers' skills vary, but the better writers produce an Indian character who is a symbol and a person, an archetype and an historical fact. Thus except for a few highly stylized romances and fabulations in which realism is minimal, the bulk of good Canadian fiction about Indians presents a satisfying balance of romance and realism. From The History of Emily Montague to The Burning Wood the good writers do not lose sight of the real Indian in the convention.

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Appendix

Chronological List of Short Titles of Canadian Works Mentioned:

Arranged by Decade

	Adult Long Fiction	Other Works
<u>1760-69</u>		
1766		Robert Rogers, <u>Ponteach</u>
1769	Frances Brooke, <u>The History of Emily Montague</u>	
<u>1770-79</u>	. . . .	. . . .
<u>1780-89</u>	. . . .	
1782		Ensign Prenties, <u>Narrative of a Shipwreck</u> . . . .
<u>1790-99</u>	. . . .	
1795		Samuel Hearne, <u>A Journey From Prince of Wales's Fort</u> . . . .
<u>1800-09</u>	. . . .	
1801		Alexander MacKenzie, <u>Voyages from Montreal</u>
1809		Alexander Henry, <u>Travels and Adventures</u>
<u>1810-19</u>	. . . .	. . . .
<u>1820-29</u>		
1825	Julia Beckwith Hart, <u>Tonnawonte</u>	
1828		John Richardson, <u>Tecumseh</u>
<u>1830-39</u>		
1830		John Galt, "The Hurons"
1831	John Galt, <u>Bogle Corbet</u>	
1832	Bellegarde, the <u>Adopted Indian Boy</u>	Catherine Parr Traill, <u>The Backwoods of Canada</u>

- |                |                                  |   |
|----------------|----------------------------------|---|
| 1832           | John Richardson, <u>Wacousta</u> | Anna Jameson, <u>Winter Studies and</u> |
| 1838           |                                  | <u>Summer Rambles in Canada</u>         |
| 1839           |                                  | "The Indian's Dream"                    |
| <u>1840-49</u> |                                  |   |
| 1840           | John Richardson, <u>The</u>      | Mrs. Child, "The Lone Indian"           |
|                | <u>Canadian Brothers</u>         |   |
| 1842           |                                  | John Richardson, <u>The War of</u>      |
|                |                                  | <u>1812</u>                             |
| 1843           | Ingraham, <u>Quebec and</u>      |   |
|                | <u>New York</u>                  |   |
| 1844           |                                  | Frederick Marryat, <u>The Settlers</u>  |
|                |                                  | <u>in Canada</u>                        |
| 1846           |                                  | E. L. Cushing, "The Indian              |
|                |                                  | Maid"                                   |
| 1847           | Douglas Huyghue, <u>Argimou</u>  |   |
|                | <u>Ottawah</u>                   |   |
| 1848           |                                  | R. M. Ballantyne, <u>Hudson's Bay</u>   |
|                |                                  | Harriet Cheney, "Jacques Car-           |
|                |                                  | tier and the Little Indian Girl"        |
| 1849           |                                  | John Richardson, "A Trip to             |
|                |                                  | Walpole Island"                         |
| <u>1850-59</u> |                                  |   |
| 1850           | Douglas Huyghue, <u>The</u>      |   |
|                | <u>Nomades of the West</u>       |   |
| ?              | John Richardson, <u>Hard-</u>    |   |
|                | <u>scrabble</u>                  |   |
| 1852           | John Richardson, <u>Wau-Nan-</u> | Catherine Parr Traill, <u>The</u>       |
|                | <u>Gee</u>                       | <u>Canadian Crusoes</u>                 |
|                | John Richardson, <u>West-</u>    | Susanna Moodie, <u>Roughing It</u>      |
|                | <u>brook</u>                     | <u>in the Bush</u>                      |
| 1853           |                                  | Susanna Moodie, <u>Life in the</u>      |
|                |                                  | <u>Clearings</u>                        |
| 1855           | T. C. Haliburton, <u>Nature</u>  |   |
|                | <u>and Human Nature</u>          |   |
| 1856           |                                  | R. M. Ballantyne, <u>The Young</u>      |
|                |                                  | <u>Fur Traders</u>                      |
| 1859           |                                  | Paul Kane, <u>Wanderings of an</u>      |
|                |                                  | <u>Artist</u>                           |
| <u>1860-69</u> | . . . .                          | . . . .                                 |
| <u>1870-79</u> |                                  |   |
| 1871           | Alexander Begg, " <u>Dot It</u>  |   |
|                | <u>Down</u> "                    |   |
| 1872           |                                  | W. F. Butler, <u>The Great Lone</u>     |
|                |                                  | <u>Land</u>                             |

- 1877 William Kirby, The Golden Dog
- 1880-89
- 1885 Edmund Collins, The Story of Louis Riel
- 1886 Edmund Collins, Annette the Métis Spy Charles Mair, Tecumseh
- 1887 Mercer Adam and Ethelwyn Wetherald, An Algonquin Maiden
- 1888 Hunter Duvar, De Roberval
- 1890-99
- 1890 Robert Sellar, Hemlock
- 1895 Josette Menard, "An Indian Lover"
- 1896 John MacLean, The Warden of the Plains
- 1898 Blanche MacDonell, Diane of Ville Marie
- Gilbert Parker, The Translation of a Savage
- 1899 Ralph Connor, The Sky Pilot W. A. Fraser, "God and the Pagan" and "The Conversion of Sweet-Grass"
- 1900-09
- 1900 Agnes Laut, Lords of the North W. A. Fraser, "The Home-Coming of the Nakannies"
- 1901 A. J. McLeod, The Notary of Grand Pré Esther Kingsmill, "The Heart of a Red Man"
- 1902 Charles G. D. Roberts, The Forge in the Forest
- 1903 W. A. Fraser, The Blood Lilies W. A. Fraser, "The Medicine-Making of Naskiwis"
- 1904 Frances Herring, In the Pathless West D. C. Scott, "Star-blanket"
- S. J. Duncan, The Imperialist
- John Mackie, The Rising of the Red Man
- 1906 Catherine Hayes, "Aweena" Charles G. D. Roberts, Around the Camp Fire
- 1907 Arthur Heming, Spirit Lake
- 1908 W. D. Lighthall, The Master of Life

- 1908 John McDougall, Wa-pee  
Moos-tooch
- 1909 Gilbert Parker, Northern Lights
- 1910-19
- 1912 Ralph Connor, Corporal  
Cameron Pauline Johnson, Flint and  
Feather
- 1914 Ralph Connor, The Patrol  
of the Sun Trail
- 1916 David Thompson, Travels in  
Western North America [first  
published version]
- 1920-29
- 1923 Ralph Connor, The Gaspards  
of Pine Croft
- 1925 Mazo de la Roche, Possession  
Gilbert Parker, The Power  
and the Glory  
M. Bourchier Sanford, The  
Iroquois Trail
- 1926 B. A. McKelvie, Huldowget
- 1927 Arthur English, The Vanished  
Race W. B. Cameron, The War Trail  
of Big Bear  
Martha Ostenso, Wild Geese Alan Sullivan, Brother Black-  
foot
- L. C. Servos, Frontenac and  
the Maid of the Mist  
A. M. Stephen, The Kingdom  
of the Sun
- 1928 Marius Barbeau, The Down-  
fall of Temlaham Long Lance, Autobiography
- 1929 Ralph Connor, The Runner
- 1930-39
- 1930 Arthur English, Ogygia Constance Skinner, Red Man's  
Luck
- Jane Rolyat, The Lily of  
Fort Garry
- 1933 Philip Child, The Village  
of Souls  
Jane Rolyat, Wilderness  
Walls
- 1935 John Hodgson, Lion and Lily Mary Weekes, Round the Council  
Fires
- Robert Watson, When Christ-  
mas Came to Fort Garry

- 1939 F. D. McDowell, The Champlain Trail  
Howard O'Hagan, Tay John
- 1940-49
- 1940 Frederick Niven, Mine Inheritance E. J. Pratt, Brébeuf and His Brethren
- 1941 Thomas Raddall, His Majesty's Yankees Emily Carr, Klee Wyck
- Alan Sullivan, Three Came to Ville Marie
- 1942 Grace Campbell, Thorn-Apple Tree
- Frederick Niven, The Flying Years
- 1944 Marius Barbeau, Mountain Cloud
- Thomas Raddall, Roger Sudden
- 1945 Will R. Bird, Here Stays Good Yorkshire Robert Gard, Johnny Chinook
- 1946 Charles Clay, Muskrat Man
- 1947 W. H. Robb, Thunderbird D. C. Scott, The Circle of Affection
- 1950-59
- 1950 Thomas Raddall, Son of the Hawk
- 1952 Hugh Garner, "One-Two-Three Little Indians"
- 1954 Hubert Evans, Mist on the River
- 1955 Nan Shipley, Anna and the Indians
- Wallace Stegner, Wolf Willow
- 1957 Will R. Bird, Tristram's Salvation Nan Shipley, Frances and the Crees
- Norma Sluman, Poundmaker
- 1958 E. M. Granger Bennett, A Straw in the Wind
- W. H. Robb, Tecumtha
- 1959 Fred Bodsworth, The Strange One
- Nan Shipley, The Scarlet Lily
- Norma Sluman, Blackfoot Crossing
- Sheila Watson, The Double Hook

1960-69

- 1960 E. M. Granger Bennett, Short of the Glory  
James MacNamee, Florencia Bay
- 1961 Will R. Bird, Despite the Distance
- 1962 Rudy Wiebe, Peace Shall Destroy Many
- 1963 Nan Shipley, Return to the River
- 1964 Margaret Laurence, The Stone Angel
- 1966 Leonard Cohen, Beautiful Losers  
Paul St. Pierre, Breaking Smith's Quarter Horse  
Rudy Wiebe, First and Vital Candle
- 1967 Fred Bodsworth, The Sparrow's Fall Ebbitt Cutler, The Last Noble Savage  
Margaret Craven, I Heard the Owl Call My Name
- 1968 E. G. Perrault, The Kingdom Carver
- 1969 Robert Kroetsch, The Stud-horse Man Iris Allan, White Sioux  
George Clutesi, Potlatch  
Margaret Laurence, The Fire-Dwellers  
Norman Newton, The Big Stuffed Hand of Friendship  
Peter Such, Fallout

1970-77

- 1970 Alan Fry, How a People Die W. Towrie Cutt, On the War Trail of Long Tom
- 1971 Alan Fry, Come a Long Journey Margaret Laurence, "The Loons"  
James MacNamee, Them Damn Canadians Hanged Louis Riel  
George Ryga, The Ecstasy of Rita Joe
- 1972 Margaret Atwood, Surfacing E. Clutton-Brock, Woman of the Paddle Song
- 1973 Wayland Drew, The Wabeno Feast  
Alan Fry, The Revenge of Annie Charlie  
Alexander Knox, Totem Dream  
Robert Kroetsch, Gone Indian

- 1973 W. O. Mitchell, The Vanishing Point  
Peter Such, Riverrun  
Rudy Wiebe, The Temptations of Big Bear
- 1974 Gordon Hepworth, The Making of a Chief  
Margaret Laurence, The Diviners  
Rudy Wiebe, Where Is the Voice Coming From?
- 1975 Matt Cohen, Wooden Hunters  
Robert Kroetsch, Badlands  
David Williams, The Burning Wood
- 1976 Marian Engel, Bear  
Herschel Hardin, The Great Wave of Civilization
- 1977 W. P. Kinsella, Dance Me Outside

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Name of Author: Marjorie Anne Gilbert Retzleff

Department or College: Department of English

Degree: Doctor of Philosophy

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