

TRICKSTERS, HEROES, SHAMANS, AND RITUALISTS
A Cultural Analysis of
Traditional Blackfoot Story-Telling

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ABSTRACT

This thesis considers traditional story-telling among the Blackfoot Indians of Alberta and Montana. It is based primarily, though not exclusively, on the collections of tales made at the turn of the century by George Bird Grinnell and Clark Wissler/David Duvall, which are reassessed in the light of opinions expressed by contemporary story-tellers, tribal historians, and ritualists. I suggest the tales are organised on a principle of "inversion", and that the structure encompassed within the tales relates to Blackfoot considerations of shamans and ritualists. Shamans and ritualists, though both are designated by a term that translates as "medicine men", are presented as opposing forces in Blackfoot culture.

A number of secondary structures are also established which follow the principle of inversion outlined above: there is seen to be an opposition between male and female, between Napi (Trickster) and Natos (Sun), and between chaos (expressed by Napi and the shaman) and order (expressed by Natos and the ritualist). In addition, these structures are presented as having been a consistent element in traditional Blackfoot story-telling since the pre-reservation period and which are still valid today. The nature of this study means only those tales which can be thought of as having a tribal currency are considered: that is, tales of Napi, of Natos and the Star People, and Tales of Ritualistic Origins. It is acknowledged the Blackfoot have numerous other categories of tales of a more personal nature which are not considered in detail here.

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Blackfoot traditions have tended to be ignored or dealt with rather superficially in many popular studies of Plains Indian cultures. This is not because ethnographic material is unavailable but stems from the fact that the Blackfoot never achieved the high "media profile" of tribes such as the Dakota (Sioux), Cheyenne and Arapaho who engaged in direct conflict with the United States during the nineteenth century to prevent white expansion and were accordingly given extensive coverage in the press and military reports of the period. Blackfoot resistance, by comparison, was low key and marked by few major conflicts with whites. They are consequently rarely mentioned in government and military despatches since there were no prolonged campaigns against them. In fact, most disputes were with the fur companies who wished to exploit the resources in Blackfoot territory and such conflicts were decidedly local (Chittenden 1986:838-842; Wissler 1940:105, 108). This is despite the Blackfoot reputation for being the dominant force on the northwestern Plains throughout the nineteenth century, and that they successfully repulsed incursions by other tribes and prevented the establishment of a disruptive white presence in Montana and Alberta until the 1880s. Although the Blackfoot sought to protect resources this was often as a means of ensuring their monopoly over trade in the area. Thus it was only at a late period that significant settlement of their lands took place, and initially the westward movement of settlers had little direct effect on them.

The Blackfoot - due largely to their refusal to be drawn into the broader question of Plains Indian autonomy and resistance - are generally mentioned merely as a "typical" northern Plains tribe. This

conveniently ignores the fact that the Blackfoot never achieved any sense of tribal unity and were only peripheral in the development of a consolidated Plains Indian resistance. The Blackfoot were separate from this, yet continued to reject white influence until their economic base was destroyed (with the destruction of the last remaining herd of northern buffalo) and their population had been dramatically reduced through starvation and exposure to epidemics introduced by Europeans. It was only then that they finally succumbed to imposed Euroamerican authority and moved on to reservations.

Blackfoot story-telling, with which this thesis is specifically concerned, has also suffered from this apparent lack of general interest. Extensive collections of tales were made at the turn of the century by George Bird Grinnell (1892) and Clark Wissler/David Duvall (1908), but the work that has been carried out since then is sporadic and is often incidental to a concern with other issues. In this sense, Blackfoot story-telling has been treated somewhat cursorily and the tales are often grouped together with others that are said to form a characteristic pattern for the northern Plains tribes. Much of this is enshrined in Stith Thompson's *Tales of the North American Indians* (1929) in which he traces themes and motifs back to shared traditions using the Motif-Index of Folk Literature that he developed at Indiana University. Wissler had previously questioned this definition of the Blackfoot as a "typical" northern Plains tribe some twenty years earlier, when he suggested that Blackfoot tales formed a distinct Algonkian language sub-group (1908:12), but his suggestion the Blackfoot should be considered as separate from other northern Plains tribes has largely been ignored.

From long involvement with Native American people and extensive conversations with modern Blackfoot story-tellers and Elders, as well as with shamans, story-tellers, and Elders from other tribes, I have formed the view that Wissler's opinion that the Blackfoot form a separate group is valid and they should not be classified (and thereby dismissed) as a typical northern Plains tribe. Their position as a

distinct Algonkian speaking sub-group has greater significance than this and a study of their story-telling traditions reveals more complex relationships than have previously been realised. It has also become apparent that contemporary renditions of traditional Blackfoot tales follow a structure which has to be differentiated from that of other tribes in or near Blackfoot territory in the nineteenth century, as well as from the tales of neighbouring tribes on lands held under treaty agreements as modern reservations.

At the same time, a modern Pan-Indian movement has tended to obscure tribal differences and enabled intrusive elements to be introduced into current renditions of the tales. This has been particularly true with regard to the stories told by the Siouan speaking neighbours of the Blackfoot, among whom little differentiation is made between modern and traditional versions; but the "authenticity" of such additions is frequently questioned by contemporary Blackfoot story-tellers. The Pan-Indian movements have until recently had relatively little impact on the Blackfoot living in Canada, and a distinction is still made by the Blackfoot between a traditional story and a Pan-Indian story. Contemporary difficulties, such as the Pan-Indian use of narratives to create an "Indian identity" or the use of "authentic" tales as a political medium, do, of course, need to be addressed in assessing the modern view. There are, in addition, disruptions to the structural form of modern tales when compared with earlier versions as well as difficulties in assessing content as a consequence of difference between conservative and progressive factions on the reservations. These points are mentioned and discussed as appropriate.

This thesis nevertheless places a strong emphasis on traditional, rather than Pan-Indian, views and opinions; although use of the term "traditional" is itself problematic. I use the term here in the sense explained to me by a Blackfoot (Northern Piegan) Elder and story-teller as meaning "something true, original, something that follows the way of the old stories". By referring back to a "traditional" outlook and to

the "old ways" the story-tellers are not bemoaning the loss of these values but are, instead, ensuring their continuity and restating their validity and relevance in contemporary Blackfoot society. This challenges Clifford's statement that "naming it 'traditional' implies a rupture" (Clifford & Marcus, 1986:112), and questions the assumptions of some anthropologists and cultural historians that "traditional" cultures equate with "vanishing" or "primitive" cultures. As Clifford notes, "Anthropology [or other forms of cultural interpretation and representation] no longer speaks with automatic authority for others defined as unable to speak for themselves" (Clifford & Marcus, 1986:9). Blackfoot ideas about truth and authenticity are "different from factual truth as we normally understand it" (Southwold, 1979:636), and their concepts of tradition, truth and authenticity are discussed later in the section on *Blackfoot Story-Telling: an Oral Tradition*. I reassess Blackfoot oral traditions in the light of my experiences on the reserves and what my informants have said about the importance of story-telling in contemporary Blackfoot culture and from the manner in which stories are told and utilised in modern Blackfoot society, but do so from a base which references the ethnographic literature and the collections of tales made by Grinnell, Wissler, and others at the turn of the century. I have also collected a few modern versions of Blackfoot tales during visits to the reserves, and those which I refer to in the text are given in the Appendix.

In reviewing Blackfoot story-telling, I am concerned with the way in which the Blackfoot themselves view the function of story-telling as an oral tradition. In this respect I have not fully addressed many of the issues a more literary or textual study might focus upon, although comment is made upon the fact representation of the tales is here in textual form and that the imposition of a "foreign" structure, such as that dictated by the academic requirements of a thesis, must inevitably have a bearing upon and perhaps alter the way in which the tales are perceived and received. I have also made no attempt to distinguish between types of narratives in terms of whether they should be considered as myths, folk-tales, stories, or whatever. The Blackfoot

do not make such distinctions - although they make other distinctions of their own - and I have followed their lead. The problem of classification into "foreign" categories has little, if any, relevance for the Blackfoot story-teller, and it is an underlying principle of this thesis that it should be guided by the "voices" of the story-tellers themselves. The Blackfoot classificatory system is an altogether different one which I investigate in some depth in the section on *Blackfoot Story-Telling: an Oral Tradition*.

There is also some confusion over the identification of principal characters who are mentioned frequently in Blackfoot story-telling sessions. It has been impossible, for example, to establish the precise manner in which the Blackfoot identify with Napi (Trickster), the main figure I discuss in the following pages, since he appears to occupy an anomalous position that can be interpreted in any of a number of different ways. This difficulty is inherent in the tales collected at the turn of the century, as is indicated in comments made by both Grinnell (1892:256-259) and Wissler (1908:9-12) and which I return to later in the sections titled *Napi* and *Tales of Adventure*, as well as prevailing on the Blackfoot reservations today. The difficulty in interpreting Napi and the anomaly he presents appears, in fact, to be a fundamental aspect of his character which provides meaning and significance in a traditional Blackfoot context, and which is inherent in the structural organisation of the tales.

Some comment is needed here on the methodology that has been employed in collecting data and determining significant elements for the analysis which follows. Problems arise in fieldwork relating to story-telling. Story-tellers may, for instance, be reluctant to discuss the context of the story-telling sessions and the deeper meanings or implications of the tales. This is particularly true of stories which have a ritual or sacred content, but applies too to other tales which are related in more informal circumstances. It has not been possible to question informants directly about this, since asking direct questions is considered insulting by the Blackfoot and

demonstrative of a lack of respect. As a consequence, formal interviews involving question and answer sessions with specific informants have generally been ruled out or seen as counter-productive. I am also conscious of the fact that "the degree of understanding will depend on the extent to which the rules and understandings [of politeness, respect, indirection] are shared and [that] members of a particular inside group may communicate at a level which would be lost on an outsider" (Hendry, 1989:630).

Because the reluctance of Blackfoot traditionalists to respond to direct queries has made it generally impossible to utilise the accepted anthropological approach of working with informants via question and answer sessions, much of the information I rely on has been gradually accumulated or derives from information imparted by other means. Some of it has been incidental to other work I have been involved in, and a great deal has resulted from informal conversations that have taken place over a very protracted period of time. It has thus been a gradual process of gathering diverse information and, perhaps of equal or greater importance, of a growing awareness of and involvement with Native American cultures and Native American people that can only be achieved over many years of contact and conversation.

The thesis is organised in the following manner:

I begin with a short history of the Blackfoot tribes since their first contact with Europeans and a description of the problems that faced them when they were placed on reservations immediately before the early collections of tales were made. This is to assist the reader who may have no specialised knowledge of Blackfoot culture; but it also has another purpose, which is to demonstrate that the tales collected at the turn of the century can be considered as reliable indicators of Blackfoot tradition. They were given by story-tellers who wished to leave a permanent record before, as was felt at the time, their traditional stories fell into disuse. Much of the impetus for these collections of tales came from the story-tellers themselves, although

it was fuelled by the emergence of the science of ethnography and the "last chance" philosophies inspired by Franz Boas and his adherents (Clifford & Marcus, 1986:113).

In the second section I discuss the early collections of tales in greater detail and address the problems that arise in making an analysis at so far a remove in time. Nineteenth century views and those of the modern period are, of course, very different; yet the early period is perhaps more "authentic" in the Native view, since it is closer to undisrupted ways of living, than the re-interpretations that have taken place since. This does not imply that there was a "true" culture prior to the turn of the century, nor that there exists a relic of past traditions which acts as a signpost to authenticity. Blackfoot culture has always been in a state of flux and constantly adapting to changing circumstances and demands. There is, nevertheless, a feeling among modern Blackfoot that events at the turn of the century imposed conditions upon them that effectively took control of Blackfoot life out of their own hands and invested it elsewhere in the representatives of church, state, and government authorities. This removal of Blackfoot control was felt particularly through the destruction of their economic base, the move to reservations, and the imposition of Euroamerican educational systems and Western concepts of "progress" through farming. Modern Blackfoot story-tellers therefore look to the pre-reservation period, and to the memories encapsulated in the stories collected at the turn of the century, as representative of a "free" outlook and of beliefs that were untainted by conditions imposed from outside. Significantly, in the contemporary revival of Indian pride and consciousness, modern story-tellers frequently refer back to these collections of tales as being "true" statements of Blackfoot belief and ideology. In this respect it is worth noting, as Kehoe does, that other collections of tales "add little not included in [Wissler and Duvall's] *Mythology of the Blackfoot Indians*" (1995:xxvi). I look particularly at the tales that were collected by George Bird Grinnell (1892) and by Clark Wissler and David Duvall (1908), since these are the major collections from the

period, although the work of other investigators in the Blackfoot area at this time is also discussed.

Reference to the works of Grinnell and Wissler/Duvall needs some further clarification since anthropological and cultural studies take place not only in geographic space, as the fieldworker or participant-observer, but also in time. It is now some 100 years since Grinnell and Wissler collected the texts that form the backbone of this thesis, and much has happened in the interim period. This does not only concern the dramatic and drastic changes in Blackfoot politics, economy, social organisation, and ritual, but also involves changes that lie at the core of anthropological and cultural studies themselves. At the time Grinnell and Wissler collected their tales ethnography was a fledgling science and in competition (and, at times, conflict) with reports being made by adventurer-travellers, military authorities, and by Indian Agents and missionaries. Each of these disparate groups had different aims and objectives in what was then termed the study of "primitive culture", and it is necessary to consider how these different objectives distorted the "voices" of the story-tellers and to what extent the collections can be considered as reliable indicators of a traditional indigenous view. This is explored in the section titled *Sources and their Difficulties*.

In some senses the problems of objectivity faced by Grinnell (as a populariser and reformer) and Wissler (as an academic) are paralleled today: the fieldworker carrying out a government-sponsored project is under pressure to produce a report that will further the aims of the funding body, whereas the researcher attached to a University department and carrying out "impartial" fieldwork is, nevertheless, expected to conform to a particular set of academic criteria that will enhance or ensure his/her status as well as that of the department. These aims and objectives may be far removed from the immediate concerns of indigenous peoples. At the same time it is no longer possible to place oneself at a remove from the "other": Native peoples today are often well informed and highly educated, and anthropological

and cultural studies have become a two-way process. Thus a critical dialogue is established between the observer and the observed in which both are equal participants and where their respective roles are sometimes reversed, rather than the imbalanced observations, or, at least, editorial biases, of "educated" outsiders versus (since this was often an antagonistic or superior stance) the "primitive" subjects of study common in turn of the century records. Informants today may well possess higher degrees and have professional status as University lecturers or professors, and are no longer the "uneducated savages" of Grinnell's time (Introduction, *Blackfoot Lodge Tales*, 1892). As Graburn notes "the descendants of the former anthropological subject peoples are no longer spatially apart or culturally confined" (1995:160).

My third section concentrates on the role of the story-teller and the relationship between story-teller and audience. Much of this stems from conversations with Native American traditionalists among the Blackfoot and other tribes and has, again, been the product of an accumulation of information that has gradually grown during repeated visits to Native American communities and reservations since the late 1970s. However, when I quote an informant in the text the quote is from a member of one of the Blackfoot tribes and not from a member of any other tribal group or community. My understanding of the traditional roles of story-tellers, shamans, and ritualists, and the basis for any comparative comments in the text, nevertheless comes from a broad background and close contacts with members of a number of tribal groups. In this section I also define Blackfoot story-telling as referring to distinct periods in Blackfoot "history": the period when Napi, the Trickster, was active; a period when the monsters were defeated by the Star People; and a period when responsibility to maintain balance and harmony in the world was given to the people through the performance of rituals. These stories form two major groups, or series: Tales of Napi and of Napi's Adventures, and Tales of the Star People and of Ritualistic Origins. It is this classificatory system that the story-tellers adhere to, and it is

essential to follow this if we are to understand the meanings the tales have for the Blackfoot.

Cassirer, in his 1942 lecture *Language and Art* given at Cornell University, stated that the way something is named creates a "fixed center to which ... appearances may be referred ... a new focus of thought" (152), or, as Moore has more succinctly and more recently phrased it, "to name a thing is precisely to give it meaning" (1995:83). In this respect it is significant that the Blackfoot refer specifically to these series of stories as their "history". One of my informants, a respected North Piegan story-teller, in reference to the Napi tales and those of the Star People, stated "Blackfoot history follows a logical progression". Also, "To tell these other stories, local histories of cultural survival and emergence, we need to resist deep-seated habits of mind and systems of authenticity" (Clifford, 1988:246). Thus it is only when these tales are considered as a logical local history rather than a miscellaneous collection of myths that it is possible to understand the significance they have for the Blackfoot today. While this does not preclude other ways of interpreting or analysing the tales, it is my intention throughout this thesis to concentrate on the specific focus brought to them by the Blackfoot and the significance of naming them as historical documents. This challenges the opinion that "given the structure of narrative, stories tend to be stories of origins or of an imaginary experience" (Game, 1991:47) and instead places them in the realm of the "real". As Clifford points out "anthropologists now question the assumption that non-Western (even small-scale 'tribal') peoples are without historical consciousness" (1989:74).

Sections four and five discuss Napi, the Trickster. In section four Napi's character is established and Blackfoot conceptions of the Trickster are discussed. Unlike the Trickster figure of some other Plains tribes, Napi is seen as a mischievous character rather than one who has any deliberate intention to harm others. Also as part of this discussion I introduce the idea that women exercise influence over

Napi, since they have power to modify his actions in both the opening and closing stories of the series (*Order of Life and Death*, Wissler 1908:19-21; *Old Man and Old Woman*, Appendix; *Men and Women Decide to Marry*, Appendix; *The First Marriage*, Wissler 1908:21; *Blackfoot Genesis*, Grinnell 1892:137-144), and I discuss the relationship between Napi (Trickster) and Natos (Sun). The second part, section five, looks more closely at how Napi's character is expressed through the tales of his adventures and the manner in which these are understood by a Blackfoot audience. I then suggest a theoretical pattern for the Napi series which is based on a principle of inversion.

In sections six and seven I discuss the Star People tales and tales of Ritualistic Origins. Although it is difficult to make a clear distinction between the two - due to the fact that some overlapping characteristics appear in various versions of the stories and modern Blackfoot may at times group them together as an oppositional series to the tales of Napi - some important differences are noted: the Star People tales are presented as creating order which makes ritual possible, whereas those of Ritualistic Origins are seen as putting ritual into practice. Section six is therefore concerned primarily with the Star People stories while section seven looks more closely at tales of Ritualistic Origins. Once again the principle of inversion is presented as governing the relationship between these tales and those of Napi: Napi's world is one of chaos and anarchy, the ritual world is one of order and restraint. I suggest further that when "power" is moved from one realm to another there needs to be a mediating force that enables this to happen.

Finally, in section eight, I extend the structures and ideas proposed for story-telling to a consideration of the shaman and the ritualist, claiming that Napi is, effectively, the prototypical shaman and that he stands in direct opposition to the ritualist. By this I suggest that the inversions implicit in story-telling have an application that is much broader and which is also put into practice in other aspects of Blackfoot life. My argument is that there is a

sustained and consistent view which permeates Blackfoot story-telling and is evident in the tales collected at the turn of the century as well as in modern story-telling.

There is, nevertheless, a vast body of Blackfoot tales that has not been considered here. I have concentrated only on those tales that have a "tribal" context, that is those tales which are in general currency or are related to rituals used for tribal benefit. The tales I have not considered are of a more individual nature, and include personal tales of adventure, individual stories referring to the acquisition of personal power in a vision, and tales with a generally restricted distribution. I have also made little comment on the origin tales referring to Warrior Societies, Painted Tipis, or Medicine Shields. These tales constitute an even larger number of stories than are considered here.

While recognising that I may be "privileging" certain categories of tales and ignoring the significance of others, the distinction I make has not been arbitrarily imposed but follows the classificatory system used by Blackfoot story-tellers. Discussions with story-tellers and participation in story-telling sessions has made it abundantly clear that some tales are considered by the Blackfoot to be "tribal" whereas others are "personal". The distinction, in general, rests on a difference between tales that relate to the group and those that refer more specifically to an individual's achievements and responsibilities. Thus Napi tales and those of the Star People are in general currency and can be related by anyone, although, as both Wissler (1908:18) and Maclean (1893:165) point out, there is a tendency for younger people to defer to older narrators as being more knowledgeable and as an indicator of "proper" respect. Other tales, referring to individuals or specific families, are considered to be the "property" of those individuals and families, or are tales relating to the origins of Medicine Bundles which require initiation to confer the right to relate them. While the origin tales of major Medicine Bundles that have a tribal function are considered in this thesis, there are

numerous other minor Medicine Bundles and personal tales which are restricted in currency and not part of general story-telling sessions.

The fact that I am dealing with structures in this thesis is bound to draw comparison with Structuralist methods of analysis such as those propounded by Lévi-Strauss, and it is therefore important to make my position concerning these clear. I am not attempting "to construct models the formal properties of which can be compared with, and explained by, the same properties as models corresponding to other strategic levels" (Lévi-Strauss, 1963:227) which I understand as a founding principle of Structuralism. In other words, I make no claim that the structures I explore are "universals" which have currency outside the specific Blackfoot context that is discussed here. It is explicit in this thesis that the structures I investigate are formulated by the Blackfoot themselves in terms of their own "historical reality", and it is in this context - and this context only - that I present them here. This does not mean they have no wider application or relevance to Structuralist analyses, but the claim I make here extends only so far as to demonstrate structures which have specific cultural, social, political, and ritual meaning for the Blackfoot in addition to their "tribal-historical" content.

First, I must distance myself from the Structuralists in terms of the data under consideration. I do not look for homology and have made no attempt to find correspondences elsewhere with the structures and principles of Blackfoot concepts; thus there has been no search for comparative data from a range of discrepant or divergent sources, which may be separated in time and geographical space, such as the Structuralists might employ in the formulation of models which have a wider application. The material I offer relates to the Blackfoot only, and where comparisons are made - such as with Iktomi, the Trickster figure of the Blackfoot's Siouan speaking neighbours - this is done to emphasise the uniqueness of the Blackfoot concept and their position as an Algonkian sub-group rather than part of a generalised northern Plains tradition.

Second, I also distance myself from the Structuralist principle of establishing a theory and then searching for data by which it might be supported. I have no wish to force the tales into structures that are either alien to or remote from the story-tellers and the story-telling sessions, and the theory in this thesis derives entirely from what I have called "Blackfoot logics" or "Blackfoot history". That is, the theory stems from ideas which are quite explicitly stated by the Blackfoot and clearly understood by a Blackfoot audience, rather than from an imposed theoretical stance formulated by the "outsider". The structures I explore are restated, reinforced, and maintained in story-telling sessions and are not remote theoretical models. I therefore contradict Lévi-Strauss' statement that "although the possibility cannot be excluded that the speakers who create and transmit myths may become aware of their structure and mode of operation, this cannot occur as a normal thing, but only partially and intermittently" (1970:11). The structures are here fully integrated into Blackfoot thinking and comprehension.

For the Blackfoot, it is essential that the Native view and the contents of the stories are considered not as a set of different elements which can be separated out or extrapolated for individual scrutiny, analysis, and classification, and then recombined and compared with similar data from other sources so their structural relationships can be investigated, but that they should instead be looked at as a coherent and self-contained entity which sets its own rules and criteria. These are Blackfoot stories and Blackfoot structures. They have their own "internal" rules, which create the structures I am concerned with, and I do not try to force their application in any "external" theorising which is irrelevant to (and may be considered invalid by) traditional Blackfoot story-tellers.

Boas had already questioned, and dismissed, the "Structuralist" approach to the study of myths when he wrote:

The starting point of those who try to interpret mythology seems to be the thought that there must be a fundamental unity in the ideas expressed in mythology. It is assumed that the myths are

not what they purport to be, but that hidden behind them lies a deeper meaning that may be discovered by comparing the tales centering around various associations, by studying their names, attributes, acts, and associations: that the natives do not recognize this meaning, partly because the themes have undergone changes and their true significance has been forgotten, partly because the 'system' although present, has never found clearly expressed utterance.

Before this method of interpretation can be accepted the proof should be given that a unified system of mythology exists. So far as I can see this proof cannot be given ... (1932:vii)

This quotation makes it clear that Boas did not adopt a "gentlemanly wisdom that hesitated to offend" (La Barre, 1970:33) and was quite prepared to speak his mind and comment critically on the methodology employed by "fellow mythologists". While I do not concur with this extreme Boasian stance and am fully prepared to accept that Structuralist models may have validity in our understanding of myths and their inter-relationships, it is nevertheless important to stress that my focus here is not on Structuralism. I am concerned with Blackfoot concepts and with the fact that the structuring and meaning of Blackfoot tales, as defined in this thesis, derives from and is recognised by the traditional story-tellers themselves.

The texts do, of course, present a number of problems that are informed by studies beyond the Blackfoot horizon: the divide between observer and observed, which "has been scrutinized and questioned by critics of the ethnographic tradition" (Atkinson and Coffey, 1995:46), or between objective and subjective are cases in point. It is nevertheless important to note that the purportedly distanced and impartial view of the anthropologist, as much as the views of cultural, social, and media historians, are called into question by the different, but equally valid, approaches adopted by Blackfoot tribal historians and story-tellers. While we must remain aware, as Kuper reminds us, that "the fieldworker is ... limited by his or her upbringing, gender, age, status; the fieldworker's social and political situation will certainly condition his or her results; any monograph can be read to reveal various hidden assumptions, and its author will surely make use of rhetorical tricks" (1993:58-59), engagement with the

Blackfoot view is nevertheless a key factor in my presentation and interpretation of these texts.

Finally, comment needs to be made concerning my informants. They are not denied a "voice" in this thesis, but nevertheless remain as anonymous contributors and are identified only as "Siksika storyteller", "Piegan Elder", etc. This has been a reluctant choice: the stories they shared with me, their opinions and beliefs, their courtesy and generosity, and their patience in helping me to gain an awareness and understanding of Native American culture and of Blackfoot storytelling, should all be given full recognition and acknowledgement. The current political climate on the Blackfoot reserves, however, makes this difficult, and to avoid embarrassment to or harassment of my informants I have not referred to them by name. In making a decision to leave them as anonymous contributors I have had to take a number of factors into account. The thesis could not have been written without them and I am anxious not to give the impression of failing to recognise the essential contribution made by Native people to this work; although the views and opinions expressed here are my own. There is nevertheless a division between progressive and conservative factions on the Blackfoot reserves, as well as a recent but influential Pan-Indian movement and the politicisation of story-telling which has resulted in poster campaigns against and threats to certain members of the Blackfoot community for sharing information with outsiders, especially white outsiders, who are presented as inappropriate recipients of Native lore. It is ironic that Blackfoot stories, and a knowledge of the "true" Blackfoot culture, have largely been preserved through the involvement of "outsiders" such as Grinnell and Wissler, or, in the case of Pan-Indian politicisation, reach us in incomplete or altered form; yet the danger of placing informants in an untenable position by identifying them is nevertheless very real. By mentioning status within the group, tribe or band affiliation, formal positions, ownership of Medicine Bundles, etc., I would make certain individuals immediately recognisable and would thereby be exposing them to unwelcome attention.

In addition, some of the prominent Elders who shared information with me have since died, and it is Blackfoot tradition that the names of the deceased are no longer mentioned. I have an obligation to the families and relatives of these people to respect their wishes, beliefs, and customs and not dishonour the dead by naming them. There is a strong belief still among some Blackfoot traditionalists that naming a dead person will tie his or her spirit to the living, causing it to become *taxpiksi*: a restless soul that hovers forever between the living and the dead and can find no peace. I have also avoided the expediency of using pseudonyms, again to conform to Blackfoot standards of tradition and respect. Names are important in Blackfoot society and define not only the individual but an entire class of kin and respect relationships. To create a "false" identity for my informants by using pseudonyms would be an insult. I have, therefore, left them as anonymous contributors. As Herle notes "cultural sensitivity is more important than a scientific desire to know everything, and anthropological inquisitiveness must have its limits" (1994:3). There is also a clear need to "conceal" members of the community from each other and there can "no longer be any excuse ... for not ensuring that at least some degree of privacy is guaranteed" (Jenkins 1979:162). Some general biographical details of the contributors of stories referred to in the text are, however, included in the introductory notes to the Appendix.

My fieldwork among the Blackfoot has been carried out over a period of many years beginning in the late 1970s/early 1980s and continuing into the present, primarily among the Siksika (North Blackfoot) and Northern Piegan, with less intensive contact with the Kainah (Blood) and Southern Piegan members of the Blackfoot confederacy and their Sarcee allies. Extensive contacts and visits with other tribes in the generalised Plains tradition have also informed parts of this thesis. Among these other tribes the most sustained contacts have been, and are, with the Osage, Pawnee, Kiowa, Kiowa-Apache, and Jicarilla Apache.

Any discussion of the story-teller and of the importance of tales in Blackfoot culture must take into consideration the social, economic, and political pressures being brought to bear on the Siksika, Kainah, and Piegan immediately preceding and during the period when the major collections of tales were made at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries (Grinnell 1892; Josselin de Jong 1914; Maclean 1890, 1893; Michelson 1911; Uhlenbeck 1911, 1912; Wissler and Duvall 1908). I discuss these various collections of tales in more detail in later sections.

Substantial comment on Blackfoot traditions at an earlier date had largely been precluded by Blackfoot opposition to any significant white presence in areas under their control, and was also due to the fact that the few white people who did enter the area were mostly itinerant hunters and trappers, backwoodsmen, and French voyageurs, most of whom were illiterate or, at best, only semi-literate. The extensive colonial records from the east made by the English, French, and the Jesuit Fathers during the struggles for European supremacy do not exist for the Blackfoot, and it was only at a relatively late date that any important commentary was made. Studies of the Blackfoot after the turn of the century (Bradley 1923; Ewers 1955, 1958; Goldfrank 1945; Lewis 1942) do not relate directly to traditional story-telling and mention this only as incidental to other aspects of Blackfoot culture.

In order to understand the content of the tales and to determine whether they express indigenous rather than imposed values it is necessary to know something of the history of the tribes and the conditions under which they were living when the major collections of

tales were obtained. This is because the turn of the century was a period during which the Blackfoot suffered a dramatic and rapid decline. Their standard of living fell to the point where many families were literally destitute, and when tribal rituals became redundant and fell into disuse or were suppressed by white authorities.

A policy of integration implemented after the Blackfoot move to reservations in the late 1800s throws into question the authenticity of material collected at this period. The Indian view was considered by many outsiders to be little more than superstitious opinion, and we are faced with the problem of trying to decide whether Blackfoot informants suppressed or modified the information they gave to satisfy the demands being made on them by white authorities and in order to show themselves in a "good light" as far as officialdom was concerned.

At the same time the policy of integration undermined much of the political structure of the tribes, which was further complicated through the introduction of treaty requirements and obligations which had only partial support among the Blackfoot. The naming of "chiefs" with white sympathies on treaty documents (Treaty 7) is one reason for conservative and progressive factions developing within the tribes: the government supported progressives arguing for reform and the adoption of new economic and religious ideals (such as cattle raising and Christianity), while the more traditional conservative faction struggled to keep intact as many of the old beliefs as possible. This division was exacerbated by missionaries and government officials who ridiculed conservative opinion and ritual practice as "backward" or "heathen". Even as late as 1894, Governor John E Rickards of the State of Montana could write to Indian Agent Charles Pomery at Great Falls concerning an impending Okan (Sun Dance):

I will not believe that Great Falls, or any part of Montana, has yet relapsed into barbarism. Ere this you have seen that I have issued a proclamation prohibiting the Dance, and I hope the better class of people in your community will strengthen the hands of Sheriff Hamilton in this matter. (Written from the Executive Office of the State of Montana, June 7th, 1894. (Reproduced in Scriver 1990:xix)

The conservative and progressive factions represent the polarities of Blackfoot thinking at the turn of the century, but neither had the wholehearted support of the majority of the population. Most Blackfoot at this time were demoralised and confused: faith in the shamans had been undermined by their inability to deal effectively with European diseases such as smallpox and measles which had destroyed an estimated half of the population (Dempsey 1978:12; Catlin 1965:258; but note that Dempsey's population estimate for 1809 appears to be low); the authority of the chiefs had been eroded and, to some extent, replaced by that of the treaty chiefs and of the "little white men" or Napikwan (which can also be interpreted as "Trickster" + kwan, "man". These were agents appointed by the government to manage the reservations, and is now used as a general Blackfoot term for white people); and their economic base had been destroyed.

Prior to the move to reservations, Blackfoot economy had been dependent on buffalo hunting; but the buffalo had been slaughtered in the millions in their ranges south of Blackfoot territory in order to supply the fur trade and provision U.S. army forts, as well as by "sportsmen" who paid large sums of money outfitting expeditions led by experienced professional hunters. The decimation of the herds had severe repercussions for the Blackfoot, and for all other Plains tribes. In July 1884 a party of Northern Piegans led by Little Dog and Bull Shoe were able to find and kill just six buffalo in the Sweet Grass Hills, a region where only two years previously the buffalo hunter, Vic Smith, had killed an estimated 5,000 (McHugh 1972:271-278; see also Hornaday 1888).

The progressives considered conformity to white ideals as the only means of survival. Because the traditional economic base had been destroyed, the Blackfoot were forced to rely on treaty provisions and became dependent on government issue beef. Even so, and despite being guaranteed under treaty agreements between the Piegan and U.S. commissioners, beef was always in uncertain supply (due in part to the fact the treaties had been agreed prior to any allocation of funds in

Washington for Blackfoot support). Smaller game, which the Blackfoot had previously used to supplement buffalo meat, also became scarce since the concentration of bands near the Agency buildings tended to scare game away to areas remote from the Agencies. The progressives continued to press for reform and extended their view to encompass other white religious, economic, and political ideals. In doing so they rejected many aspects of tribal life which the missionaries and government officials considered inappropriate to the future "development" of the tribes.

Many Blackfoot, however, were suspicious of white motives and reluctant to engage in activities such as farming which they regarded as degrading. There was, and is, a strong feeling among Blackfoot men that any gathering of plant foods was "women's work" and that digging in the soil was beneath their dignity. This is also suggested in numerous comments made by Grinnell and Schultz, both of whom spent much time among the Southern Piegan during this period and whose male friends were reluctant to engage in activities that threatened the sanctity of Mother Earth. This reluctance was primarily because the Blackfoot were nomadic hunters with an almost total lack of any farming tradition. Although they may have practised limited farming prior to their migrations on to the Plains, the only remnant of this that remained was the cultivation of a small plot of sacred tobacco; but even this had been abandoned by the time Wissler/Duvall collected their information and replaced by the use of Hudson Bay Tobacco (1912:148). Grinnell, too, noted "tobacco is no longer planted by the Piegans, nor by the Bloods, though it is said that an old Blackfoot [Siksika] each year still goes through the ceremony" (1892:268). Ben Calf Robe, a Siksika Elder and minor chief, also noted "we Siksikai last produced our native tabacco (sic) in the 1940s. The Bloods and Piegans quit a long time ago" (1979:57).

Caring for the sacred tobacco plot had formerly been by an honoured male Elder and was considered an essential part of the rituals with which it was associated, rather than being considered an

"agricultural" activity. Calf Robe, who was a Beaver Medicine Bundle Owner, notes that raising this crop was the former duty of the Beaver Bundle Owners (1979:57). Yet despite the lack of a farming tradition and the repeated failure of the small acreage that was planted, the government agents nevertheless considered advancement in farming as an indicator of Native progress towards improvement and civilisation. The only advances in farming, however, were among the Kainah division of the Blackfoot confederacy (Dempsey 1978:23), but even these - at least until after the First World War - were limited.

The conservative faction meanwhile called for passive resistance to the demands of the Agents and held out for the retention of traditional values. They felt that resistance to white domination would enable the tribes to preserve their cultural identity. At the same time it was becoming increasingly clear that any preservation could only be partial since events had progressed beyond the point where a return to a nomadic hunting lifestyle was possible; although a few shamans held out that the buffalo had merely been spirited away and the correct performance of rituals would ensure their return. They claimed this had happened in the past, and as evidence cited the passage referring to the *Theft of the Buffalo* recorded as part of the *Twin Brothers* tale by Wissler/Duvall (1908:40-53) and as a separate story by Grinnell (*The Dog and the Stick*, 1892:145-148).

In Wissler/Duvall's version of the *Twin Brothers*, Crow Arrow is jealous of one of the Twins, Beaver, and in a fit of anger spirits the buffalo away. He hides them in a hole beneath a bed in his tipi, but Beaver discovers their whereabouts and, by a clever ruse, chases them out and restores them to the people. Grinnell's version places Old Man (Napi) in conflict with Raven. Raven has hidden the buffalo in a cave because he is too lazy to bother with hunting, and they are rescued from here by Napi. Laziness and the accumulation of resources as a hedge against later exertion are, however, characteristic features of Napi, and Napi is behaving out of character by working for the benefit of others. His behaviour and personality are explored in more detail

in a later section, and Grinnell is almost certainly mistaken in believing that this version of the tale originated among the Blackfoot.

While both these tales contain traditional elements of Blackfoot story-telling, the views expressed by the shamans concerning the return of the buffalo may have been influenced by the widespread Ghost Dance movement of the 1870s. This had its adherents among most of the Plains tribes as well as among tribes in the Great Basin area and beyond. It was a revivalist movement, a blend of Native and Christian beliefs, and preached that if the people kept dancing until they fell into trance the "Great Spirit" would reward them with visions of their dead relatives and, on an appointed day, would sweep the country free from whites, restore the dead, and bring back the buffalo.

Although the Ghost Dance had relatively little impact on the Blackfoot, and the shamans who expressed this view had few followers even among the southern groups who were in contact with Ghost Dance participants of other tribes, the possibility of Ghost Dance influence in these tales cannot be ignored. Mooney claims the Ghost Dance did not extend as far as the Blackfoot of Montana (1896:178); but Ghost Dance ideals may nevertheless have had some impact on tales collected at the turn of the century (for a general discussion of the Ghost Dance as a worldwide phenomenon see La Barre 1972; note, too, that Dempsey's 1968 *Blackfoot Ghost Dance* does not imply acceptance of the generalised Ghost Dance of the Plains but refers instead to a Blackfoot variation of the Shaking Tent ritual). Regardless of the inter-tribal and revivalist influences that were reaching the Blackfoot at this time, it is certain that by the end of the nineteenth century the majority of the Blackfoot felt they were caught in a situation that had been forced on them. They were no longer economically independent and able to manage their own affairs, but were equally reluctant to entrust this to outside agents and foreign governments.

The problems of factionalism evident from the 1880s and early 1900s influenced the information that different individuals were

prepared to make available to outside observers. It is apparent in the introductions to their collections of tales given by Grinnell (1892), Wissler/Duvall (1908), and Maclean (1890, 1893), as well as in comments made by McClintock (1910) and Schultz (1907), that Blackfoot opinion varied widely as to how much information concerning traditional customs and beliefs should be made public. Some felt this information should be hidden to prevent further suppression, while others, disheartened at the apparent breakdown of their culture, felt that the only way anything could be saved was by leaving a permanent record. These individuals realised the futility of attempting to return to the old way of life as well as the inevitability that many traditional customs and values would be lost by adapting to the new circumstances they were forced to face.

There was also active discouragement at this time of Native beliefs and practices by missionaries and government agents. Some of this was a blatant abuse of their power by political appointees with little interest in or concern for the welfare and customs of the tribes in their charge, and this led to calls for reform. This was part of Grinnell's demands for change and a "better deal" for the Blackfoot (1892:287-300), as well as being the impetus for Schultz to write to the New York press (1935:197). As a result of these and similar pressures a number of Agents were removed from their posts and replaced by church appointees who, it was felt, would have a more humane attitude. Although the Agents appointed by the churches were generally honest, many of them were religious fanatics and held extremely narrow views which permitted no reference to "heathen" traditions. It was against this background of hostility and demoralisation that a few story-tellers and ritualists collaborated with - and often actively encouraged - outside observers to record Blackfoot beliefs, tales, social organisation, and language before these "memories" were irretrievably lost, and it is from these informants that the records of pre-reservation customs and the collections of tales derive. Such collaboration was not, however, always easy.

Many aspects of Blackfoot life, particularly those of a ritual nature, required initiation into organisations or societies that were rapidly becoming defunct (McClintock 1937; Wissler 1912, 1913). Since initiation was regarded as a prerequisite for gaining specific knowledge, without which it was considered improper to discuss these issues or to reveal the details of ritual procedures, there was resentment - and at times active opposition - from within the tribes directed at individuals who were prepared to share information with uninitiated outsiders. As a consequence, and despite intense interest being shown in Blackfoot ritual by people such as Wissler, our knowledge of the most sacred aspects of Blackfoot life prior to the turn of the century remains sketchy.

To understand the manner in which the Blackfoot were caught between conflicting opinions that, at their extremes, either totally rejected or fully embraced white ideals, it is necessary to know something about the pre-reservation period. The first reference to the Blackfoot is from 1748, when the French trader, Pierre Gaultier de Varenne de la Verendrye, mentioned a group of tribes living to the west, in what is now Alberta, who traded occasional furs to the Cree in exchange for European goods which the Cree obtained from the French and English trading posts centred on Hudson's Bay. He tells us that these tribes were acquainted with guns which they obtained from the Assiniboine and Cree and says they were also familiar with horses that were brought into the area from the west by the Shoshone.

It is, however, unlikely the Blackfoot had been in possession of either guns or horses for any length of time prior to Verendrye's comment. David Thompson refers to the narrative of Saukamapee (The Boy), a Southern Piegan, which refers to a fight between the Piegan and Shoshone that Saukamapee witnessed as a child. This fight took place between 1720 and 1730 and Saukamapee is adamant the Piegan had only a few guns and no horses at the time, whereas the Shoshone had a few horses but no guns (Thompson, 1916:328-330). Saukamapee tells us the Piegan kept their guns hidden at first, but that even if the Shoshone

had seen them they would have thought they were "long clubs" since they were totally unfamiliar with this weapon. The diffusion of horses to the Blackfoot has been discussed in depth by Ewers in *The Horse in Blackfoot Culture* (1955), and it is only necessary to point out here that although horses were indigenous to the Americas the small native horse had become extinct at the close of the Pleistocene. The source of all horses in the historic period was the Spanish settlements of the Southwest, which were being raided by the Apache as early as 1659. The Apache then traded the captured horses to the Shoshone and other tribes.

Verendrye mentions only that the Blackfoot were "familiar" with the horse, and it is unclear from his letters and journals whether he is suggesting they knew of the horse from seeing them among the Shoshone or whether they possessed any of their own. Saukamapee's narrative suggests the former rather than the latter. It is nevertheless obvious the Blackfoot were not completely isolated from articles of European manufacture or introduction at the time first comment was made about them, although these were reaching them via other tribes rather than by direct contact.

On the strength of Verendrye's comments, the Hudson's Bay Company despatched their agent, Anthony Hendry, to these remote regions in 1754 to determine whether "The Bay" could profitably establish posts to trade directly with the Blackfoot. It had already been noted that Blackfoot country was rich in fur-bearing animals, and the Hudson's Bay Company was eager to exploit any avenue of trade that removed the middleman (in this instance, the Cree and Assiniboine) from their agreements in order to maximise profits. Hendry notes that the Blackfoot Indians he met in 1754 were mounted, and it is therefore likely the Blackfoot acquisition of horses occurred some time between Saukamapee's comments of 1730 and Hendry's visit in 1754.

Hendry was the first European to name the Blackfoot, although he did so using the Algonkian dialect of his Cree guides and called them

Architinue (the Cree word for "strangers"). This appellation had previously been used in 1691 by another Hudson's Bay employee, Henry Kelsey, but it is not known whether he was referring specifically to the Blackfoot or simply to "western tribes". Hendry's use of this word also makes it uncertain whether he actually visited the principal tribes of the Blackfoot confederacy, since Architinue was more generally applied by the Cree to refer to the Atsina (Gros Ventre) who at this date were allied with the Blackfoot.

Hendry's report nevertheless gives us a clue as to the disposition and temperament of members of the confederacy and their allies. His journal notes that the Architinue were reluctant to engage in fur trapping at a level significant enough to justify the establishment of permanent trading posts, and implies that they felt their own indigenous trade networks were sufficient to keep them supplied with any "luxury" goods they required. He notes that these tribes cherished their independence and looked with some scorn upon the growing reliance on European goods they observed among the Cree.

Hendry also notes that it was apparent the Blackfoot confederacy and their allies were determined to keep any influence from traders at as distant a remove as possible. This was partly because of their dislike and distrust of the Cree and Assiniboine, whom they regarded as little better than beggars living on the white man's handouts; but was also partly from self-interest. Self-interest is reflected in the fact that status in Blackfoot society was largely dependent on two factors - wealth and generosity - and unlike the situation among many other Plains tribes where war honours were a prerequisite it was possible to acquire a leading position in Blackfoot society through generosity alone. By continual acts of gift-giving and feasting a man gained a following of dependent families (for a fuller discussion of status and warfare among Plains tribes see Mishkin 1966; Bancroft-Hunt 1995a). This was nowhere more apparent than in the institution of the Miniska, or favourite son, whereby a boy was elevated to high position by his father's demonstrations of wealth through lavish gifting in the boy's

name. Such a son might be prevented from ever joining a war party and might not even be taught hunting skills. Although he was a highly respected member of the community due to the influence his relatives exerted on his behalf, he nevertheless possessed no means of his own whereby he was able to support himself or his family (for further discussion of Blackfoot social life see Ewers 1958; Josselin de Jong 1912; and Wissler 1911).

A major indicator of wealth (and support for the Miniska) was the ability to acquire trade goods. The remoteness of the various tribes comprising the Blackfoot confederacy and their disinclination to trade directly with Europeans meant that trade goods could only be obtained by those with sufficient means and kin-group support to procure them. The control and disposal of trade goods through acts of generosity to fellow tribal members was therefore an important consideration, and it was in the interests of the leading families to ensure that such contacts were restricted to prevent valuable trade commodities becoming more generally available. In this respect it is significant that the Indians Hendry met were all mounted. At this early date the Blackfoot owned only a few horses and these would have been specially trained ponies reserved for buffalo hunting and for the exclusive use of important families. Hendry's contact was almost certainly with representatives of these leading families, and their refusal to engage in direct trade was a means of protecting their own influence within the tribes and their positions as prominent members of the community.

In 1772 The Bay again attempted to establish direct contact with the Blackfoot. Their agent on this occasion, Matthew Cocking, met with the same response Hendry had received eighteen years earlier. He, too, comments on the intransigence of the Blackfoot, and on his return to Hudson's Bay reported that there was little possibility of establishing a remunerative contact with them and that it would be unsafe to establish trading posts in their territories. Cocking's impressions may, however, have been compromised by the fact that he followed Hendry's lead and employed Cree guides. Although it was logical for

the British to use Cree guides, since the British-Cree trade was well established and a number of Cree Indians were permanent employees of the Hudson's Bay Company and spoke passable English, Cocking may have been unaware of the volatile relationship between the Blackfoot and Cree, which had now reached a point where there was open conflict between them. His association with the Cree undoubtedly soured any relationship he hoped to establish with the Blackfoot.

Cocking was nevertheless the first person to identify the different tribes comprising the Blackfoot confederacy and their allies. The names Cocking gives, again in an Algonkian Cree dialect, are:

Powestic-Athinuewuk, or Water-Fall Indians.

Nithco-Athinuewuk, or Bloody Indians.

Koskitow-Wathesitock, or Blackfooted Indians.

Pegonow, or Muddy-Water Indians.

Suxxewuck, or Wood Country Indians.

Cocking's nomenclature corresponds closely with the modern terms used to refer to the Blackfoot and their allies. The confederated tribes were the Algonkian speaking Kainah or Blood, the Siksika or North Blackfoot, and the Piegan or Pikanni. These are Cocking's Bloody Indians, Blackfooted Indians, and Pegonow. Allied with them and also speaking an Algonkian dialect were the Atsina or Gros Ventre, who are also known as Fall Indians (Cocking's Water-Fall Indians) since they lived near the falls of the Saskatchewan, and the Athapascan speaking Sarcee (Cocking's Suxxewuck).

Even though the Blackfoot rejected direct trade, the presence of Europeans in adjacent areas was causing rapid changes among all the tribes of the northern Plains and exposing them to diseases to which they had little or no resistance. As early as 1781 a smallpox epidemic swept through the tribes of the Upper Missouri and spread to the Blackfoot when a group of Piegan warriors raided a stricken Shoshone village and carried away contaminated spoils of war. Other epidemics originating with Europeans were a direct consequence of trade, since

large gatherings of Indians from different tribes at the trading centres on the Missouri meant that any outbreak rapidly became inter-tribal. Although the Blackfoot themselves were not at first regular participants in the trade gatherings they were in contact with other tribes which were.

The resultant death toll among the Blackfoot was severe, but losses among neighbouring tribes were even heavier and resistance to Blackfoot expansion was weakened. Before 1800 the confederated Blackfoot and their allies claimed a vast area that reached from the North Saskatchewan River in Alberta to a southern boundary on the Musselshell River in Montana, and from the Bear Paw Mountains in the east to the Rocky Mountain divide on the west. Their claim to this territory was disputed by the tribes the Blackfoot attempted to dispossess, as well as by other tribes who entered the area during annual buffalo hunts (McHugh 1972:11). This was one of the richest buffalo hunting grounds on the northern Plains, and "probably contained more game and in greater variety than any other part of the continent" (Grinnell 1892:226). The Blackfoot came into conflict with tribes to their west, south, east, and north-east, and a pattern of small-scale raiding and reprisals became typical of the Blackfoot relationship with all neighbouring groups. Warfare was further encouraged by the adoption of horses as a standard of wealth, and in common with many other Plains tribes the majority of horses in Blackfoot camps were obtained by raiding the herds of their neighbours (Ewers 1955:171-193).

Increasing conflicts and disputes with neighbouring groups highlighted the disadvantages of the Blackfoot reluctance to engage in direct trade with Europeans: Blackfoot war parties armed only with bows and arrows and a few firearms were easily routed when faced by enemies with regular access to trade guns and ammunition. The Blackfoot need to obtain guns and ammunition which would enable them to successfully defend their territories was therefore the driving force behind the establishment of a limited trade relationship with Europeans: the Kainah and Siksika favouring the Hudson's Bay Company,

while the Piegan traded more regularly with the rival Northwest Company.

Both the Hudson's Bay Company and the Northwest Company eagerly sought trade with the Blackfoot. The Northwest Company stemmed from the original French trappers of Montreal and the upper Great Lakes, although the impetus for its expansion came from Scots traders in the region. Under the inspiration of Sir Alexander McKenzie, it was set up in 1793 to challenge the autonomy of the British owned Hudson's Bay Company. Competition between the two companies was intense and sometimes broke into open conflict (Chittenden 1986:93-94; Ballantyne 1897:125-127). The smaller and more informally organised Northwest Company was, however, unable to resist the power exercised by the Hudson's Bay governors and factors and their militaristic system of strict discipline and adherence to exacting trading principles. The two companies finally amalgamated in 1821 to give the Hudson's Bay Company a monopoly in Canada which it retained until it surrendered its rights of governorship to the Dominion of Canada in 1869.

Relations between the Blackfoot and both the Northwest Company and the Hudson's Bay Company were far from cordial and trade was either conducted at "safe" trading posts located outside the Blackfoot territories or with itinerant traders. Because the Blackfoot showed a distinct disinclination to gather at the trade centres for the convenience of white traders, and since the small bands from which each of the Blackfoot tribes was composed ranged widely and separately for much of the year, it was often necessary for the traders to take their goods to the Blackfoot camps.

Due to the relatively small number of white people in the area the Blackfoot were initially able to dictate the terms on which trading would be permitted. In particular the majority of Blackfoot bands refused to trap beaver, the principal fur-bearing animal of the region and the mainstay of the northern fur trade, even though their country was "the richest beaver country in the west" (Chittenden 1986:841). To

the Blackfoot the beaver was sacred, and as "chief of the animals" was central to the ritual performances of the sacred Beaver Medicine Bundle (see references to the Beaver Medicine Bundle in McClintock 1935; Wissler 1912). Only a few Piegan bands in the Rocky Mountain foothills trapped this animal on any regular basis. Most Blackfoot hunters refused to do so for religious reasons.

The Blackfoot were nevertheless too powerful for the traders to anger them by ignoring their demands for the supply of firearms, ammunition, and other "wealth" goods, since small parties of traders and trappers were highly vulnerable to attack by Blackfoot war parties. Trade was therefore established on the supply of other less valuable pelts, primarily fox and wolf. There was also a fairly considerable trade in supplying provisions, mostly of pemmican (dried meat), and in horses. By now the latter were in plentiful supply among the Blackfoot, but were impossible for British traders to bring overland from Hudson's Bay since the journey was mainly by canoe and demanded difficult portages.

Following the Louisiana Purchase of 1803, which removed French control of areas west of the Mississippi-Missouri, the southern Blackfoot territories were opened up to American exploration. The most significant of these for the Blackfoot was the Lewis and Clark Expedition of 1804-1806. Comments in the reports and diary entries of Lewis and Clark confirmed the "treacherous" reputation of the Blackfoot and their allies, who had attempted to steal their horses and rifles after an initial show of friendliness (and who, incidentally, were the only Native people to suffer casualties during the entire duration of the Expedition when Lewis and his compatriots shot and killed two of the raiders). The reports also implied that there was an abundance of fur-bearing animals in Blackfoot country, and this prompted a number of St Louis companies to engage trappers to exploit this resource rather than attempt to deal with the intransigence of the Blackfoot tribes and their allies or to rely on the supply of less valuable furs from the Blackfoot. Thus, unlike the Hudson's Bay and Northwest Companies which

traded directly with Native hunters, American policy was to employ trappers who worked a "season" within Blackfoot country. The Blackfoot resented these intrusions, partly because they deprived them of a means of obtaining trade goods in exchange for what their own hunters were prepared to supply, and adopted a policy of ambushing American trappers and relieving them of their furs, which they then traded to the British in the north (Wissler, 1940:105).

Although it is now impossible to substantiate American claims of the period that the Blackfoot were incited by the British, it is obvious the Blackfoot exploited the conflict of interest between the Americans and the British and used this to their own advantage. A significantly high proportion of raids took place near the close of the trapping season, when the heavily laden trappers were preparing to load their furs on to makeshift rafts and transport them back to St Louis. The Blackfoot felt that the raiding of American trappers was a more exciting and lucrative way of maintaining their trade with the British than was the comparatively arduous task of setting traps to obtain inferior fox and wolf pelts.

The Blackfoot:American relationship changed dramatically after the introduction of steamboat travel from St Louis to the Upper Missouri in 1830. Prior to this river transport had been via a variety of small boats, canoes, and improvised rafts. The advantage of the shallow-draft Missouri paddle steamer was the considerably superior tonnage it could carry as well as the protection it offered to parties of trappers. This latter point was of no small importance, since Siouan war parties regularly waylaid canoe travellers on the Missouri and prevented them reaching the rich trapping and hunting areas controlled by the Blackfoot further upstream. The steamboat also opened a trade in buffalo hides which favoured the Southern Piegan. Areas under their control were rich in buffalo, but the northern trade was reliant on canoe transportation which made the movement of heavy buffalo hides impractical. Although the Siksika and Kainah participated in the trade in buffalo hides to a limited extent, they

were too far north to fully exploit this new opportunity and resented the "favourable" treatment they felt was being given to the Piegan. Dissent arose within the confederacy, and while the Americans traded peaceably with the Piegan they were continually subject to raiding by the Siksika and Kainah, and by their Gros Ventre allies.

The problems associated with the Blackfoot trade are indicated by the fact that the first permanent trading post established among them (Fort Piegan, which was built for the winter trade of 1831) was burnt down by a Blackfoot war party just a few months later in the spring of 1832 (for details of trading posts among the Blackfoot see Chittenden 1986, appendix F). The continual camp movements of the Blackfoot and their reluctance to accommodate the wishes of the traders also made the establishment of permanent trading posts an impractical proposition, and most later "forts" were simply temporary structures built for a single season's trading (Schultz, 1907, 1935, discusses at some length the deliberations of the traders in deciding how best to approach each season's trading with the Blackfoot, and notes that when he was in association with a trader named Berry (Joe Kipp) between 1877 and 1903, they had to locate their temporary trading posts in Blackfoot territory rather than expect the Blackfoot to travel to more permanent establishments).

American insensitivity to the autonomous nature of the different Blackfoot tribes - since they never considered themselves a single tribe and there is no evidence that the Piegan, Siksika, and Kainah ever camped together - caused further divisions within the confederacy. Attacks on trapping parties and trading posts were attributed to the "Blackfoot" in general, and the Piegan objected to being held responsible for Siksika, Kainah, and Gros Ventre raiding. The confederacy held together and a divisive war was averted, but animosity within it was high and some clashes between the Piegan and the other groups occurred. This ultimately led to a war between the Piegan and the Gros Ventre (Atsina) following a dispute over some stolen horses,

and as a consequence the Gros Ventre withdrew from the confederacy and were thereafter implacable foes of the Blackfoot.

The division within the confederacy was further widened by a treaty council in 1854, when Isaac C Stevens was in the area to make meteorological and geological surveys, to carry out a railroad survey, to establish a governorship for the Montana Territory, and to open official negotiations between the Blackfoot and the United States. Under this brief he initiated a peace treaty with the Southern Piegan in Montana. A few Northern Piegan, Siksika, and Kainah chiefs were present at the treaty council, but the signatories to the treaty were primarily Southern Piegan and the majority of the Blackfoot living in British Canada felt that agreements made with the United States were of little interest or importance to them. The treaty did, however, highlight the differences being felt between the southern and northern groups, and emphasised the geographic division between American and Canadian Blackfoot - in particular the artificial division between Southern and Northern Piegan - that failed to recognise tribal territorial claims. This was the first of several treaties made between the Southern Piegan and the United States, whereas only one treaty, Treaty Seven (1877), was made in Canada with the northern tribes of the confederacy (for a comparative study of U.S. and Canadian Indian policy see Samek 1987).

Shortly after the treaty signing of 1854/1855 a flood of prospectors entered Montana Territory after reports that gold had been found. Mining towns were established during the 1860s at Helena, Nevada, Virginia City, and Bannock, and at a number of smaller sites close to the mining fields of Alder Gulch and Grasshopper Creek. In the wake of the prospectors came other Americans eager to seize the opportunity of providing services that the rapidly growing mining communities required. At this time Montana was a lawless frontier which had little appeal for pioneer families who intended to settle down. Instead it attracted a mixture of people from different backgrounds: Irish-American bull-whackers, French voyageurs, Scots

frontiersmen, and a colourful crowd of gold miners, backwoodsmen, and "free" and "company" trappers. Law and order was maintained by vigilance committees with secret membership (for a description of the characters in a Montana frontier town of the period see chapter one of Schultz 1907, 1935; also Brown and Felton 1955:17-19).

The frontier towns thus had transient populations of unmarried young men eager to "strike it rich", and the few white women in the area were mainly those who worked the local bars and brothels. Felton records the impression of the frontier photographer L.A. Huffman that in Virginia City "every third building was a saloon and houses of ill fame were almost as numerous" (1955:17). Many of the immigrants therefore "married" Piegan wives and the Southern Piegan population became marked by a high proportion of mixed-bloods in comparison with that of the Northern Piegan, Siksika, and Kainah in the more remote Canadian regions (Schultz 1907, 1935 - whose own marriage to Nät-ah'-ki, a Southern Piegan woman, was long-standing - describes in some detail, and with some disgust, the general feeling of the white population in Montana that marriage to a Piegan woman was only a temporary arrangement). McFee notes that "traditional [Piegan] culture suffered from the increase in number and influence of half-breeds who had settled in the area" (1972:53), and Ewers tells us that "by 1910 [half-breeds] comprised more than half the population of the [Southern Piegan] reservation" (1958:326).

Although the influx of miners had an effect on Blackfoot social relations, gold itself was not valued by the Blackfoot and they expressed little concern at the mining operations of the gold seekers. The increasing number of white people in Montana and the escalation of the trade in buffalo hides nevertheless served to intensify some existing traditions and to place a new emphasis on certain aspects of Southern Piegan culture. There was, for instance, an increase in a reliance on wealth during transfers of the ownership of major Medicine Bundles, as well as increased prestige in having been the owner of several since this was seen as a statement of the wealth and

resourcefulness of the individual. As Wissler notes "those having a long list were cheered while those having a short one were ridiculed" (1912:276).

Some explanation of the Medicine Bundle and the way it was acquired is needed here. A Medicine Bundle (Saam) is a wrapper, usually of hide or an animal skin, containing symbols of the spirit-beings thought to have conferred power on an original owner. These powers are given in a vision during which the recipient receives songs and face- and body-paints that can be used to reactivate the "vision power" during subsequent rituals. In the Blackfoot system, custodianship of such a Bundle can be passed to a new owner who is under an obligation to make recompense to the previous owner. Originally transfers were associated with vows made during periods of personal crisis and the burden of ownership was considered to be a moral obligation, but competition for status fuelled by trade wealth introduced a concept of "purchase" that was not commensurate with a vow. Bundle ownership thus became "a display ... of the current state of often changing and contested power relations within the group [with] specific groups of individuals [owning] the exclusive right to perform or organise it, to enact the leading roles in it, or to teach or transmit it authoratively" (Harrison 1992:235). Status could therefore be achieved by purchasing rights to a Bundle of major tribal significance (such as the Beaver Bundle, Medicine Pipe, or Natoas).

The system whereby Medicine Bundles could be purchased and transferred to a new owner without the need for a qualifying vision meant that successful hunters and traders were able to buy both ritual and social status, and this tended to undermine the role and authority of the band leaders. Hanks and Hanks note that "although some chiefs [band leaders] continued to distribute their own wealth among needy band members, they lost much of their economic influence upon which their political authority and the cohesiveness of their bands depended" (1950:31). Burt makes similar comment that "aspirants to political leadership who were attempting to legitimise their positions of

influence through the acquisition of major rituals inevitably contested the authority of established ritual owners, head-men, and chiefs" (1976:144; see also Ewers 1955:161-162, 242, 255-256; Hanks and Hanks 1950:125-126).

Social relationships were also undergoing change. The heavy demand placed on women to prepare buffalo hides and furs for trade resulted in an increase in the numbers of wives in the polygamous marriages of successful hunters, since such men were in a better trading position if they had several women to prepare the large numbers of hides and furs they required to exchange for goods of European or American manufacture (Oscar Lewis 1942:38). Increasing hostility with neighbouring tribes, resulting from competition for the resources in Blackfoot territory to supply trade demands, also encouraged the practise of polygamy, since it resulted in a significant number of deaths of males between their late teens and late thirties (the active warriors) and created an imbalance between the sexes. As Father Point noted in a letter to Pierre-Jean de Smet "... women constitute more than two-thirds [of the Blackfoot], if not even three-quarters. This inequality, so baneful to morals, is the result of war" (De Smet 1846:952). The increase in war and war fatalities further encouraged the adoption of captive women and girls as "secondary wives". Whereas polygamy had previously been linked only with prominent families as a means of establishing political ties, or with the custom of sororate marriages, the trade in buffalo robes and furs altered this by introducing an economic necessity for plural wives.

Yet despite these and other changes, the Blackfoot - including the Southern Piegan - remained fiercely independent until the middle 1880s. This was directly related to the presence of buffalo and Blackfoot control over what was to be last refuge of the northern herds. As long as buffalo were present the Blackfoot were economically self-sufficient and had no real dependence on trade goods or government provisions; but in 1875 hunters among the northern groups were unsuccessful in locating herds and Siksika and Kainah hunters reported

few buffalo in Canada. The Siksika and Kainah therefore moved south into the Southern Piegan territories in Montana for their autumn hunt where, in spite of reports reaching them from the north, south, and east that the buffalo had virtually disappeared, they found several thousand head.

This, however, was the last northern buffalo herd of any substantial size that remained in North America and by 1880 only a few straggling bands of twenty or thirty animals could be found (McHugh 1972:272-278). In 1883 an estimated quarter of the Southern Piegan population died during the "starvation winter" because their hunters were unable to find game and beef provision under treaty agreements had failed to materialise. In addition, many Blackfoot were reluctant at the time to eat beef, believing it to be the carrier of the epidemic diseases introduced by whites (McHugh 1972:286). Thus between 1875 and 1885 the Blackfoot experienced the total destruction of indigenous economic patterns and became almost wholly reliant on agreements with the American and Canadian governments which were not of their own choosing and which were outside their control.

This brief resumé of Blackfoot history identifies the period between 1800, when the Blackfoot consolidated their position as the dominant force on the northern Great Plains, until the decimation of the buffalo in the mid-1870s as when the Blackfoot were at the height of their power. Throughout this period they remained independent and self-supporting. Ritual and social life, although undergoing superficial change in response to an exaggeration of wealth patterns expressed through the acquisition of "luxury" goods, had been largely unaffected by European and American presences in the area. What changes did occur affected the Southern Piegan more substantially than the northern groups, due primarily to the higher levels of inter-marriage with the white population of Montana. By the 1880s, however, Blackfoot indigenous culture had been all but destroyed: in addition to social and political changes there was mounting pressure on them to abandon hunting and turn to farming and cattle-raising, and the process

of "civilising" their children in government and mission sponsored schools had already begun.

Although all Plains tribes of North America suffered decline and confinement as a consequence of European and American domination and expansion, the rapidity with which the Blackfoot experienced a change from being the most powerful force in the area to subject status - which happened over a period of approximately ten years - is unparalleled elsewhere. At the beginning of the 1870s most Blackfoot leaders were confident of their power, and even sympathetic white traders such as Schultz expressed surprise at how quickly Blackfoot culture collapsed in the 1880s.

The post-1880 reservation period also brought other pressures to bear. The somewhat nebulous concept of the "frontier", for instance, ceased to be recognised following the more stable conditions that developed after the formation of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police in Canada in 1874 and the replacement of military and vigilante control of Montana by United States Sheriffs and Marshalls. This encouraged permanent white settlement and led to the establishment of cattle ranches in Blackfoot country. Some Blackfoot attempted to regain self-sufficiency after 1880 by using treaty annuities to purchase cattle and establish themselves as stock-raisers; but Montana cattlemen regularly stole the Blackfoot steers and, despite Blackfoot protests, unbranded Blackfoot cattle were run off their ranges and included in the quotas sent by the "cattle barons" to the railheads supplying the east. Schultz details the rapid spread of ranches in Montana and notes the ruthless techniques employed by the cattle ranchers against Native attempts at self-sufficiency and against rival sheep-herders, who were discouraged by burning them out (1935:202-204). Schulz had personal experience of this, since his own smallholding was subject to an arson attack as a reprisal for his close relationship with and support for the Piegan.

The Southern Piegan bore the brunt of white expansion, which caused further divisiveness and put additional pressure on the already demoralised tribes. Blackfoot protests were heard by unsympathetic Indian agents who were reliant on political backing from the "cattle barons" if they wished to remain in office and who were involved with the cattlemen in illegal "rings" in Washington where Blackfoot annuities were used to purchase sub-standard goods at premium prices. The establishment of non-productive farms and erection of costly windmills and grain storage facilities for a virtually non-existent crop further eroded annuity payments, and it was not until the end of the decade that farming was given up as the official means of civilising the tribes (Dempsey 1978:30). The desperate suffering of the Piegan is described in harrowing detail by Grinnell (1892:289-292) and Schultz (1935:194-197), but is also picked up in a more detached manner by Ewers (1958:294). Ewers, in fact, tells us one of the major reasons for the winter of starvation in 1883/1884 was the failure of Congressman John Ellis, chairman of the House Sub-Committee on Indian Appropriations, to approve funding to feed the Blackfoot.

Both Grinnell and Schultz were on the reservation at the time of the "starvation winter", and their comments make it apparent the Agents were falsely reporting considerable farming progress and self-sufficiency among the Blackfoot in order to enhance and consolidate their own positions. Congressman Ellis cannot, however, be exonerated from blame. When he finally accepted that Blackfoot families were starving to death, he purchased food at a high price from the tribal annuities after deducting a considerable portion of the monies owed to the Blackfoot as "expenses" for non-existent irrigation projects. Kehoe (1995:xvi), quoting Ewers and Samek, says \$100,000 was deducted; Schultz (1935:196), uncharacteristically, gives a much lower figure of \$30,000. Either, from a total annuity of only \$150,000, represents a sizable reduction in funding available. The food Ellis purchased was lacking in both quantity and quality. Much of it consisted of putrefied pork and maggot infested flour, and it was only after the

newly formed Indian Rights Association threatened to make his actions public that he finally approved more substantial assistance.

Ellis' attitude was typical of a bureaucracy that considered the Indians as a "problem"; yet the containment of the tribes on reservations and the removal of the Blackfoot "threat" paradoxically provided the possibility for more sustained studies of Blackfoot customs and beliefs. This occurred at a time when such customs and beliefs were already in decline and falling into disuse, but were nevertheless vivid memories of the informants who had been active participants in them only a few years previously. At the same time, the expansion of Western ideas had opened up "political, economic and subsistence opportunities which had not existed previously and some [Blackfoot] people had clearly recognised and taken advantage of this" (Bamforth 1994:112).

Once again it was the Southern Piegan who were the often reluctant beneficiaries of this new "economic development" and who became the primary focus of "scientific" enquiry. The reasons for this were both practical and political. At a practical level, the Southern Piegan reservation was readily accessible to Americans and good wagon routes existed across it. These had been established in the gold rush era, and the network of roads had increased substantially with the arrival of new settlers. Rail and river travel also made it easy to reach the southern Blackfoot country along the Mississippi-Missouri or overland from St Louis. This was accompanied by political pressure on the recently established ethnology department at the American Museum of Natural History in New York, then under the custodianship of Franz Boas, to secure information about the tribes of the United States and to form an Indian collection while there was still time to do so. The northern reservations, by contrast, were remote and travel to them required lengthy voyages by canoe and difficult river portages around frequent rapids and waterfalls, followed by horseback travel to reach the encampments.

The gathering of information and artefacts met with a mixed response from the different factions represented within the tribes and the number of informants prepared to cooperate was limited. What cooperation there was tended to come from tribal members who felt that the passing of the old ways was inevitable but who retained a personal belief in and experience of their importance in maintaining a cultural identity. Unable to pass on traditional ideals to sons and daughters who had embraced white values and with their role as ritual leaders undermined, these individuals chose to leave a legacy of information in the only manner available to them: by allowing outside observers to record their stories and traditions.

There was no doubt in the minds of the informants and of the researchers who recorded their impressions that the Blackfoot would soon be thoroughly assimilated into the dominant white culture. Concern at this time was to ensure that future generations would have access to information held by the Elders and story-tellers which was rapidly failing to have any practical significance in Blackfoot life. The informants and ethnologists at the turn of the century were thus actively engaged in "salvage anthropology", with the express intent of preserving a record of indigenous beliefs, customs, and languages, and in gathering artefacts for their museum collections, before these became a thing of the past. American researchers such as Wissler followed the lead established by Franz Boas in the 1880s of using Native informants as "research assistants-field ethnographers".

Boas' reliance on George Hunt (Kwakiutl) as a field ethnographer is closely paralleled by Wissler's dependence on David Duvall (Blackfoot), and although Wissler only credits Duvall as co-author of *Mythology of the Blackfoot Indians*, Duvall nevertheless provided much of the material and translations for all Wissler's work among the Blackfoot. In a similar manner Osgood relied on the Ingalik informant Billy Williams (Osgood 1940, 1958, 1959); Alice Fletcher was dependent on the Omaha, Francis La Flesche (Fletcher and La Flesche 1972); and a

number of ethnologists including Wissler, Fletcher, and Dorsey relied on the Pawnee, James Murie (Parks 1978, 1981).

What has tended to be overlooked, however, is the impetus brought to these investigations by Native people themselves. They were not passive informants but were instead active field researchers; often more so than the ethnologists under whose names these texts generally appear. Early ethnology and anthropology in North America was not the one-way process identified by Clifford as "intensive fieldwork, pursued by university-trained specialists, [which] emerged as a privileged, sanctioned source of data about exotic peoples" (1988:24). Clifford, admittedly, intended this as a critique of ethnographic methodology and of the "hegemony of fieldwork ... [on which] valid anthropological abstractions were to be based, wherever possible, on intensive cultural descriptions by qualified scholars" (1988:24-25) and defines this as occurring during a period bounded by the years 1900-1960. It is nevertheless essential for an understanding of the content of Blackfoot tales collected around the turn of the century to emphasise the active role played by Native American informants.

Not only did Native American informants press upon white observers the need to record customs in writing while the Elders still possessed knowledge of them, but, although they were never Clifford's "qualified scholars", they sometimes taught themselves to write phonetically so they could make accurate transcriptions of the information they were given, carried out their own intensive programmes of fieldwork, initiated their own programmes for checking and cross-checking information, and on occasion wrote their own texts. Without these Native initiatives much of what we know today would have been irretrievably lost. Although the status of the informant has been questioned by Clifford, Sanjek, and others, it is ironic that the Elders and story-tellers who so fervently wished to maintain their traditional beliefs and keep them alive for the benefit of future generations felt that the only means available to them to do so was via the new science of anthropology.

It is important to realise that the stories collected at the turn of the century were being related by men who had been active warriors and hunters only two decades or so prior to the dates the stories were obtained. The values which had been instilled in them during their formative years were those of the independent buffalo hunting period. They were also people who believed emphatically in the importance and value of the tales they had to relate, and who believed that these should be preserved as accurately as possible. Much of the information they gave was done in the face of opposition from within the confederacy. It is a testimonial to the courage and determination of these men and their few sympathetic supporters that sufficient information has been recorded to fuel a Blackfoot revival. Modern beliefs expressed by the Blackfoot story-tellers, though often modified and adapted to fit current circumstances and concerns, are largely reliant on the collections made at the turn of the century and on re-interpretations of this material.

SOURCES AND THEIR DIFFICULTIES:

(with particular reference to Grinnell and Wissler/Duvall)

This section offers an account and a critique of the major collections of Blackfoot tales made at the turn of the century. Although a number of researchers were working among the Blackfoot in the late 1800s and early 1900s, the most substantial bodies of tales that are presented in a systematic manner are from George Bird Grinnell (1892) and Clark Wissler/David Duvall (1908). Both Grinnell's *Blackfoot Lodge Tales* and Wissler/Duvall's *Mythology of the Blackfoot Indians* contain a considerable number of stories which provide insights into Blackfoot culture during the pre-reservation period and are useful in establishing "their" history and the function and importance of the story-teller.

Wissler also comments on a few variants and miscellaneous tales collected by others, such as Lowie and Maclean. These other collectors generally obtained information from the story-tellers as incidental to other work they were engaged in and present us with only a few versions of tales, some of which appear to be atypical of Blackfoot story-telling traditions. Where possible I have referred back to the original sources noted by Wissler, as well as to other works from the period during which Wissler conducted his field studies (Josselin de Jong 1912, 1914; Maclean 1890, 1893; Michelson 1911; Petitot 1886; Schultz 1916; Uhlenbeck 1911).

Grinnell and Wissler relied on different approaches in obtaining their information. Wissler supplied his informant and interpreter, David Duvall, with funding from the American Museum of Natural History in New York to enable him to carry out extensive fieldwork on the Museum's behalf. It was through Duvall that Wissler was able to make

contact with respected tribal Elders and story-tellers, and this is reflected in Duvall's name being given as co-author of *Mythology of the Blackfoot Indians*. Duvall's fieldwork was more extensive than Wissler's own, and he provided Wissler with most of his information relating to the Blackfoot for this and other volumes in the American Museum of Natural History's *Anthropological Papers* (although he is not mentioned as co-author elsewhere). Duvall spent several years recording different versions of myths, and collecting data on social organisation, ritual practices, etc., in both Blackfoot and English, on Wissler's behalf.

Grinnell, however, relied for his information on the Piegan families with whom he was most closely associated, and his versions of the tales were often recorded during informal family story-telling sessions between small groups of relatives and friends. There is little evidence for the dedication and systematic collection of evidence apparent in Wissler/Duvall's work, and in this respect it is interesting to note that Grinnell recorded several tales of adventure which were the personal reminiscences of his informants whereas Wissler/Duvall's more structured approach placed on emphasis on "types" of tales rather than on individual and personal narratives.

Wissler's collaborator, David Duvall, needs some further mention here. Duvall was the son of a prominent Piegan woman, Yellow Bird (Louise Big Plume), and a French-Canadian fur trader, Charles Duvall. Although Wissler only refers to Duvall as a translator of the tales he collected, it is clear that Duvall shared with Boas, Wissler, and many Blackfoot of the period, a belief that the loss of knowledge of tribal beliefs and customs was imminent. He also assisted a number of other researchers, and is named as a story-teller, translator, and as a source for other informants by Michelson in the introduction to *Piegan Tales* (1911). Duvall was fluent in Blackfoot and English, and Wissler provided him with the opportunity of saving a record of tribal lore by contributing to the *Anthropological Papers* which Wissler was editing. Duvall took this opportunity up with unprecedented energy and



commitment. He was responsible for many of the translations of texts, which he cross-referenced and checked for accuracy with leading Blackfoot Elders and story-tellers. His importance to the *Anthropological Papers* is evident from the fact that planned volumes on the Blackfoot were cancelled by Wissler when Duvall committed suicide in 1911 before the research for them could be completed.

Wissler notes in his Memoriam to Duvall (1911) that:

[Duvall] took an unusual interest in the work. He was of an investigating turn of mind and possessed of considerable linguistic ability. On his own initiative he set out to master the more obscure and less used parts of his mother tongue, having, as he often said, formed an ambition to become its most accurate translator into English ... during the last years of his life he contributed several hundred pages of manuscript.

Duvall's concern was to save the knowledge of his people for the future, and he worked closely with other Blackfoot who shared this view. In this respect his aims and ambitions, despite Wissler's disclaimer that Duvall was "not ... in any sense an adherent of Blackfoot religion" (In Memoriam, 1911), differed from the detached "scientific" approach advocated by Wissler, since Duvall's own position and beliefs could not allow him to become an entirely impartial recorder of information such as Wissler might have preferred. Wissler's comments in his introduction to *Mythology of the Blackfoot Indians* suggest his own approach encompassed a rather dogmatic and rigid methodology, yet it is nevertheless clear he allowed considerable latitude in the way fieldwork was actually conducted and there is nothing to suggest Wissler directed the work Duvall carried out on his behalf other than to ask him to obtain as many opinions and versions of tales as possible. The final form in which Duvall's information was published is, however, entirely due to Wissler's editorship and his desire to establish "prototypical" tales rather than to present individual variants.

Duvall's involvement raises important questions about the role of the Native informant. It is not possible at this remove in time to

determine the extent to which Duvall's "hidden agenda" (as a preserver of his people's customs and beliefs) coloured the information he gave to Wissler, nor whether his circle of friends and acquaintances were truly representative of Blackfoot opinion at the turn of the century. It is interesting, though ultimately futile, to speculate on whether Wissler would have reached different conclusions about the generic forms of Blackfoot tales if his informant had been someone other than Duvall, and, if this had been the case, whether modern story-telling (based in large part on a reworking of Wissler/Duvall's texts) would have taken on other shades and tones.

Duvall's input as informant/translator is also apparent in other collections from the period. Alternative versions of tales collected by Duvall appear in various publications by Maclean (1890, 1893), Michelson (1911), and Uhlenbeck (1911, 1912). To what extent these are dependent on information that Duvall had already acquired for Wissler, or how thoroughly Duvall was involved with the work of these other authors is unclear. These sources do, however, need to be treated with some caution. The few tales Michelson collected with Duvall's assistance in the summer of 1910 were incidental to his study of the Blackfoot language, and it is apparent that some of the tales cannot be attributed directly to the Blackfoot but are likely to be borrowings, in whole or in part, from neighbouring groups. Concepts of Pan-Indianism, of an ethnic rather than tribal identity, were beginning to be felt among the Blackfoot when Duvall carried out his fieldwork, and were probably part of an ancient tradition of borrowing cultural elements. Duvall's involvement in Michelson's work is acknowledged when Michelson writes "Mr. D.C. Duvall interpreted but one of these tales himself, and related the last one [and provided] interpreters for the others when he was not available" (1911:238).

Michelson's tales of *Old Man and his Step-Daughter* (1911:247-248) and *Old Man and the Geese* (1911:248) nevertheless both appear to have been introduced to the Blackfoot. In *Old Man and his Step-Daughter*, Old Man (Napi) pretends to die and then comes back in disguise so he

can marry his step-daughter. This is a widespread theme which may have originated among Siouan speaking Dakota groups, where the step-daughter may be replaced by daughter, but has also been recorded among the Assiniboine (Radin 1956), Gros Ventre (Kroeber 1908), Northern Shoshone (Lowie 1909), Arapaho (Dorsey and Kroeber 1903), and Crow (Lowie 1918). Similarly, the story of *Old Man and the Geese*, in which Old Man (Napi) persuades the geese to dance with their eyes closed and then begins to kill them, has been recorded in almost identical form by Dorsey and Kroeber among the Arapaho (1903), the only difference being that the geese are replaced in the Arapaho version by "dancing ducks". That this tale is an introduction is underlined by the fact that the Blackfoot consider fish and any animal or bird associated with water to be poisonous. It would therefore be ludicrous in an original Blackfoot context for Napi to trouble himself with killing "inedible" geese to satisfy his greed; unless this is used improbably as a means of emphasising Napi's contrariness and foolishness. The only other reference in Blackfoot tales to geese being killed is a version of the story of the culture hero, Scar-Face, collected by Wissler (1908:63), and in this the culture hero does so because the geese threaten the life of Morning Star rather than because he is hungry. Grinnell notes that "Geese ... are credited with great wisdom and with foreknowledge of the weather" (1892:139), and this being the case, we should expect the geese to outwit Napi rather than vice-versa; Napi's foolishness would be more characteristically expressed by a failure to recognise that the geese possess any wisdom of their own.

Maclean repeats the same tales from his publication of 1890 in his work from 1893, with some slight changes in wording which are evidently editorial and do not suggest the tales were variants from different Blackfoot story-tellers. Maclean does not credit Duvall with assistance, and notes "the following fragments were gathered from the lips of the Blood Indians, as I sat in their lodges with note-book in hand" (1893:165), and his own concluding comments cast doubt on the reliability of his informants and the accuracy of their versions of the stories. He tells us:

Among the Blackfeet there are several traditions which the writer was unable to obtain, as only a few of the older men possessed the knowledge sufficient to relate them accurately, and they seemed to be unwilling at the time to impart the information. (1893:172)

Uhlenbeck's more substantial records (1911, 1912) provide us with several tales in Blackfoot with literal English translations. Uhlenbeck relied on Joe Tatsey (a bi-lingual Blood-Piegan) and it is therefore possible that variations in the tales he recorded when compared with those in other collections reflect the personal interpretation and presentation of his informant as well as a mixing of elements from the Blood and Piegan divisions of the Blackfoot confederacy. That Uhlenbeck was probably also in contact with Duvall is nevertheless clear, since in recording *Bear Chief's Songs* he tells us "[these songs were] communicated to Bear-chief by Big-plume" (1911:66). Bear Chief was a close friend of Duvall's and the narrator who passed these tales on to him, Big Plume, was the father of Duvall's mother, Yellow Bird (Louise Big Plume). To what extent Uhlenbeck's record has been influenced by Duvall's work is, however, uncertain. I am not suggesting that Bear Chief was an unreliable informant and imply no criticism of Uhlenbeck's work: in fact, it is evident that Uhlenbeck's personality has intruded less than in those tales collected by Grinnell and Wissler which have been rendered into more readable prose. That Uhlenbeck relied on a single informant nevertheless makes it impossible to ascertain whether the tales he collected were related in a tribal context and had tribal currency, or whether these simply reflect a personal view.

Other references to Blackfoot traditions from this period are found in the works of Schultz (1907, 1916, 1935), McClintock (1910), Josselin de Jong (1914), and Curtis (1911), although these do not provide us with a corpus of stories. Again, we need to refer to these sources with care, especially so with regard to Schultz and McClintock. Schultz's *My Life as an Indian* (1907 and 1935) and McClintock's *Old North Trail* (1910) contain a wealth of ethnographic information but are written as popular texts with a strong pro-Indian bias and may not be

objective. Schultz was a trader who had married into the Small-Robes band of the Southern Piegan and remained living with them after the fur trade era ended. Much of his writing is justification of his own position as a "squaw man" among the Indians and, as Kehoe points out, he was "praised as a 'born storyteller', but born storytellers are not scrupulous about historical facts" (1995:xx). McClintock's *Old North Trail* reflects a similarly romantic youthful fling with the Blackfoot while he was working for the US Forestry Service, although he did devote the later years of his life to a more serious academic study of Blackfoot customs and beliefs which were published as part of the Southwest Museum's Leaflet series between 1935 and 1948. McClintock was, however, in contact with Duvall, since shortly before he committed suicide in 1911 Duvall had written to Wissler to inform him that he anticipated spending the following summer working as a translator for Mr McClintock.

A few tales were also collected by Robert Lowie among the Northern Blackfoot (Siksika), to which reference is made by Wissler. I am not aware that Lowie published these separately, and I am here reliant on the versions given by Wissler and Duvall in *Mythology of the Blackfoot Indians*. My emphasis, while considering the contributions made to Blackfoot story-telling traditions by other recorders of the tales, is nevertheless on the comparative merits of the collections made by the two major contributors to our knowledge of Blackfoot story-telling from this period: George Bird Grinnell and Clark Wissler/David Duvall.

Grinnell and Wissler, as previously intimated, represent opposite extremes in the study of Native American cultures. Grinnell is, in some senses, easier to criticise than Wissler. We know his strengths and weaknesses only too well, since he spelt them out, and it is clear that he was an impassioned, and at times enraged, participant in Blackfoot events at the turn of the century rather than an impartial observer. His character and temperament are akin to those of his close

friend, Schultz, who also championed the "Indian cause" and from whom Grinnell obtained some of his stories. He acknowledges that:

a portion of the material contained in these pages [*Blackfoot Lodge Tales*] was originally made public by Mr Schultz, and he was the discoverer of the literature of the Blackfeet. My own investigations have made me familiar with all the stories here recorded, from original sources, but some of them he first published in the columns of the *Forest and Stream* [of which Grinnell was the general editor] (1892:xiv)

Grinnell attempted to reach a popular audience with the intention of making white Americans aware that Native Americans were human beings who had been subjected to "an unbroken narrative of injustice, fraud, and robbery" (1892:ix) in their interactions with the white community. In this respect he, like Schultz, had an evangelical zeal to make his writings widely available and to present a sympathetic view of the American Indian. Wissler, by contrast, was initially employed as assistant to Franz Boas at the American Museum of Natural History in New York. After Boas left in 1905, Wissler became general editor and the driving force behind their series of *Anthropological Papers*, and, later, Curator Emeritus of the Museum's ethnographic collections. His brief, initiated by Boas, was to record and document Blackfoot customs and beliefs in as unemotional a manner as possible and to present facts for the scrutiny of an academic audience.

Thus the two major collections have radically different approaches to a study of and involvement with the Blackfoot: Grinnell's from a sense of outrage and sympathy based on information from close friends and informal contacts; Wissler's from a desire to present what he felt was unbiased factual information based on material supplied via Duvall from some of the most important and respected members of the Blackfoot community. We should not, of course, ignore the fact that Duvall and his contacts also had their own agenda which was not without bias. In general, however, a major difference between Grinnell and Wissler is evident in Grinnell's presentation of tales referring to the personal narratives of his informants when compared with Wissler's persistent search for tales he believed were

representative types. Both these approaches carry their own particular forms of prejudice which need to be considered a little more closely.

In Grinnell's writing we are invited to share the emotional experience of sitting by camp firesides on cool autumnal evenings listening to the story-tellers, and can feel the tension, suspense, excitement, and humour of a Native American audience. In these renditions we can recognise the personalities of the individual story-tellers and empathise with them. Grinnell does, however, adopt an uncritical stance regarding the reliability of the personal friends who were his informants, and is not always the objective observer of Blackfoot customs that he claims to be. He tells us "these are Indian stories, pictures of Indian life drawn by Indian artists, and showing this life from the Indian's point of view" (1892:xi), but it is nevertheless important to exercise caution in taking such statements entirely at face value.

Some of his stories stem originally from non-Native sources, such as Schultz, are composite tales, or derive from other language groups as in the *Dog and the Stick* (1892: 145-148; in which Old Man transforms himself - a characteristic of the Siouan Trickster, but not of that of the Blackfoot). A closer reading of his collection of tales also suggests that he (or his editor) chose to rewrite various passages that might have offended a populist white middle-class audience and which would have thwarted Grinnell's aim of gaining support for the Indian cause. This is particularly evident in, but not limited to, tales referring to the Trickster, Napi (Old Man), in which all references to Napi's immense sexual appetite and obscene behaviour have been altered in order to present him as a more wholesome character who would appeal to the charitable matrons of fashionable Washington society, and which would be acceptable in a book intended to be distributed to a conservative mass market.

That Grinnell's own informants themselves adapted the stories by removing any sexual or obscene references because they were embarrassed

to recite these in his presence is untenable. Wissler tells us there were a great number of ordinary humorous stories, most of them obscene (1908:6), in addition to the obscene passages in the Napi series. These were - and still are - told freely in front of mixed audiences which often contain children (young girls might today be told not to listen while the more risqué passages are being recited!), and some of the erotic adventures of Napi were even used as "lullabies" to soothe fretting babies (Wissler 1908:16). It is highly unlikely that any Blackfoot story-teller would have felt it necessary to "clean up" the stories for Grinnell's benefit. There was a very open attitude to sex and sexuality shown by the Blackfoot in comparison with the prudish and Victorian attitudes expressed among the "polite" society of Grinnell's day which formed the primary audience for his publications.

An obvious example of removing sexual references occurs in the jumping trial ordered after the death of a chief's daughter in order to identify the culprit. In Wissler/Duvall's version entitled *Old Man's Escape* (1908:34-35), Napi places excrement on her dress and demands sexual intercourse as "payment" to prevent him exposing the fact she has soiled herself. She agrees to this request, but asks him to tie a stick beneath the glans of his enormous penis. He, however, removes the stick and the girl is killed. In the jumping contest that follows Napi exchanges his gigantic penis for the small one of a bird. Encumbered by the enormous weight he has to carry the bird is unable to jump a river and fails the test, whereas Napi, wearing the tiny penis of the bird, leaps the river with ease.

In Grinnell's "sanitised" version, *Old Man Doctors* (1892:159-164), Napi simply swaps necklaces with Chickadee, and Chickadee is unable to jump because Napi's necklace is so much larger than his own. Whereas Wissler/Duvall begin with Napi smearing excrement on the girl's dress and then forcing her into sexual intercourse as a means of paying him for not revealing her distress, the comparable elements in Grinnell are that he smears buffalo gall on the girl's lips and then accepts the offer of a widowed woman (a legitimate marriage) as payment for

removing the bitter taste. Such alterations are in spite of Grinnell's claim that he gives us:

... the Blackfoot stories as they have been told to me by the Indians themselves, not elaborating nor adding to them. In all cases except one [he doesn't say which] they were written down as they fell from the lips of the story-teller. Sometimes I have transposed a sentence or two, or have added a few words of explanation; but the stories as here given are told in the words of the original narrators as nearly as it is possible to render those words into the simplest everyday English. (1892:xi)

It is also evident that Grinnell, although he was rather forthright in his outspoken support for the Blackfoot and other tribes, expressed opinions that were common at the turn of the century. He felt the Indian was untutored and that uncivilised notions governed his conception of the world. To Grinnell the American Indian was a "child" who expressed sentiments "not unlike those which your own small boy might utter" and who was "underdeveloped". He tells us that the Indian:

has the mind and feelings of a child with the stature of a man [but that] civilised and educated, the Indian of the better class is not less intelligent than the average white man, and he has every capacity for becoming a good citizen. (introductory notes 1892:vii-xiii)

Grinnell's writing gives the impression that the Indian has been abused and misunderstood, but this is presented with a curious mixture of admiration for the "savages", a desire to present the Indian in the best possible light, and a clear belief in the superiority of the white man and the benefits of education and civilisation. It is difficult to determine whether Grinnell is lamenting the loss of the old, free (but also simple and childlike) life of Blackfoot hunters and warriors, or whether he is urging reform so the Blackfoot can grow to "maturity" under the paternalistic care of the United States government (Grinnell was in contact with Southern Piegan families and seems generally unaware of the somewhat different circumstances faced by the Canadian Blackfoot). His ambivalent attitude is evident when he attempts to explain misunderstandings between Indian and white communities by

attributing different feelings and motives to the Indian and the civilised man. He writes:

Many stories about Indians have been written, some of which are interesting and some, perhaps, true. All, however, have been written by civilised people, and have thus of necessity been misleading. The reason for this is plain. The white person who gives his idea of a story of Indian life inevitably looks at things from the civilised point of view, and assigns to the Indian such motives and feelings as govern the civilised man. But often the feelings which lead an Indian to perform a particular action are not those which would induce a white man to do the same thing, or if they are, the train of reasoning which led to the Indian's motive is not the reasoning of the white man. (1892:x)

Such a view would attract criticism today for its ethnocentric and male-oriented bias. None of the informants Grinnell names is female; indeed, there is a curious lack of women in Blackfoot society if we are to judge by Grinnell's text: all his references are to "warriors" and what would appear to be (but could not have been) all male story-telling sessions. Blackfoot story-telling sessions were, and are, open to all members of the community and the contexts in which Grinnell tells us he heard the stories would not have precluded women and children from attending. Although restrictions are placed on the composition of an audience in certain situations, such as ritual transfers, even these do not result in exclusively male audiences. In fact, the importance of women in Blackfoot society cannot be emphasised too strongly. In the pre- and early-reservation days, as well as today, they are often acknowledged story-tellers, and women play a major role in the transfer of ritual properties and hence in the transference and re-enactment of the tales by which these ritual properties are validated.

The myth of male dominance in Plains societies is nevertheless a persistent one, based on misunderstandings by outside observers which attempted to fit Native ideals of respect relationships into a framework of their own making. La Barre even goes so far as to state this is the Native view: "so basically do recent Indians assume that individual excellence and personal superiority must be masculine that

women of high social dominance must inevitably be called 'manly-hearted women' among the Blackfoot and Piegan" (1970:139). Apparently unknown to, or unrecognised by, La Barre is the fact that "manly-hearted woman" refers to a woman who has adopted a masculine role, as hunter or warrior, and makes no reference to social status or prestige. I am unaware of any situation among the Blackfoot in which stories would be related before an exclusively male audience as implied in Grinnell's text.

Yet in spite of what would now be considered as serious objective failings on Grinnell's part, he was one of the more enlightened writers of his period. He recognised the injustices the Blackfoot had suffered and the outrages perpetrated against them under the reservation system (1892:x-xi) and campaigned for equal rights, even though it was his own definition of equality that he pursued by demanding that the Blackfoot had the same right to be educated and to enjoy the rewards of civilisation as did the white man (a view with which many Blackfoot would have disagreed). The attitude of Grinnell's informants may not have been representative of all, nor perhaps even the majority, of Blackfoot at the turn of the century. He tells us that "while sitting about the fire" he let fall a scrap of paper which one of the Blackfoot present, Double Runner, picked up, exclaiming: "this is education. Here is the difference between you and me, between the Indians and the white people. You know what this means. I do not. If I did know, I should be as smart as you" (1892:vii).

Although Grinnell's conception of equality and the importance attached to education by his informants was not shared by many Blackfoot at the time, Grinnell does succeed in presenting the "human face" of the Indian in contrast to the popular opinion in Montana at this period that they were "treacherous savages". This latter view was expressed by trappers and traders who had suffered Blackfoot depredations and their biases are perhaps to be expected since the Blackfoot had only recently been subdued and confined to reservations when Grinnell collected his tales. The danger from Blackfoot war

parties - whether real or imagined - was still fresh in the minds of many Montana citizens. Chittenden notes that during the fur trade era immediately preceding Grinnell's involvement with the Blackfoot, the "first to arrest our attention [are] the terrible Blackfeet, the scourge of the Upper Missouri country during the whole of the [fur trade] period" (1986:838). The charitable views of members of polite society whom Grinnell hoped to influence lived far from the "frontier" and often held romantic notions of the "simple" life of the uneducated Indians that Grinnell - who idealised the notion of the "Noble Savage" - so effectively conveyed.

The views being expressed in and around the Blackfoot homelands were very different. It was a common belief that the Blackfoot were uselessly occupying land which might be put to better use, and there was widespread resentment that they were being "rewarded" for their past wrongs through the provision of "free" government supplies, education, and health care under the treaty arrangements. Schultz (1907:411-415; 1935:198-204) notes that at this period "squaw men" (that is, white men with Indian wives) were effectively barred from holding public office in Montana and were especially despised by the wives of the upright citizens of Montanan towns.

Grinnell had the courage to speak out against such entrenched views; but it is clear many Americans still held the opinion expressed by Father Pierre-Jean de Smet as early as 1846. Although de Smet established many successful missions among the north-western tribes and wrote "I am firmly convinced that a mission to [the Blackfoot] would produce results very fortunate and very consoling for the religion" he felt compelled to add the qualifying remark that:

It is assuredly a task full of difficulties and obstacles, requiring the zeal and courage of an apostle; one must be prepared for a life of crosses, privation and patience; they are savages in the full meaning of the word, accustomed to wreak vengeance on their enemies and wallow in blood and carnage. They are plunged in coarse superstitions which brutalise their souls; they worship the sun and moon and offer them sacrifices of propitiation and thanksgiving. Now they cut deep gashes in their bodies and catch the blood; now they strike off joints of their

fingers and present them to their divinities, crying: "I do thee this favour, Apostotokio (God, Spirit), I give thee my blood; do me also a favour on the war-path, and when I come again I will worship thee with scalps that I take from my enemies. (Letter from Pierre-Jean de Smet to his Father Superior, Fort Lewis, September 7th, 1846)

De Smet admittedly wrote this comment before the Blackfoot finally succumbed to starvation and were incarcerated on reservations, but his opinion is one that was still held by many Americans at the turn of the century. Exaggerated frontier tales of Blackfoot atrocities, no matter how fanciful, had earned the Blackfoot and their allies a reputation for savagery, and it was common public opinion that their destitute condition was retribution for past wrongs. Yet Grinnell made close friends among them and found the Blackfoot hospitable and generous.

Grinnell's view, as well as that of other late nineteenth century travellers and traders who knew the Blackfoot well, such as McClintock and Schultz, is difficult to reconcile with the vehement condemnation implied elsewhere. Grinnell, in fact, visited regularly over a period of several years, when he was welcomed in their lodges and shared numerous story-telling sessions with them, and on several occasions he acted as an envoy for the tribes, using his influence to force investigations into malpractice by the Indian Agents appointed to safeguard Blackfoot rights (see *Indians and their Stories*, the introductory chapter to *Blackfoot Lodge Tales*, for comment on Grinnell's attitude to government authorities).

Although Grinnell clearly had the interests of his Blackfoot friends at heart, he was unable to disentangle his feelings and emotions from the politics of the period and tried hard to be accepted by both the Indian and white communities. While he recognised and admired certain Blackfoot values, he also saw these as a hindrance to their future advancement. His loyalties were undoubtedly divided between the lodge fires of the Indians and the banqueting tables of fashionable circles. Factual alterations to the tales he collected

were intended to avoid alienating his American audience, and his emphasis on the value of educating the "savages" was as much one that would be acceptable to his peers as it was that of his Blackfoot contacts. Thus Grinnell attempted to combine the romantic notion of the Indian way of life - with which he charmed others during polite dinner conversations - with his call for reforms that would make the Indian a "good citizen" but which would also inevitably lead to the abandonment of the simple life he so admired.

At the opposite extreme, Wissler avoided involvement with the moral issues that caused Grinnell so much anguish. Although Wissler was undoubtedly driven by the political notions of the time and with his concern to secure his own position at the American Museum of Natural History, and despite Duvall's very involved position with the internal politics of the Blackfoot, he nevertheless remains detached and remote in his comments. His unemotional approach is severe, and his concern to record factual detail so fastidiously adhered to, that the individual voices of the Blackfoot narrators of the tales have been lost. The narratives Wissler presents lack spontaneity, despite Kehoe's assertion to the contrary that they provide "glimpses of the passions, the fears, and sometimes noble actions vivifying Blackfoot community life [and that] a relish of being alive, of taking up challenges, proving one's worth ... comes through this collection" (1995:xxviii). Instead, they read as if the story-tellers have given formal recitals in the context of an interview rather than being recorded during performative sessions. While it is clear that some tales were collected during formal interviews, Duvall's status and involvement meant that much of the information must have been obtained during actual story-telling sessions or from informal discussions with other story-tellers.

The formal character of the tales, as presented by Wissler, is more likely to derive from Wissler's editing of the texts and transcriptions he was given by Duvall rather than from the manner in which they were collected. It is also clear that Duvall obtained some

of his texts in Blackfoot, although only the English versions appear in the final publication. There is nothing in the texts as presented by Wissler to engage the attention of a live audience, and the asides and comments that both Grinnell and Wissler tell us were apparent in story-telling sessions are missing in the tales as published by Wissler. Wissler records statements of fact without any sense of individuality, tension, pace, or involvement.

Despite its detachment, Wissler's work is probably more representative of Blackfoot story-telling at the turn of the century than is Grinnell's, due primarily to Duvall's diligence in obtaining tales from a number of respected story-tellers whose integrity was unquestioned rather than Grinnell's reliance on stories told by a few well-known friends. Even so, Duvall's circle of informants, who also gave information to Michelson and Uhlenbeck, and possibly to Maclean, represent a fairly limited group of often related individuals, and their opinions - although differing from the attitudes expressed by Grinnell's contacts - still indicate a polarity in Blackfoot thinking rather than a general consensus. There is, however, no indication that Wissler permitted any deviation from what he felt was the "true" presentation of facts - although his definition of "truth" and of representative types of tales was his own rather than that of the Blackfoot. Duvall's involvement nevertheless ensured that Wissler had a selection of tales available to him that had been scrutinised and checked in the light of informed Blackfoot opinion.

Wissler's failing, in contradiction to Grinnell's emphasis on the personal narratives of his friends, was that he understated the importance of the individual narrator's style in Blackfoot story-telling sessions. A clue as to why there is this striking lack of personality in the tales Wissler published is contained in his introduction to *Mythology of the Blackfoot Indians*. He tells us the method adopted for the most important myths was to discuss them with different individuals so as to form an opinion as to the most common arrangement of incidents. He does not give us any criteria by which

"importance" was judged, and it has to be assumed that Wissler regarded those tales as important which he or Duvall heard most frequently or which were associated with the major Medicine Bundles and rituals.

It may, too, be the case that Wissler's collection is far from complete and that he failed to gain versions of some important tales. There were almost certainly significant tales the Blackfoot withheld because they referred to events that they considered sacred or to which Duvall had no right that permitted him to record them. This would apply to some tales of Ritualistic Origins where Duvall had not been initiated into the ritual and therefore had no formal access to the ritual's more esoteric aspects. This is underscored by Wissler's own comment in *Social Life of the Blackfoot Indians* (1911) that Duvall was "not an adherent of Blackfoot religion", and is readily apparent in *Ceremonial Bundles of the Blackfoot Indians* (1912), Wissler's study of Blackfoot ritual, where important but secret aspects of various rituals are omitted. This study was also carried out with Duvall's help and we can assume similar omissions are reflected in the collection of tales. Thus, despite the apparent completeness of Wissler's collection, it is impossible to state categorically that he had access to all tales of major significance.

It is, furthermore, also apparent that Wissler presents us with his "definitive" versions of the tales rather than recording what Duvall's informants actually said. This is in spite of the fact that Wissler did recognise individuality in Blackfoot story-telling since he tells us:

Myths are told by a few individuals, who take pride in their ability and knowledge, and usually impress their own individuality upon the form of the narrative ... each narrator has his own version, in the telling of which he is usually consistent.

He adds

Once when discussing this matter with a Blood Indian, the venerable old man pulled up a common ragweed, saying, "The parts of this weed all branch off from the stem. They go different ways, but all come from the same root. So it is with the different versions of a myth". (1908:5)

An interesting debate could be entered here as to whether Wissler was the first American "structural anthropologist", since he was clearly concerned to look beyond the immediate information he was given in a search for structures and patterns that implied deeper connections and parallels than a straightforward retelling of the stories suggests. In this he was at odds with his former superior and teacher at the American Museum of Natural History, Franz Boas, whose interest was in obtaining "unbiased" texts. Helene Codere, commenting on Boas' research methodology, noted "Boas originated the recording of texts for ethnographic as well as linguistic purposes as a solution to the problem of acquiring ethnographic data as free as possible from the certain self-contamination of the data by the ethnographer himself" (1966:xv).

The question arises as to what extent Wissler, freed after 1905 from any restraints imposed by Boas, continued to follow the teachings of his predecessor. Boas may be thought of as a major opponent to any structuralist approach, and, as noted above, was against "ethnographic intervention" in order to assist him in acquiring unbiased texts. On the surface this appears to contradict the approach adopted by Wissler; yet Boas was conscious rather than dismissive of structuralist aims, and Wissler's avowed intent (though perhaps not his actual practice) was to obtain academic "facts". This search for a factual and unbiased base is reminiscent of Boas' teaching, but the methodology Wissler adopted to achieve this end led him to consider the tales as entities separate from any individual telling of a story. It is this that tended to divorce him from the people he studied and which leaves an impression that he was uninvolved with his informants. There is little warmth in Wissler's work, and in this respect he differs from Boas whose initial lead in funding and employing a respected Native informant was followed by Wissler.

Boas, despite his objective distancing and unlike Wissler, made many efforts to involve himself directly in the lives of the communities he worked with - such as sponsoring a feast for the

daughter of one of his informants - and his relationship with the Scots-Tlingit George Hunt, his informant and collaborator among the Kwakiutl, was one of close friendship. Wissler stayed separate and there is no indication that he ever became emotionally involved with the Blackfoot he studied and with whom he was in close association. Even his Memoriam to David Duvall displays little personal warmth, although it is clear from his increasingly frustrated correspondence with Duvall's successor and nephew, James Eagle Child, and as Kehoe points out (1995:vi), that Wissler deeply regretted the loss of his able and intelligent co-worker.

Whereas Boas attempted to establish himself within the community but to maintain academic objectivity, Wissler remained distant for the same reasons. Wissler's concern with a detached and objective view that attempts to establish some preliminary structural meanings and representative types of tales is interesting but cold, and discussions with prominent Blackfoot story-tellers suggests they would disagree with Wissler that any tale can be reduced to a single formula: indeed, they stress the variety and individuality of separate tellings. Boas' concern for scientific objectivity and the distancing of the ethnographer's own voice from the subject is paralleled by Wissler's different, but not incompatible, approach.

Wissler's professional attitude was to keep his own personality firmly in the background: it is, in fact, rare to find any personal comment expressed in his publications concerning the Blackfoot, and when we do it is generally presented in a tentative manner. Wissler, as Kehoe notes, was "reticent about his personal feelings" (1995:vi); yet his work is nevertheless coloured by the views of turn of the century American opinion and by Boas' lead in that he considered Indian culture as destined to disappear, as well as by his own definition of what the aims and objectives of anthropology should be. In this latter respect his editorship of the *Anthropological Papers* of the American Museum of Natural History made him a very influential figure, as did his position as Curator Emeritus of the Museum's collections. Wissler

dealt with facts and encouraged anthropologists working under him and dependent on his approval for financial backing from the Museum or who otherwise came under his influence, such as Robert Lowie, Alanson Skinner, and Pliny Earle Goddard, to do the same.

However, what constituted fact for Wissler is not entirely straightforward. His definition of the aims and objectives of anthropology and that this should be as free as possible from any contamination of the data by the ethnographer stems directly from Boas, as does his belief that a single informant who was prominent in his own community should be employed as a field researcher in order to gain access to information that the "outsider" might be unable to obtain. Wissler did not adopt Boas' "magpie" approach of gathering every possible scrap of information regardless of its apparent relevance. Instead, Wissler collated and edited information of the "kind he could use" and often returned documents to Duvall for rewriting. Despite this, he was nevertheless willing to let Duvall exercise considerable freedom in the manner by which he collected data as well as acceding to Duvall's notions of which tales should be considered worthy of collection.

An important concern here is that Wissler went to great lengths in his editing of the tales supplied to him by Duvall in order to eliminate certain aspects of the stories which he felt hindered a "correct" presentation. Many of these eliminations appear to have been of repetitive phrases introduced by the story-tellers at what Wissler tells us are "irregular intervals"; but it is also evident he amalgamated several versions of some tales to present his readers with his own definitive version. He tells us these repetitions and "individual idiosyncracies [were] naturally eliminated in the translations [and that] the present condition of Blackfoot mythology is such that its comparative study would not be materially facilitated by [literal] records" (1908:5). Some of the texts were recorded in Blackfoot, and Wissler acknowledges these might prove invaluable in linguistic research, but he laments the fact that comparative tales

were no longer available. This, of course, contradicts his own statement that "each narrator has his own version" (1908:5).

Wissler's concept of fact is therefore far removed from the direct gathering of information and the presentation of this in a manner as close to the original as possible. We can go so far as to say that he considered the individual voice in a narrative as detracting from its factual value by introducing idiosyncracies, and that he felt it was only by the removal of such idiosyncracies that a "true" version of the narrative could be determined. Wissler is concerned with the structure of tales rather than their individual presentation, but fails to recognise the essential personal aspect in Blackfoot narratives by treating them as static entities which can be reduced to a definitive form.

It is evident that both Grinnell and Wissler interpose their own beliefs and intentions between the information they collected and the manner in which this is presented for public debate and consideration. Both carried out fundamental editing of the material that was available to them: Grinnell in order to avoid alienating his patriotic white audience and to champion his cause; Wissler in the furtherance of an academic truth which sought some kind of prototypical tale that would encompass the essential elements of the variants he had been given. Modern Blackfoot retellings of these stories nevertheless usually regard the Grinnell and Wissler versions as factual statements of information received directly from the original story-tellers. Where criticism has been made by contemporary Blackfoot story-tellers it is of the personal views and attitudes expressed in these publications - a criticism directed more at Grinnell than at Wissler - but the contents of the tales themselves are generally accepted as being transcriptions of the original stories as received. It is significant, however, that the Blackfoot have no difficulty in also accepting that several versions of a single tale may each be considered as "correct".

While it is important to recognise the question of accuracy in any reinterpretation of these tales that is caused by failings in the original collections, and although it is impossible to avoid the biases introduced by both Grinnell and Wissler, it is possible to look beyond these to a structure that is characteristic not only of Blackfoot story-telling but which is reflected in other aspects of Blackfoot life and social interaction. Modern Blackfoot story-tellers, tribal historians, and ritualists claim this "traditional" structure is still relevant for the Blackfoot of today. This does not imply that every Blackfoot is aware of a theoretical structure that applies to story-telling and which also governs other beliefs, neither am I suggesting that every modern Blackfoot holds a traditional view. There is, however, a strong focus of opinion among Elders, tribal historians, story-tellers, and Medicine Bundle Owners that the tales, order of rituals, respect relationships, and so forth are patterned (or structured) in specific ways that keep tradition alive and ensure continuity. I claim the structure I investigate in the following sections is inherent in the attitudes of such traditionalists, even though it may not always be articulated and spoken out. To them "tradition" is a natural part of their outlook and their way of life rather than something to be dissected and analysed.

Before proceeding to a closer consideration of the collections of tales from the turn of the century, some brief comment needs to be made about studies of the Blackfoot since the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. There have been a number of initiatives from the Blackfoot themselves, linked with bi-lingual study programmes, the collection of tape recorded narratives, and the inclusion of story-telling as part of Survival School courses. In all of these oral history and narratives play an important part. The Blackfeet Heritage Program, Heart Butte Bi-Lingual Program, Old Sun College, Survival Schools, and various tribal and local educational projects are all part of this movement to preserve traditional views and to make the opinions of the Elders more readily available to a younger generation. These programmes are mentioned by Dempsey and Stepney in their introductions

to Scriver (1990) but have also been made apparent to me during my own visits to the Blackfoot reservations. High School and Adult Education programmes on the reservations place an emphasis on the recitation of myths and tales as a means of promoting awareness of Blackfoot values. As Krupat notes, quoting the Lakota spokesperson Cheryl Crazy Bull, "cultural knowledge restoration and preservation is a primary mission of all tribal colleges. Teachers at the tribal colleges ... teach in a manner consistent with what is taken as the Navajo, or Lakota, or other traditional 'way' of the people ..." (1996:104). The Tribal Museum at Gleichen, Alberta, which is in the forefront of these initiatives on the Blackfoot reservations, has recently (1982) started a project to tape record the stories of Elders and to store these as a resource for future research.

Investigation of the Blackfoot initiatives indicates that the tales collected by Grinnell and Wissler are still current, and the repertoire of many modern story-tellers is, essentially, based upon these. The turn of the century records therefore remain as a fundamental aspect of contemporary presentations; although a distinction needs to be made between the use of narratives in a traditional story-telling context and the more recent use of narratives by the Pan-Indian movement (by which I refer to Native movements that attempt to unite indigenous people across tribal divisions). The use of narratives in the Pan-Indian movement is discussed in more detail in the following section.

Apart from the Blackfoot initiatives, little recent work has been done that adds substantially to our specific understanding of Blackfoot story-telling. Academic studies from 1920 to 1940 were concentrated on Blackfoot adjustment to reservation life and their adaptation to Euroamerican systems rather than conducted as investigations into Blackfoot traditions (Goldfrank 1945; Hanks and Hanks 1950; Hanks and Richardson 1945; Oscar Lewis 1942). The reason for this is that the Blackfoot presence in Montana and Alberta affected the development of the state and province during their early growth periods and it was

felt important to integrate the Blackfoot as fully as possible in these developments. They had too strong a presence to be dismissed as a peripheral issue, and, in addition, treaty rights granted them considerable acreages of productive land and theoretical control of road and railway routes. To some extent this latter point still applies in Canada, where the Blackfoot have not given full legal access to lands under their control. A right of way for the Trans-Canada Highway, for instance, crosses the North Piegan reservation and the details of settlement payments and access to lands bordering the Highway are still in dispute. The Piegan opinion is that they have merely granted a right of passage but still own the land over which the Highway passes. The Canadian government's attitude is that the Blackfoot released their rights in exchange for payment for gravel extracted when the Highway was constructed. Blackfoot integration in the 1920s to 1940s, as today, was a matter of crucial concern to the viability of Montanan and Albertan townships, since Blackfoot cooperation was essential if these were to prosper.

The problem of Blackfoot cooperation and integration passed through several phases, beginning in 1907 when the Dawes Severalty (Allotment) Act, 1887, was implemented among the Southern Piegan. This divided the reservation into 160 acre plots of individually owned farmland. By 1919 the Blackfoot were considered competent to sell their land, and large tracts passed into the ownership of white ranchers and cattlemen or were leased out at nominal rents under the administration of Agents appointed by the Bureau of Indian Affairs. This not only considerably reduced the size of the reservation, but further undermined the already eroded position of the chiefs and prominent families and led to further disruptions to the economic and religious life of the Southern Piegan, with a consequent decline in the importance of story-telling. Not until 1934, under the Indian Reorganization Act as part of Roosevelt's New Deal, was Blackfoot ranching actively encouraged.

By 1950 the Blackfoot "problem" had largely been solved. The tribal members who remembered the days of freedom and independence were dead, and most Blackfoot families were subject to the educational influence of the dominant white community. Their children had been educated in mission schools, which effectively prevented instruction in traditional values, and parents were only too happy to defer to their educated offspring in their relations with the white community. While the middle-aged were apathetic about these developments, the young were enthusiastically embracing the new ideals. Thus when John C Ewers carried out extensive work among the Blackfoot during the 1950s for the Smithsonian Institution he was effectively obtaining information about customs in which the Blackfoot, and in particular the Southern Piegan, no longer had any real faith. His work concentrates on Blackfoot material culture, and the observations he obtained came from people who had little or no direct experience of the pre-reservation period and only remembered being told about the "old days" by their fathers and grandfathers. Only Ewers' oldest informant, a woman named Double Victory Calf Robe, could have recalled any personal experiences from the pre-reservation period. She was said to be 102 years old when Ewers interviewed her in 1951 (the year of her death); but most of Ewers' informants were born in the late 1860s and early 1870s and had little recollection of the period immediately prior to the move on to reservations.

Further changes affected the Blackfoot during the 1960s and 1970s. Their "educated youth" discovered themselves in a no-man's-land: they were not accepted by the white community whose values they had so wholeheartedly embraced, but also found that tribal structures which might have provided security were either destroyed or were inaccessible to them because they did not possess an understanding of tribal traditions. The absence of a traditional upbringing meant they were unable to participate fully in the tribal ceremonies that were still extant, but at the same time white prejudice prevented them from obtaining work outside the reservations. Other tribes were similarly affected, and this provided the impetus for the formation of Pan-Indian

movements which sought to assert an Indian rather than a tribal identity. Within the Pan-Indian movement tales acquired political meaning as an assertion of "Indianness" and the distinctive tribal differences in elements and motifs became blurred. Tales collected among the Blackfoot from this period are often "Indian" in character rather than being specifically Blackfoot.

More recently, with Indian revivalist movements and a growing sense of both tribal and Indian pride, there has been a tendency to go back to supposedly "unadulterated" sources in an attempt to recapture something of the beliefs and ideals that sustained the original groups. For many tribes this has been possible only by referring to the early ethnographies and the records of tales from the turn of the century, and for the Blackfoot this means reference primarily to the collections of Grinnell and Wissler/Duvall. Because of this, any study of traditional Blackfoot story-telling must, at least, take the Grinnell and Wissler/Duvall tales as its starting point.

To conclude this section comment has to be made on the problem of considering Blackfoot oral tradition from texts written in English, since there are arguments that any oral tradition must undergo change when presented in a written and translated form. The Blackfoot situation is a somewhat complex one. Neither Grinnell nor Wissler published any original texts in Blackfoot, and even the Uhlenbeck texts use an archaic Blackfoot that few modern readers or Blackfoot story-tellers are familiar with. There is therefore little reliance on Uhlenbeck's arguably more accurate renditions, and the source for modern Blackfoot story-telling via Grinnell and Wissler/Duvall is already a translation into English as well as a shift from oral to textual format. This, however, has to be considered in light of the fact that the Blackfoot today are literate and most are bi-lingual and that there is a close connection between verbal art and literature. Tales may today be told in either Blackfoot or English. Thus when tales are told in Blackfoot there is a retranslation back into the Algonkian language of the Blackfoot from the published English

versions, as well as a shift from an oral tradition into text and back into spoken form.

As Vladimir Propp points out in *The Nature of Folklore* "... there is a close tie between folklore and literature ... folklore is a literary phenomenon. Like literature, it is a verbal art" (1984:6). Putting an oral tradition into writing nevertheless causes a major change in emphasis: the tale is taken from the communal (story-telling) context and placed in an individual (story-reading) context. What is a public performance as an oral tradition is converted into a private activity in the story-reading situation. Clearly, "listening to a story and telling (or observing a ritual and doing it) are two quite different processes in the ordering and ascription of meaning, and are separated in developmental experience" (Robertson, 1996:600). This is an important difference, but we should be careful of making good:bad value judgements. The difference is in the context in which the tale is received rather than one which affects its contents.

As readers we bring a different perspective to bear on the tale than we can as listeners, and in some circumstances this can be a more perceptive, or critical, one. Time can be spent to consider the various nuances and subtleties of the tale and to re-read passages that might otherwise be unclear or difficult. On the other hand, hearing the tale in a communal setting allows for shared reactions that can give the rendition an emotional intensity which might be lacking in an individual reading. In story-telling sessions the way the audience responds is an integral part of the "meaning" the tale conveys. There are, therefore, changes in the way a tale is "heard" depending on whether it is performed or presented as text. Ethnographic writing as a form of literary exercise in its own right has been taken up by Geertz (1973) and subsequently, though somewhat inconclusively, by Clifford and Marcus (1986), Kuper (1994), Reyna (1994), and others. In addition, we must recognise that "there is no neutral medium of representation available for the ethnographer [and that] there are socially shared conventions of reading and writing that exert a major

influence on the production and reception of academic texts" (Atkinson and Coffey 1995:50).

Translation presents a different problem. Story-telling sessions may be in Blackfoot or English or in a combination of both, depending on the preferences of the story-teller, the proficiency in either or both languages of the audience and story-teller (although nearly all Blackfoot are fluent in both languages), as well as the context in which the story is being told. For instance, most tales recited as part of Survival School programmes are in English, the Heart Butte programme uses English and Blackfoot, whereas the Old Sun College tape recordings of tales are all in Blackfoot - although translations are being prepared. The Kiowa story-teller, author, and professor, N Scott Momaday, with reference to American Indian oral tradition in general, says of translation:

... something changes, but I'm not sure that the change represents a loss ... it is a kind of cliché to say that translation is impossible, or that one loses what is most important in translation ... there is such a thing as a very good translation in which nothing is lost. It is even possible that something new might be gained. (Lecture Notes, University of California, Berkeley, n.d.)

Momaday's view is that translation puts the tales into a different "word set" and makes them available to a speaker of another language and that this causes a change in the way they are received, although we should again be careful of making an all-embracing good:bad value judgement: a poor rendition in Blackfoot is weaker than a good rendition in English. Modern renditions in Blackfoot are, in any case, a re-translation from the English texts published by Grinnell and Wissler. There is nevertheless a difference between telling a tale in Blackfoot and telling it in English, and this is that subtle nuances in Blackfoot may be lost (others from English may, of course, be added). An important element in understanding the underlying meaning of the stories is that in the Blackfoot language animate categories are different from those in English. Thus something which is inanimate in English may be considered animate in Blackfoot and is thereby thought

to possess a "soul" and to be capable of independent existence and motivation. This was explained to me by a highly respected Northern Piegan Elder who is active in educational programmes and in the recording of oral traditions. He said:

The Blackfoot have many sacred things. Anything can be sacred because everything is animate. Even today modern things have an animate character: a cigarette lighter, a fountain pen, a ruler, these are all animate in the Blackfoot language just the same as things were in the past. There is no real difference between a rock and a cigarette lighter, they are both animate objects, they both have souls and characters. Many people, white people and some Indians, don't understand this. Maybe this is because they don't have a traditional upbringing. But our language tells them about these things and this is the reason we teach Blackfoot language in our schools. (personal communication)

According to this informant, everything in Blackfoot is named as if it possesses the capacity for independent thought and action. This difference makes it more difficult to understand a tale such as that of *Old Man and the Rolling Stone* (Wissler 1908:24-25; *The Trickster Cycle*, Appendix), in which Napi is pursued by a rock after he insults it, when the tale is told in English rather than Blackfoot, because there has to be a conceptual shift by which inanimate objects can be approached in animate terms. Blackfoot makes this obvious; English does not. Once this is realised, however, many of the difficulties in understanding the subtleties of the tales are overcome: one can then appreciate how Napi, for instance, can continue to exert a presence and influence even after he is turned into a pine tree by the Woman Chief (*The Trickster Cycle*, Appendix; *The First Marriage*, Wissler 1908:21-22), since his transformation does not render him an impotent (ie. inanimate) object.

Uhlenbeck, however, qualifies the statement made by my informant. He writes:

[The] Blackfoot make a distinction of gender between animate and inanimate things which generally but not invariably distinguish "beings" from lifeless objects. Plants were apparently never regarded as animate beings and most were of inanimate gender. For the present purpose it is important to note that the animate gender of certain plants and other inanimate things bore no relation to whether or not these things possessed power. (1912:6-7)

Regardless of whether the animate/inanimate distinctions are complete or partial, an essential aspect here in terms of understanding the content of the tales is to realise that the categories are different from those in English. Thus, in Blackfoot, there is no difficulty in ascribing an animate and sentient personality in ways which contradict English usage.

In an attempt to counter what are seen as "biases" in the way language is used in the early collections of tales, recent authors such as Brian Swann, Jerome Rothenberg, and Dennis Tedlock have concentrated on the re-presentation of Native American texts as "performable translations"; although these do not focus specifically on the Blackfoot stories. Their work does, however, introduce another perspective that needs consideration. In "performable translations" the texts are rewritten in a format that allows them to be read as performance pieces. An example of this, building on earlier concerns expressed by such authors as Natalie Curtis (1907) and Mary Austin (1923) for a more "truthful" representation of American Indian art and poetry that recognises implicit meaning in the performance, was presented in Rothenberg's book *Shaking the Pumpkin* (1972), which includes *Sixty-Six Poems for a Blackfoot Bundle* (201-213) together with instructions for the manner in which the performance is to be carried out by the audience and narrator. This is a reworking of the songs from the Natoas Medicine Bundle which were included in Wissler's publication *Ceremonial Bundles of the Blackfoot* (1912:215-219).

Rothenberg, as well as Swann, Tedlock, and others, has taken existing texts and placed these within a new and personal definition of performative art which is claimed to be closer to the indigenous view than the texts of people such as Grinnell and Wissler; but by doing so the meanings of the original texts have been shifted and made into something else. Rothenberg states that Wissler presented an "incomplete description" but one which contains "a lot of poetry" (1972:437) and announces his intention of creating a work of

"translation and recovery" (1972:xxiii), similar to Tedlock's "total translations" of Zuni narratives (1971).

However, it is difficult to see how Rothenberg's reworking of the translation Duvall made for Wissler assists in the process of "translation and recovery" or increases the "totality" of the work. Song number 27, for instance, which refers to the erection of the sacred Okan or Medicine Lodge, is rendered by Rothenberg as "Let's put my sunhouse up & no one knock it over" (1972:205) in comparison with Duvall's version "May my lodge be put up without mishap" (1912:217). Duvall's reference is to the fact that the Okan must be erected according to a complex set of ritual procedures in which no error is permitted during their performance, the sense of which is made meaningless in Rothenberg's reworking.

Other attempts to reinterpret Native American narratives may also force them into literary styles that are removed from the original contexts. Thus Dell Hymes asserts that "to discover the patterning of oral narratives, one must start with lines and the ways in which lines constitute verses. One must go on to recognise relations among verses that constitute larger rhetorical forms" (1996:214). The repatterning of Blackfoot narratives into lines and verses is not, however, an indigenous form, and introduces elements that are inconsistent with Blackfoot story-telling as a performed art in which the narrative is a continuous one that does not necessarily have a "poetic" structure. It is therefore necessary to exercise caution in claiming that modern interpretations are inherently closer to indigenous meaning than those made at the turn of the century.

While there has been a shift in emphasis in recent works that reflects an increasing consciousness of indigenous meanings as well as concern that a Native "voice" will be heard, there is nevertheless a danger in claiming, as Krupat optimistically does, that the work of [some] contemporary "anthropologists, linguists, or literary critics has been undertaken with a commitment to undo the imperial legacy of

Western knowledge and gathering" (1993:xix). In some senses this "Western legacy" is locked into the disciplines of anthropology, linguistics, and literary criticism, as well as in the re-presentation of Native American narratives as "performable poems", and the reprocessing of late nineteenth century texts by late twentieth century authors does not confer on the latter the status of greater authenticity. While modern authors may recognise inherent problems or difficulties with the early written versions of Native stories, contemporary renditions remain different from the way the stories are performed and heard in traditional story-telling contexts.

This section has considered the differences between Grinnell's and Wissler's approaches to the collection of Blackfoot tales, as well as the difficulties faced in modern reinterpretations of this material. I also very briefly summarised the major trends in studies of the Blackfoot in the period between when the early collections were made and today. We have seen that the turn of the century tales are the major sources available for study, but also that these stories are still current among the Blackfoot in modern story-telling contexts. Although some changes and modifications have been made, the traditional stories told today are essentially the same as those in the early collections. In the following section I look at the role of the story-teller and at story-telling sessions in further detail.

This section discusses traditional Blackfoot story-telling. By traditional I refer to the Blackfoot usage of this term to mean "something true, something real, something original, something that follows the way of the old stories" (personal communication, Northern Piegan story-teller). That is, it considers tales that belong exclusively within the context of Blackfoot story-telling rather than those which are associated with a Pan-Indian or inter-tribal identity. I am not, however, referring simply to past traditions, since the context in which stories are told today and the meaning inherent in them is frequently viewed by contemporary Blackfoot as a continuation of tribal history that is as relevant now as it was at the turn of the century. Modern tales are often based on the early collections by Grinnell and Wissler and may be considered as retaining their original functions in that they are still believed to convey moral messages and instruction, as well as being considered representative of the "true" Blackfoot worldview. In this respect I endorse the view that "one of the main roles of oral-traditional poetry in culture is to create a bridge between past and present" (Mihály Hoppál 1987:92) and question the emphasis in "recent work in critical theory [which has] tended to assume that value lies entirely on the side of opening, expansion, alterity and invention, and not on the side of fixity, conservation, tradition and repetition" (Connor 1992:3).

Although the role of the story-teller apparently lost importance in the early reservation period (Maclean 1890:296; 1893:165) and went into further decline during the 1930s and 1940s, the practice of story-telling was never entirely abandoned by the Blackfoot. Story-telling thus remains an important means whereby traditional values and ideas are reinforced, particularly in view of the loss of other economic and

ritual aspects of Blackfoot life. My assertion is that there is an internal structure to the tales which has been maintained throughout the reservation period and up to the present day, although I do not believe this can be extended to recreate "prototypical" tales as Wissler attempted.

The Blackfoot themselves do not consider any single rendition of a tale to be the definitive version. There is nevertheless a coherence and sense of stability expressed through the tales in terms of Blackfoot logic and continuity. As one Blackfoot story-teller, associated with the Old Sun College and prominent in recording Elder's versions of tales, explains:

Our stories are always the same stories. But the stories are told differently, they have different introductions, and the stories are told differently according to who is telling the story and to whom it is being told. The stories are our traditional education system - this is why the stories are important in the community college here. (personal communication)

Changes and adaptations have occurred in the content of some of the tales since Grinnell and Wissler made their collections. Modern story-tellers might, for example, include references to the white man which are of recent origin and/or refer to current events. Given the individuality inherent in Blackfoot story-telling it would be surprising if changes had not taken place and were not continuing to take place. Perhaps the most significant change to traditional stories has been their abbreviation in modern story-telling sessions. Much of the descriptive quality evident in the early versions is condensed, and partial versions of tales are now sometimes recited as though they are complete. This abbreviation is most obvious in formal sessions when the re-telling of a complete cycle of stories, which may have taken four nights or more at the turn of the century, may now be completed in a single evening or within the space of an hour or so. It is interesting to speculate that the pace of modern life is, at least in part, responsible for the truncation of the stories: long recitations now compete with the immediacy of modern media.

Ben Calf Robe, a Siksika story-teller, wrote in relation to the origin of the Okan (Medicine Lodge, or Sun Dance), and as he and others confided to me in conversation about other tales, "This is actually a very long story, how it all happened. I am just telling the main parts of it" (1979:33). Audiences may also no longer be fully familiar with the details of customs that the descriptive passages refer to, and it can be tempting for a story-teller to omit a passage about, say, the piskun method of buffalo hunting (in which herds were driven over a cliff edge by pedestrian hunters) when hunting is no longer the mainstay of the Blackfoot economy and an audience may know buffalo only from a local zoo park.

Another important change is that tales have been brought into a wider and increasingly political context that challenges the formerly prevailing view of the white majority expressed by La Barre that "American Indians are largely obsolescent, now politically impotent, and constitute no epistemological threat to us" (1970:xii). Challenging such views has become a major aspect of modern story-telling, and although I am primarily concerned here with establishing the traditional values contained within the cycles of tales and the manner in which these are understood and expressed in Blackfoot society, some comment needs to be made about the politicisation of myths and tales since this inevitably affects any modern reading of the stories.

In many senses "objects [and in the context of this thesis, texts] become ethnographic by virtue of being defined, segmented, detached, and carried away by ethnographers" (Kirschenblatt-Gimblett 1991:387). Thus for many Blackfoot, both today and in the past, there is a feeling that the presentation of their history according to Western traditions is an imposition of foreign concepts and methods: a form of reinterpretation (or theft) which tends to undermine the Native view. It is significant here that the Blackfoot do not have a tribal history which records events by date or follows what Western tradition thinks of as a "logical" pattern: that something happened is

in many senses more important than when it happened. We do not find among the Blackfoot the Winter Counts or Pictographic Calendars of the Dakota or Kiowa, such as those recorded in Mooney's *Calendar History of the Kiowa Indians* (1898), by which a tribal member was responsible for keeping an annual record of significant events. This does not, however, mean that the Blackfoot lacked a conceptual grasp of time and sequential order: in a tale recorded by Wissler (*Cuts-Wood*, 1908:66-68), Cuts-Wood leaves notched tally sticks painted black with his sister when he goes on the warpath so she can keep a record of the time he is away. When one of the sticks is lost and the sequential order broken, Cuts-Wood fails to return. Similarly, marked tally sticks were an important part of most of the Beaver Medicine Bundles (Wissler 1912:171).

My own discussions with modern Blackfoot and other Native Americans reveals an intense and widely held sense of bitterness at what they see as the misunderstanding of their "logical history" and the usurpation of their oral traditions by the academic community (which is conceived as being far removed from the problems of reservation life and from the traditions the stories refer to). This, again, is frequently quoted as evidence of the displacement of Native ideals by the dominant (white, academic) culture. Many younger Blackfoot are angry and dissatisfied and often express this in quite vehement terms; yet there has been little incentive to renegotiate this position or to enter academic debate and criticism. It is also not unusual to find a refutation of academic authority among the older people. I was told by a Siksika Elder in his late 70s that:

The Blackfoot don't believe in books. Things can be understood without writing them down. Books are OK for the white community, but the Blackfoot don't need to read them. (personal communication)

The opinion that the major collections of tales by Grinnell and Wissler are deliberately prejudiced is also regularly expressed, although the prejudice is thought to be with the views and attitudes of the collectors and not in the actual contents of the tales. This is,

however, a modern view and not one expressed by Grinnell's or Wissler's informants, who were anxious the tales should be recorded and preserved for future generations. Yet one frequently comes across the sentiment on the Blackfoot and other modern reservations that "Native history can only be accurately recorded by Native people, and only Native people therefore have the right to comment on Native culture". This way of thinking has become so deeply ingrained that it even appears in publications which expressly state their purpose as being to improve understanding. Thus in his introduction to *Tsu T'ina*, published by the Sarcee Culture Program with the stated intent of giving "the public a good view of the Sarcee people of today and in the past", the tribal historian Harley Crowchild writes: "There is a lack of knowledge by white writers and reporters, who have a tendency to make us out as renegades or losers to any challenges, or thieves" (1979, unpaginated).

Harley Crowchild's sentiment is understandable in terms of the consequences that have marked Indian:white contacts and which, almost without fail, have been detrimental to the indigenous populations, resulting at times in the loss of language, culture, and land. It is also valid in the sense that many collections of tales and other documents referring to pre-reservation life, as well as more recent publications which include stereotypical views of American Indians, contain comments that reflect ethnocentric biases. The anger and frustration being expressed is not, of course, a peculiarly American phenomenon, although it is particularly marked in North America by the rise of highly politically motivated groups that claim to speak for the majority of Native Americans (a term which, although now culturally accepted and in common use, is itself a designation with political overtones that was adopted in the 1960s to identify an Indian cultural ethos within the broader context of an American or Canadian identity).

These pressure groups have so far failed to gain complete acceptance among northern groups such as the Blackfoot and have frequently met opposition from the more conservative members of these tribes. This failure is in large part due to the fact that the older

Blackfoot think of themselves first and foremost in terms of their own specific tribal identity and only secondarily as part of a minority and ethnic group. Also, in an attempt to reassert their individual and tribal identities, many Native Americans today have begun to refer to themselves by traditional tribal names. This has caused confusion since these names are not necessarily those by which they are familiarly known from the literature - which are sometimes derogatory terms applied to them by Europeans or by neighbouring groups (Sioux, for example, is a contraction of the Chippewa word *Nadowessiou*, meaning "adders" and referring to them as enemies, and is no longer in general circulation among many of the Siouan-speaking Dakota tribes). A plethora of tribal names has therefore evolved which have political significance. Among the Blackfoot, for instance, it is becoming increasingly common to hear the Piegan refer to themselves as *Pikunni*, the Blood as *Kainah*, and the Blackfoot Proper (or Northern Blackfoot) as *Siksika* or *Siksikau*. Their allies, the Sarcee, refer to themselves as *Tsu'tina*.

The failure of the Pan-Indian movements to establish themselves during the 1960s and 1970s as a representative body among the Blackfoot is due largely to the fact that problems facing other tribal groups are so different from those faced by the Blackfoot that there is little common ground for a united stance. There are language, cultural, historical, and political differences which mitigate against a common view. The modern Blackfoot, who have retained cohesive tribal structures and among whom some eighty to eighty-five per cent of the population still understand their Algonkian dialects, share little, for example, with the Pawnee where the relationship between the tribes is divisive and where only a handful of people now in their 80s still understand any of their Caddoan dialects. Blackfoot of all generations regularly converse in Algonkian and the Tribal Councils exercise considerable control over tribally owned territory; whereas among the Pawnee the tribe owns only the land on which the administrative offices stand and one never hears Caddoan spoken. It would be similarly unrealistic to expect the Blackfoot to relate their growing economic

base in cattle ranching, horse raising, and land leases with the undermining of Northwest Coast Native economies by offshore commercial salmon fishing.

Notwithstanding the failure to arrive at a Pan-Indian consensus, the politicisation of myths has to be taken into account in assessing the opinions that might be elicited on the Blackfoot reservations today. An interpretation of the tales as "innocent" documents that are devoid of political meaning is no longer possible, and this affects the type of information that can be obtained since many tales have acquired additional meaning in the broader Pan-Indian view. It may, however, also be difficult at times to obtain traditional responses, since the conservative Elders adhere to the Blackfoot belief that asking direct questions is a breach of etiquette and that certain subjects, such as the details of Medicine Bundle transfers, can only be discussed between people who have an acknowledged "right" to the possession of this information. While visiting the Siksika I was told that:

Asking questions only gives you facts, it doesn't give you understanding. You only ask for something to be explained if you don't understand, but when you understand there is no need to ask anything at all. This is why some of our most knowledgeable people do not always say anything. They sit together in silence and each understands the other perfectly. Their knowledge doesn't have to be exchanged in questions and answers. (personal communication)

It is only within the last thirty years or so - partly as a response to the emphasis on oral tradition expressed in the Pan-Indian movements - that the younger Blackfoot have become interested in the stories of their grandfathers. Prior to the 1960s and 1970s these stories were regarded as relics of the past that had little importance. They were reduced to the level of old-folk's tales which were without relevance to the modern situation: as the fond memories of people who reminisced about the "good old days". When the tales came back into general currency they did so on the crest of a wave of Native American revivalism and often in muddled form, incorporating motifs and episodes from different language groups and culture areas. Even so, these "composite" tales may today be regarded by the younger generation as

the "true" history of their people and superior to the records of Indian life in pre-reservation days recorded in academic documents. Many of these documents may be considered by Native Americans to represent the views of the white majority and to ignore the "voice" of the Native community. In Lewis' words, "particularly in America, the vast contemporary expansion of applied anthropology and its use sometimes for politically dubious ends, has promoted the generalized myth that all anthropology in the period of European colonial rule was politically motivated in the interests of the colonial authorities" (1995:94). For many Native Americans it is conveniently overlooked that an understanding of traditional life and beliefs, including story-telling traditions, is only possible because of the existence of written documents made by outsiders with the full cooperation and approval of respected tribal Elders who remembered the old ways and wished to record these as accurately as possible.

Blackfoot story-telling was less affected by the disruptive consequences of turn of the century politics than that of some other tribes who lost both their land and their language. Whereas the American policy of relocating tribes in Indian Territory (now the state of Oklahoma) and actively discouraging children from speaking their own languages has had a cumulative effect which, in some cases, has effectively destroyed any oral traditions, the Blackfoot, although undergoing a period of intense trauma and stress, still occupy areas that they claimed at the first contact period (although these are much reduced) and have retained the tradition of story-telling, at varying levels of intensity, throughout the reservation period. Story-telling remains an important part of Blackfoot life today.

Even so, both Dempsey and Stepney in writing forewords to *The Blackfeet* (Scriver 1990) feel it necessary to comment on the opinion expressed by some Blackfoot that the Scriver collection - which was begun at the turn of the century and includes a number of sacred, or Medicine, objects but does not generally contain the essential stories through which the power inherent in these objects can be reactivated -

"nurtures and perpetuates the divisions between native and white cultures". Dempsey and Stepney go to great lengths to explain that if this material had not been collected by Thadeus Scriver it would have been discarded by the Blackfoot and lost. At the time Scriver and his contemporaries made these collections Blackfoot culture was in decline and political and economic power was vested in the progressive members of the tribes who sought to embrace white views and opinions. Traditional customs, and particularly rituals and their associated tales of origin, were rapidly falling into disuse. Much of this material (the tangible aspects of the rituals, rather than the details of their performance or their songs) was placed in the care of people such as Thadeus Scriver by Blackfoot Elders who felt that this was the only means of preventing it from disappearing entirely.

At the turn of the century when Scriver's collection was started the Blackfoot were in total confusion: politically, economically, socially, and culturally. Many Blackfoot were virtually destitute, and their choice was often between selling family heirlooms which were no longer in use or starving: the starvation winter of 1883/1884 was still a recent memory. In these circumstances most families preferred to feed their families by selling many items, including important Medicine Bundles, that were no longer of any practical value, and it is to the credit of Scriver and people such as him that so much Blackfoot material culture has been saved. Yet Dempsey and Stepney both note that there is a vocal element within the Blackfoot today who condemn such collections as evidence of their "stolen culture" (Scriver 1990:vi-vii). The divisions in the 1960s and 1970s were between conservative (often Elder) and progressive factions (a younger Pan-Indian identity), and it is a legacy of this that has carried through into Dempsey's and Stepney's forewords written in 1990. Such hypersensitivity is a relatively recent development and it would have been rare to hear such comments among the Blackfoot when Grinnell and Wissler collected their tales or when the Scriver collection was originally started, although even then different factions existed and Blackfoot opinion was divided.

The view of the vocal minority of the 1960s and 1970s that the Blackfoot have always been preservers of their own culture is not supported by the facts. Due to high prices being offered by dealers and collectors, many younger Blackfoot sold important items of tribal value which they had inherited from parents and grandparents. The problem was acute, and many Elders have recently countered this when transferring a valuable item by also giving the recipient its value in cash: the idea being that as it has already been "paid for" it cannot be sold again. My discussions with dealers in tribal art in Calgary and with Blackfoot Elders suggest that this has had the effect of making most younger Blackfoot reluctant to sell paid for items, since this would cause a sense of shame and hurt pride and bring intense criticism for not having behaved in a "proper" manner. The sale of Medicine Bundles, ritual costumes, etc., as well as the recording of "traditional" stories or making these available to outsiders for publication, which thus turns both artefacts and stories into marketable commodities, is also at odds with the professed ethos of Pan-Indianism, which rejects the imposed values of a Euroamerican capitalist economy. Pressure from within the community and a (partial) rejection of values from outside has had the cumulative effect of keeping much original material in Blackfoot ownership, but it has also encouraged the manufacture of "duplicates" - remade artefacts and reworked tales.

These attitudes colour attempts to obtain information on the reservations today. Tales - at least for a younger generation - have taken on additional meaning as statements of Indianness and of Native American revivalism. It is often difficult, for instance, to question an opinion expressed by a younger generation Native American without meeting the stock response that white people don't know anything about this because they only read it in books. The implication is that knowledge can only be gained through practical experience, but such opinions are frequently voiced by people who have little real involvement in their own tribal (as opposed to Pan-Indian) identity. Ben Calf Robe summed up the attitudes of many younger people in Siksika

(1978:104-105), written when he was 88 years old, as well as in conversations with myself two years later. His opinion was that young people had lost respect for the Elders and the ways of the ancestors. He noted that they talked about being Indians and tried to tell others what was right, but he felt that they had little traditional education or wisdom and that in the old days no one would have listened to them.

Ben Calf Robe's view and that of other owners of major Medicine Bundles - all of whom are Elders - is that the Bundle rituals, and hence the tales with which they are associated, may soon be lost entirely because younger people are no longer prepared to accept the restrictions and responsibilities that Medicine Bundle ownership entails. Many of the Bundles are, in fact, already in private collections and public museums, and to avoid the total loss of those that remain among the Blackfoot the care of a number of them has been entrusted to the Tribal Museum at Gleichen. This is not entirely satisfactory, since although the Bundles and the building were ritually purified when the transfers were made in the 1970s, the actual practice of the rituals - which can involve learning lengthy and complex songs - will be lost if younger owners to whom the rights to the performance can be transferred are not found before the existing owners pass away.

The older generation of Blackfoot often express sadness at what they see as a lack of respect and knowledge being demonstrated by a younger generation. Apart from the loss of tribal Bundles and their origin tales, Blackfoot tradition is that a stranger should be treated with courtesy rather than disdain: the Elders feel that the young people, in their search for an "Indian" identity and awareness, are losing contact with the roots of their individual tribal cultures. Yet although it is still common to hear the views of 1960s and 1970s Pan-Indianism expressed on the reservations, there has been a conceptual shift in Native American thinking during the 1980s and 1990s. Instead of the outright rejection of imposed "outsider views", these are now being used and adapted to suit Native American needs. This stems partly from the successes of Native American lawyers in fighting land

claim and treaty rights through the courts, and successes in the United States such as the repatriation of ownership of ritual objects, human remains, etc., from public collections to the tribes; but it is also reflected in modern Native American literature, poetry, and art. These have tended to become personal statements of "what it means to be a Native American" and often address contemporary issues such as urbanisation, poverty, alcohol misuse, and so forth.

The interrelation between the generations, between conservative and progressive factions, and between traditionalism and Pan-Indianism, as well as the connections between traditional story-tellers and the new generation of Native American writers, is a complex issue; yet these different points of view and the social and political messages they contain are factors that must be recognised as influencing any reading of the tales as well as the manner in which their contents may be interpreted. There is a growing tendency to use narratives as political weapons, as well as a substantial body of modern Native American literature and poetry that addresses issues of social significance. Native American literature and poetry are now major areas of creative expression, and part of an important literary movement which, in part, has superseded - or, at least, is read in parallel to - traditional story-telling.

As Fischer has pointed out "recent Amerindian autobiographies and autobiographical fiction and poetry are among the most sophisticated exemplars of the use of ironic humour as a survival skill, a tool for acknowledging complexity, a means of subverting oppressive hegemonic ideologies, and an art for affirming life in the face of objective troubles" (1986:224). It is nevertheless interesting to note here that few of these modern writers are full-blood Native Americans, even though their biographies tend to emphasise only their Native American links. They often rely on Euroamerican methods (such as formal publication of their works) which are now diverted to fulfil a Native American agenda, and this agenda, which can be thought of as Native American/Euroamerican, is in many ways far removed from the communal

telling of traditional stories with which this thesis is primarily concerned.

Contemporary understanding of traditional tales and the opinions of different informants might therefore be reflected in any one of a number of ways:

- 1: traditional tales might be presented as a "true" tribal history which unequivocally validates a superior world-view.
- 2: they may be presented as valuable records that document Native American oral tradition and serve to underpin ceremonial, ritual, and social ideals and beliefs and modes of behaviour.
- 3: they might be offered apologetically as "memories" of the past which are no longer valid in contemporary circumstances.
- 4: they may be considered as museum pieces (when the museum itself may be thought of as a "foreign" method of preserving both artefacts and traditions).
- 5: they may be used politically as a means of establishing and/or validating a "Native American identity" and provoking an awareness of the unique qualities of Native American culture.
- 6: they may be "re-invented" as a means of challenging perceived bias and prejudice.

Any modern reading of Blackfoot tales is therefore subject to factors which influence their interpretation in ways that were not applicable when Grinnell and Wissler made their collections. The pressures bearing on the tribes at that time - a move to reservations, depletion of the buffalo, and a reliance on treaty provisions for survival - affected many aspects of Blackfoot culture, and changes in the distribution of wealth (through trade) and a reduction in population (from disease) altered social relationships between and within the tribes. The changes occurring at the turn of the century nevertheless left the tradition of story-telling largely untouched. If anything, story-telling initially gained in significance during the early years of the reservation period (although it was to decline later) as one of the few remaining ways by which a link with

"uncorrupted" ideals could be retained and which was, to some extent, protected from outside influence. Momaday believes "the oral tale belongs to the tribal memory" (Lecture Notes, University of California, Berkeley n.d.) and it is not, therefore, something that can be erased. Regardless of the standpoint of any individual or the manner in which personal interpretation may take place the tale itself stands as an entity that is "fixed" and which is a permanent part of a tribal past, present, and future.

It is nevertheless clear that some elements from white culture had already been introduced when the early collections were made: in the tale of *Napi and the Great Spirit* collected by Wissler (1908:23-24), for instance, the Great Spirit makes a white man who carries a cross. The incorporation of European motifs in Blackfoot tales at any appreciable and disruptive level (i.e: at a level that affects the inherent structural order) tends, however, to occur at a later date when the importance attached to the role of the story-teller went into a temporary decline, or, more recently, when the content of tales has been altered to reflect shifting political but non-traditional aspirations. In addition, the inclusion of "foreign" motifs and episodes that derive from the tales of other tribes and are not specifically Blackfoot, and which was later to be characteristic of the amalgamation of diverse tribal elements in the Pan-Indian movements, was already becoming apparent at the turn of the century.

However, at the turn of the century many of the story-tellers had been active participants in the "old culture" and were still accorded honours and status through their earlier participation in successful war parties. Their upbringing and learning was fully steeped in the beliefs and ideals of a buffalo hunting and warrior ethos, and these men and women believed sincerely in the values and customs that the tales reinforced and which, while recognising some inevitable loss, they were struggling to maintain as fully as possible in the face of rapidly changing circumstances. For them these were not simply memories, but were lived experiences.

Grinnell tells us:

I have seen these story-tellers so much in earnest, so entirely carried away by the tale they were relating, that they fairly trembled with excitement. They held their little audiences spell-bound. The women dropped their half-sewn moccasin from their listless hands, and the men let the pipe go out. These stories for the most part were about the ancient gods and their miraculous doings. They were generally related by old men, warriors who had seen their best days. (1892:186)

Comments by Grinnell and others make it evident that the telling of stories in a traditional context was not a simple recitation, but a dramatic re-enactment accompanied by singing, drumming, the acting out of parts assigned to various characters, and thrilling vocalisations in which the audience as well as the narrator participated, and this continues to be the case today. At modern recitations in an educational context at Old Sun College in Gleichen, for instance, the audience is actively encouraged to assume the roles of various characters in response to the story-teller's prompting and there is a great deal of interaction between narrator and listener. The modern situation at Gleichen does, however, reflect a shift in emphasis from the traditional pattern. In traditional narratives the story-teller performs the various parts of the tale, adopting the postures and characteristics of the various personages, or those of the spirit-animals in ritual recitations. Drummers and singers accompany the narration, but, although responses are expected from the audience during particular parts of the narration, the acting out of the parts of the principal characters is limited to the narrator. In major Medicine Bundle transfers there may be several narrators, each acting out the specific part to which his/her part-ownership of the ritual grants a right. At Gleichen, however, both children and adults are assigned roles. This, I argue, is not so much a deviation from traditional practice but, rather, an elaboration brought in to accommodate the different function the tales have acquired as part of an educational process.

It is commonly stated in modern Blackfoot criticism of Grinnell's and Wissler's collections that they are removed from the active context

of performance and placed into the passive context of written text. This is felt to alter the character of the story: it is changed from being performance into literature. It is also felt that the narrator's "voice", or interpretation of the story, is an important aspect of story-telling sessions and this, of course, is absent from written versions (and exacerbated by Wissler's editing out of individual "idiosyncracies"). It is also unfortunate in terms of performative story-telling that the Blackfoot express reluctance today to permit the tape recording of actual story-telling sessions: even the recordings being made for the Tribal Museum at Gleichen are told as formal recitations and not given as dramatic re-enactments.

Rothenberg, commenting on the complexity of story-telling in tribal cultures, writes:

... the words or vocables are part of a larger total "work" that may go on for hours, even days, at a stretch. What we would separate as music & dance & myth & painting is also part of that work, & the need for separation is a question of "our" interests and preconceptions, not of "theirs". Thus the picture is immediately complicated by the nature of the work & the media that comprise it. (1985, p.xxvi)

Such a "total work" must clearly be very different in character from the same story presented as text, and the separation into "our" interests and preconceptions as distinct from "theirs" is a criticism that can also be applied to Grinnell, Wissler, and other early collectors of Blackfoot tales. At the same time, the interactive nature of Blackfoot story-telling introduces an element of familiarity which is not a prerequisite for a written text. It is possible for someone to read and understand a written text without prior knowledge of its content, but to be a member of a participatory audience it is necessary for each member of that audience to be familiar, at least, with the major sequences of events prior to the performance taking place. Without this knowledge one is placed in the role of "outsider" or "looker-on": a passive observer of the performance rather than an active member of the audience.

This participatory aspect of story-telling sessions and the familiarity it presupposes on the part of the audience has helped ensure the traditional stories told today are, in essence, the same ones as recorded by Grinnell and Wissler. The expectation that the audience will have prior knowledge of the story's overall structure introduces an element of constancy that militates against radical departures from the underlying form of the original tales; although certain changes, deletions, and accretions have taken place in the past and continue to take place today.

An aspect of the possibility of change occurring within a fixed, or structured, form is reflected in the fact that the most popular story-tellers are those who can present the narrative in an unexpected manner through their method of presentation. This introduces changes in detail rather than in the major contents or structures of the tales. Burt notes:

The basic theme of the narrative remains constant in all versions, while elements which are not universally present are often shared by two or more versions ... only in minor details which are incidental to the main narrative theme do versions of tales usually show much individual variation ... It seems that tales were treated with flexibility only within certain limits and that the Blackfoot recognised definite standards of fidelity in the transmission of tales from one person to another. (1976:38)

The flexibility - and hence the degree of "fidelity" - permitted the story-teller varies widely depending upon the category of story being told. Tales of Ritualistic Origins are closely tied to the performances of the rituals - which act out the original myths through which the meaning and function of the rituals is explained and also act as instruction for new initiates in ritual details. In such tales - contrary to Wissler's observation that "there is wide variation in detail" (1908:12) - little deviation from what is considered to be a "true" version is actually permitted, since the successful outcome of the ritual performance derives from strict and accurate adherence to its structural detail.

Some explanation of Wissler's comment is needed, since he fails to apply Blackfoot logic and concepts of fidelity. The variation, which he found "contrary to expectation" and "difficult to interpret" (1908:12, 13), is explained by the fact that major Blackfoot rituals are an accretion of numerous elements which have been consolidated into different Medicine Bundles. Thus, for example, one Beaver Bundle will contain representative tokens (and their specific origin tales) which differ from another Beaver Bundle. Both are composite Bundles, and no two Bundles are alike. Although the origin of the first Beaver Medicine applicable to both will follow a similar formalised pattern (as Wissler recognised), the complete performance has to be regarded as a series of separate ritual origins relating to each of the introduced elements the Bundle contains, and each of which has its own fixed pattern. The performance (which systematically acts out the origin myths of the Bundle's contents) will thus vary from one Bundle to another. Wissler's "mistake" was a result of his methodology, in which he attempted to iron out idiosyncracies and individual variations to arrive at a representative type. There is no representative Beaver Bundle, since the contents of each are variable and unique. Wissler had a clue to this which he failed to recognise: he tells us "when one asks for the reason or significance of a specific part of a ritual, he is referred at once to the myth" (1908:13). His use of the term "specific" should be noted, since each part of the Bundle had its own significance and, hence, its own specific origin myth.

Tales which are of personal experiences or which have a purely entertainment value may, by contrast to those of ritualistic origins, change dramatically from one story-telling session to another: an episode which plays a major part in one recitation may, for instance, be omitted entirely in another rendition by the same story-teller. Although there is still the expectation of "truth" which prevents the structure of the tale undergoing radical change, considerable elaboration and alteration of detail and specific content is accepted (and often expected, since it is these changes that give the tale its entertainment value). In general, the more personal a tale then the

greater the degree of flexibility that the story-teller has in its recitation.

Thus there is always a strong sense of what is considered acceptable in traditional story-telling in terms of deviation from the original major sequences of events - as opposed to changes to individual episodes and details within that sequence - and if this undefined (but clearly understood) parameter or boundary is breached it will result in criticism that the narrator is "not telling the truth". Curtis (1928:193) and Wissler (1908:85) both note some narrators preceding the recitation of tales with statements that they "spoke the truth" or would relate "the true account".

The Blackfoot concept of sequence does not however follow the tenets of Western logic and of linear progression, and this has a profound effect on what may be considered as "truth" in the story-telling sessions. Since a date-ordered sequence is foreign to Blackfoot thinking and tradition, it is unimportant whether the adventures of Napi (Trickster) took place in the distant or near past - there is, in fact, no reason why a story-teller should desist from reciting them in the present tense if he/she wished to do so (and in ritual contexts, where the participants stand in the same relationship to each other as the spirit-animal givers of the original ritual did to the first recipient, there is an incentive for them to do so) - but it is of paramount importance that the major cycles of different types of tales should follow one another in what is considered to be the "true", and therefore previously defined, order.

My informants explained sequence and order in the Blackfoot "historical" context by saying there was a period during which Napi (Trickster, Old Man) transformed the world, and that this was followed by the exploits of the Star People who defeated the monsters which threatened the people and thereby made it possible for the people to acquire rituals (taught by the spirit-animal intermediaries). Through these rituals the influence and assistance of the Star People can be

called upon, or reactivated, in future crises. The sequence of Napi, Monsters, Star People, Ritual is fixed and cannot be altered; but within this it makes little difference, for instance, which monster happens to threaten the people at any particular point within that specific part of the overall sequence.

In the discussion of the structure of tales which follows later, it is established that it is necessary for each cycle of stories to prepare possibilities for the cycle by which it is followed. This is because certain groups of tales stand in a particular relationship - or pattern - to other groups of tales. The placement of individual episodes within the group itself is not absolute, and the pattern is therefore dependent on the type of tale to a far greater extent than it is through the actual content of any episode within a particular cycle.

Both Grinnell and Wissler nevertheless recorded the Blackfoot opinion that tales are "fixed", and in my own discussions with various story-tellers it has been continually stressed that no one can change the order in which events occur since "our stories are always the same stories - no one changes what Napi did". Yet even a cursory reading of the tales shows a definite order of events does not apply within a specific cycle of stories: that changes in tales occur continually, and the individual story-teller's readiness to omit episodes or to add in completely new ones, suggests there is little standardised agreement among the Blackfoot. There is a clear expectation that different story-tellers will each have their own versions of the tales and that changes may occur between one story-telling session and another.

My understanding of this is that we need to consider a different concept of "fixity": there is a fixed relationship between groups, or types, of tales, but flexibility is permissible within the group. This enables episodes to be added or omitted and permits rearrangement of elements within each cycle according to the preference of the individual story-teller or the appropriateness any particular element may have in different story-telling contexts. Provided this concept of

fixity is adhered to it is unimportant to a Blackfoot audience when flexibility results in contradiction by, for instance, failing to provide an explanation of events or by enabling something to occur prior to the introduction of other elements on which it is dependent, so long as such contradiction remains within the relevant cycle, or type, of stories.

An example of this kind of contradiction occurs at the beginning of the Napi cycle (*The Making of the Earth*, Wissler 1908:19; *The Creation Myth*, Maclean 1893:165-166): the earth is covered with water and Napi sends animals to dive for mud with which he will create the world. This is contradicted by the fact that Napi must first create an environment in which the animals can exist. We are asked to believe that Otter, Beaver, Muskrat, and Duck (according to Lowie and noted in Wissler), or Fish, Frog, Lizard, and Turtle (according to Maclean) are present before entirely suitable habitats are available to them and before Napi, who in some tales is the "creator of all things" and in others the "transformer of the world", has actually brought them into existence.

Such examples were regularly used at the turn of the century to emphasise the credulity of American Indians - such as Grinnell's view of the Blackfoot as possessed of "child-like simplicity" - and to present them as unable to understand the "illogical" nature of the tales, and this is one of the reasons why these opinions are subject to criticism by the Blackfoot today. They are considered to be offensive by Native Americans and are seen as perpetuating Grinnell's notion of an unquestioning and illogical faith. Native Americans are, however, quick to point to the lack of apparent logic that is so readily observable in European traditions and folk-lore and cannot, for example, see why the countless references to animals which behave like humans in European folk-tales should be considered any differently from the animals in their own stories which have similar characteristics.

Yet these anomalies and contradictions frequently continue to pose problems for students of Native American oral history, particularly when they attempt to apply criteria to Native American traditions that they are reluctant to apply to their own cultures or which they have never considered as appropriate frames of reference except when applied to the "other". Thus as recently as 1994 Taylor referred to American Indian tales as the product of "bizarre and imaginative thought" and tells us that "the complex tales ... require the ingredients of impossible events or attributes which common sense must clearly reject" (1994b:6-10). It would perhaps be more accurate to say that Blackfoot oral history requires the application of a non-literal and non-linear way of thinking, one different from that found in historical studies which attempt to categorise events and place them in some kind of causal relationship.

The contradictions that Taylor finds "bizarre" also confused Grinnell and Wissler, both of whom note the lack of rational or common sense explanations for the episodes contained in the stories. Grinnell's collection of stories of personal exploits also made him puzzle over why his informants sometimes referred to events as if they had recently occurred when it was readily apparent to him that they must have taken place in the distant past. He felt that this was because the Indian was unable to recognise events as having an historical nature and did not possess the intellectual capacity to place them in their "correct" order. He was similarly bemused when told the tale of Elk, who appeared out of a mysterious lake and caused the wind to blow, by an informant who claimed to have personally known the men to whom this experience occurred (1896:173).

Wissler, too, confessed bewilderment at the contradictions he encountered and sought explanations that would be acceptable to the academic community of the time. He suggested that contradictions arose from the "degradation" of original stories brought about by the incorporation of introduced elements which had not been fully integrated into the Blackfoot system. His belief is that there is a

core group of older stories which has had to accommodate these new elements (1908:14). Thus in Wissler we encounter hints that the Napi series is original but has been displaced by intrusive tales of the Star People, and in the process Napi has lost his previous importance. The tales of Ritualistic Origins, which in Wissler's scheme exhibit characteristics of both the Napi and Star People series, he regards as referring to two different traditions: explanations of older rituals that were original to the Blackfoot overlaid by those of newer rituals or ritual elements which have been introduced from other Plains tribes (see the Introduction to Wissler/Duvall 1908). Wissler implies, however, that these contradictions do not bother a Blackfoot audience by telling us "the only rational criterion seems to be the approximate form in which the myth is most often encountered" (1908:6), and is clearly frustrated at the failure of his informants to respond to (or even to recognise) what he saw as the illogical nature of some of the tales he recorded.

My assertion, which is discussed in detail later, is that "Blackfoot logic" presupposes that each group of stories reverses the structure of the previous and/or following group, and that rather than contradiction we have a balancing of opposites. New elements have been incorporated within this structure as a consequence of influences from other tribes, but, contrary to Wissler's belief, these do not stem from a single Plains tradition. Such a tradition is probably non-existent. Plains tribes do not share any common origin but are mostly recent migrants into the area from different groups within the Woodlands, Basin and Plateau, Southeast, and Subarctic culture areas. These migrations on to the Plains were widely disparate, not only in terms of the direction from which they were made but also in terms of which language groups were involved. The chronology of Plains cultures prior to the historic period is poorly understood, but there is little evidence to suggest that the majority of the historic tribes were ancient occupants of the area: most of them appear to have entered the Plains after being displaced from previous areas of occupation due to the pressures of European expansion or were either forced or attracted

into the area after the European introduction of the horse and gun. A few groups, among whom are the Blackfoot, were living in the area prior to European-induced migrations. Although Blackfoot prehistory is clouded and uncertain, it is likely that they moved from forest regions near the Great Lakes (Wissler 1940:101) to a homeland in Saskatchewan in the 1600s and early 1700s (Ewers 1955:121-123) and thence into the areas they historically occupied.

Each group entering the area had its own tradition of story-telling, and these became mingled through interactions between the various tribes. The diversity of these traditions is reflected in the fact that "in the Plains the range of interest [ie. number of tale "types"] is extraordinarily wide. Practically every class of tale current occurs here" (Stith Thompson 1968:xxi). The widespread appearance of similar motifs and themes does not however suggest this creates a Plains tradition. The tales come originally from differing environments and from varying language groups and do not share a common base. Contradictions are inherent in such borrowings. The stories of the Blackfoot migration which refer to travel over frozen seas and lakes (*When the Sarcee and Chipewyans were One People*, Wilson 1889; *Old Man Leads a Migration*, Wissler 1908:22-23) are, for instance, clear examples of tales that come originally from the Subarctic and which have been introduced into the body of Blackfoot tales by their Athapascan speaking allies, the Sarcee. Lakes are not a feature of the Plains environment but are abundant in the Subarctic area, and the tales of the Athapascan tribes to the north of the Blackfoot from where the Sarcee migrated on to the Plains are replete with references to frozen lakes and rivers.

Apart from contradiction, the "accuracy" of any rendition may be determined by factors which are not usually applied in Western criticism or analysis. The same story-teller telling the same story on two different occasions may have the renditions judged differently for a number of reasons even though their factual content, in our sense of the word, might be identical. Factors that might be taken into

consideration include not only the narrator's own performance but also the reactions and responses of the listeners: a lethargic audience will undermine the perceived authenticity of the tale, whereas a responsive one will heighten its sense of being true. Other elements which may appear remote from the story-telling session, such as a distant storm, may also be thought of as supporting certain aspects of the telling: if the story-teller is relating a passage about thunder and thunder sounds as he does so, this could be interpreted as a favourable sign that the Thunder Spirit accepts the veracity of the recitation. As Goodchild (1991) and others have pointed out it is not only the way stories are told that is important but also the way they are heard. Kirk, in relation to Greek myths but also applicable here, wrote:

Myths ... constitute an enormously complex and at the same time indefinite category, and one must be free to apply to them any of a whole set of possible forms of analysis and classification ... Myths ... are often multifunctional, and consequently different hearers can value a myth for different reasons. Like any tale, a myth may have different emphases or levels of meaning. (1974:166)

The veracity of any Blackfoot story-telling session is subject to factors that are not usually applied in Western criticism but which are of major importance in the traditional context. Thus the Blackfoot conception of truth is one in which a concept of fixity, or patterning, is rigidly adhered to but where there is a possibility of making additions, omissions, and changes within any particular group of tales. Lévi-Strauss, in his 1975-1976 lectures to students at the Collège de France under the title of *Order and Disorder in Oral Tradition and Myth*, notes that:

... the mythological traditions of non-literate peoples [appear] under two contrasting aspects: some are heaps of disparate pieces, each retaining its own individuality; others are coherent wholes consisting of inter-related narratives, but in which we often find myths or elements of myths that a neighbouring people recounts as separate stories. (1987:118)

He refers to the latter sequence of inter-related tales as having an "epic" formula: that they are stories of heroic deeds and momentous

events which are fixed in collective memory. But he reminds us, in a statement that is very pertinent to the Blackfoot conception of changeability, that such tales may incorporate elements from neighbouring groups without disrupting their cohesiveness or internal structure. The Blackfoot conception of combining the epic with changed and/or introduced elements is borne out by the fact that tales told by different narrators invariably retain the principal sequence of events but permit changes to occur according to the story-teller's preference or in response to other factors: these include the type of audience (when the emphasis may be placed on different elements); the reaction of the audience (since if they are inattentive the story-telling session may be curtailed; but if they respond favourably it can be lengthened); and the circumstances in which the tale is being narrated (whether it is part of a public performance or restricted to a few individuals).

The variability of the tales is recognised by Wissler, who, as noted previously, commented that "each narrator had his own version" and "myths are told by a few individuals [who] usually impress their own individuality upon the form of the narrative"; although he felt these variations were unimportant in understanding the characteristic or representative forms of the tales. He tells us "while the main features of the myths are the same for all, the minor differences are so great that extreme accuracy of detail with one individual would avail little" (1908:5). My own informants state that in retellings of the stories the order in which events occur cannot be altered. It is nevertheless clear that this refers to the main events, or sequences, while allowing for the possibility of adding in or deleting episodes to personalise the narratives or to "modernise" the tales.

This process of "modernisation" is not a recent phenomenon. A closer look at Wissler's tales of ritualistic origins makes it evident that gradual changes were continually being made to bring the stories up to date. The tales accounting for the origins of the Medicine Pipes and the Beaver Medicine Bundles (*Origin of the Medicine Pipe*, 1908:89-

90; *The Beaver Medicine* a, b, c, d, 1912:136-167, 168-208), for instance, have been expanded as the Medicine Pipe and Beaver Bundles grew in size and significance through successive transfers of ownership. Both began as rituals derived from a single source - the Medicine Pipe from Thunder, the Beaver Bundle from Beaver - but gradually came to include powers (and thus origin myths) derived from other spirit-animals and from different sources which reflected their growing importance as statements of prestige and authority. Thus they were symbols not only of ritual origin, but also of shifting patterns of political and social status and responsibility, and, consequently, had to be updated regularly.

Blackfoot story-telling is further complicated by the fact noted previously that the listener is not considered to be a passive recipient of the story but is regarded as an active element in the way the tale is interpreted and understood. That an audience might consist of several listeners at different levels of comprehension means that the same sequence of events within the narrative is being listened to at a variety of levels of meaning, each of which incorporates its own assumptions and places its own values on the elements and messages contained in the tale. This is indicated in the statement by one of my informants that "a story is told differently according to whom it is being told". Since Blackfoot audiences invariably contain a mix of ages and gender this can be taken a step further to suggest that every story contains an almost limitless number of possible meanings, since it means something different to each person who is listening to it.

A respected Siksika Elder and story-teller described to me four basic levels of comprehension: that of children, of young people, of mature people, and of Elders. The differences between these categories was explained as follows:

- 1: Stories told to young children teach them the traditional moral values; they teach them respect - but this is not the same as obedience: you can respect someone even though you don't do everything they say.

- 2: When the stories are told to our young people, after they are children, they teach them responsibility. These used to be the warriors, and they learnt to be responsible to the people.
- 3: Once a person had stopped being a warrior [after gaining maturity - usually in his mid to late thirties] he knew the stories really well. He knew them as well as the Elders. But he still listened, because the Elders had to remind him of what the stories were about and remind him of their real meanings. I know one Elder who explained a story; told its real meaning. It took more than twice as long to tell the meaning than it took to tell the story. But it was good to be reminded.
- 4: Among the Elders the stories have yet another meaning. These are the old men and they all know the stories, they know the meanings, and they know the different introductions that various persons would use. These old men were reminiscing - they were telling about the way it used to be, about what had happened, and about whether the people really followed the ways the legends told them about.
(personal communication)

There is a sub-text to the above which also affects the way any recitation is understood. This informant placed the stories within his own gender group and the way he responded to them at various stages in his own life: his references are to warriors and old men. A female listener, while accepting the broad general categories above, would interpret the tales somewhat differently and see in them references to her own particular role in Blackfoot society. The tales can be understood at many levels and this varies with the listener and his or her interpretation of the narrative, as well as with the particular narrator and the emphases introduced through the use of incidental themes and personalised sub-plots. Thus, although there is a clear sense of a fixed order or pattern in a story-telling session, there is no absolute definition of any particular tale. Each narration is a unique and multi-faceted experience which is dependent on the story-teller's presentation, additions, omissions, and modifications within the general pattern of the story, and on the listener's understanding of these in accordance with his or her gender and age group.

This section has established that Blackfoot story-telling is complex, both in the manner in which stories are presented and in the

ways they are received and understood. Modern interpretations also have to take into account the fact that additional meanings of a political nature may be read into the stories, although this does not alter the order inherent in traditional renditions. The tales have a logical connection in so far as one cycle relates to another and creates a characteristic "pattern" that applies to all traditional versions of tales. This connection does not, however, follow the logic that might be applied in Western historical studies and analyses, and I have emphasised that we should listen to the "voices" of the storytellers and avoid "a largely one-way 'conversation' in which the predominant pattern is for the West to speak and for the Rest to listen" (Morley and Robbins 1995:230).

It has also been noted that within any of the sequences there is the possibility of adding in new elements or omitting old ones to personalise the narrative and bring it "up-to-date", but that such personalisation and modernisation can only take place within certain fixed parameters which are dependent on the type of tale. It is further apparent that any rendition is understood at a number of different levels of meaning, which are dependent on the narrator's presentation and on the composition of the audience, as well as on the personal expectations of each listener and his/her position within Blackfoot society.

In the following sections I will discuss the types of traditional tales that are important in the pattern of Blackfoot story-telling and the meanings and structures inherent in them. The Blackfoot understand these as comprising three distinct "historical" periods:

- 1: A period when Napi (the Trickster) is active and during which the animals (or animal-humans) are in ascendancy, marked by lack of control, instinctive behaviour, and a concern for immediate needs. During this period no distinction is made between humans and animals: they share similar customs, often intermarry, and speak a common language.

- 2: A period when the Star People gain ascendancy. This is marked by controlled behaviour and a concern for future needs. The Star People are able to exercise direct influence which determines future events. They are not, however, human and are unable to remain in human communities or continue to live among the people.

- 3: A period (the present) when the Star People have gone but have created a possibility for the people, through the performance of rituals, to exercise indirect influence over future events. There is an implication here that the chaotic world of the animal powers and of the Trickster, Napi, can return if rituals are not correctly performed, but that the Star People will not themselves return to earth to restore order. The modern period therefore gives people responsibility to ensure that order is maintained and chaos averted through ritual procedure.

Blackfoot history follows a logical progression. It begins with the creation; that is, it begins with Napi. Napi created the world, then Old Woman helped form it correctly. Napi always did what she said. Woman was responsible for the way things are now. Napi wasn't satisfied with just creating things; he wanted to have some fun and he had a very mischievous character. It is because of his character that Napi became a Trickster.
(personal communication)

This quotation from a Northern Piegan story-teller defines the first phase of tribal history as being the period during which Napi, the Trickster, was active. In this section I investigate the character of Napi, who occupies an ambivalent - and at times confusing - position within traditions of Blackfoot story-telling. He is seen as mischievous rather than malevolent, yet at the same time he is the possessor of supernatural power (although it is never made clear exactly what this power is), or is even considered to be the creator of the Blackfoot world.

Grinnell's and Wissler's informants gave contradictory opinions about Napi: Grinnell's informants mentioning him as a revered character to whom prayers are addressed (1892:257) whereas Wissler's informants poured scorn on his suggestion that Napi was held in any esteem and expressed the view that he was an untrustworthy and somewhat ridiculous figure (1908:9-10). Modern informants are equally vague and contradictory. They suggest that Napi is today held in greater esteem than Wissler's comments imply, but it is also evident that attention focuses on him as a humorous and somewhat immoral character and that he is not regarded as a major figure in any ritual or ceremonial context, where his presence would be considered disruptive (although he is, nevertheless, the dominant figure in public - ie. non-ritual - story-telling sessions).

The Blackfoot know Napi under several names. He is frequently referred to as Old Man, and in contemporary poetry and literature may be called Old Man Coyote or simply Coyote. The identification with Coyote, however, is not a traditional Blackfoot association. Unlike the Trickster figure among some other Plains tribes that of the Blackfoot has no connection with any animal, and the reference to Coyote is a Pan-Indian adaptation to the Coyote-Trickster that features prominently in modern Native American literature, poetry, and storytelling but which is not specifically Blackfoot.

One tale collected by Grinnell does, however, suggest an animal association in the Napi stories. In *The Dog and the Stick* (1892:145-148) Old Man (Napi) changes himself first into a dog so that he is able to search for and discover the whereabouts of the buffalo, which have been spirited away by Raven. He then turns himself into a dead beaver as a lure for Raven, whom he catches and holds in the smoke-hole of a tipi and thereby turns Raven black. This is also the only tale in which Napi is credited with shape-changing ability, although shape-changing is frequently found in the Trickster tales of other Plains tribes and in tales from beyond the Plains area. Furthermore, it is out of character for Napi to engage in any activity which is not of immediate benefit to himself, and he is unlikely to be concerned that the people are starving due to lack of buffalo provided he is himself well fed. Either Grinnell is in error by including this among the Napi stories, or the version that he received from his Piegan informants was introduced from elsewhere and has its origins outside the Blackfoot region. Significantly, Napi does not feature in Wissler's version of these events which is included as part of a longer narrative of the *Twin Brothers* in the *Star People* series (1908:40-53). There is no evidence, other than in the single tale from Grinnell, to suggest that in traditional Blackfoot tales Napi takes animal form or is able to transform himself into an animal.

Modern Blackfoot recitations of traditional stories invariably begin with the tale of *Old Man (Napi) and Old Woman* (Appendix; see also

The Trickster Cycle). According to these Old Man and Old Woman always existed or, at least, came into being without explanation since no reference is made to their origin. In these modern versions, Old Man and Old Woman change the form of the world and make all living things by transforming materials that already exist. Reference to tales from the turn of the century make the independence of Old Man and Old Woman and their creation of living things less clear. Maclean confirms Napi's independent existence by writing that "the Indians do not know the manner of [Napi's] birth, nor the place from whence he came" (1893:168), and in *Old Man and the Great Spirit* Wissler records "There was once a Great Spirit who was good ... then Old Man came along. No one made Old Man; he always existed" (1908:23-24). In *The Order Of Life and Death* Wissler tells us "there was once a time when there were but two people in the world, Old Man and Old Woman" (1908:19-21).

In Grinnell's tales the independent existence of Napi is taken for granted, but that of Old Woman is explicitly denied. In *The Blackfoot Genesis*, for instance, he tells us that Napi created Old Woman and her son out of clay, and that he then made "the birds, the animals, and the people" and travelled about "fixing up the world as we see it today" (1892:137-144). Michelson, Uhlenbeck, and Wissler do not credit Napi (or Old Man and Old Woman) with the creation of animals. Although Maclean credits Napi with making the first woman in his version of the *Creation Myth* (1893:165-166) his texts are somewhat unclear, and in the *Creation Myth* he implies the independent existence of animals but then says Napi made the buffalo. Why this animal should be singled out for creation by Napi is unexplained, although it could, of course, be due to the importance of buffalo in the Blackfoot economy. This does not, however, appear to be sufficient reason, and since such a distinction appears only in this tale and in no other, Maclean's implication that Napi was a creator of at least some of the animals has to be treated with caution or disregarded as a probable borrowing from other Plains tribes where such a feature does appear.

Modern tales follow Grinnell's lead in crediting Napi with creative power. They do not state that he made Old Woman, but they nevertheless agree with Grinnell that he made "the birds, the animals, and the people". Yet Napi's ability to bring people and animals into being is either explicitly denied or is refuted by implication elsewhere. It is denied by Hale in *The Creation* (1885), as well as by Wissler who suggests the Great Spirit made people prior to Napi's advent (*Old Man and the Great Spirit* 1908:23-24); but since the latter tale includes the passage about a white man carrying a cross it is possible that the concept of a single Creator God is a reworking under Christian influence. In more general terms, Napi's creation of animals and people is also denied by Maclean (*The Creation Myth*, 1893:165-166).

Lowie begins the Napi stories he collected by saying, in the tale entitled *The Making of the Earth*, "During the flood, Old Man was sitting on the highest mountain with all the beasts" and that "the flood was caused by the above-people [my Star People], because the baby [a fungus] of the woman who married a star was heedlessly torn to pieces by an Indian child" (in Wissler 1908:19). Lowie's version therefore suggests people and animals exist independently of Napi. Lowie's identification of the baby with a fungus, which he apparently felt was a mistranslation and which also confused Wissler, is understandable in terms of the Blackfoot belief that puff-balls - round fungi which burst explosively when handled - are Fallen Stars (they appear in the night sky in the form of meteorites). It is therefore appropriate that the child of a Star Person should assume this form as well as that an Indian child is able to effortlessly tear it to pieces. Thus it is perfectly logical in the context of the tale for the baby to be associated with the puff-ball and for the Star Baby to be both a fungus and a child. The importance of the association between Fallen Stars and puff-balls is still expressed by the Blackfoot, and their Painted Tipis set up for modern dances and other Indian gatherings have a line of painted circles around their bases to represent puff-balls, or Fallen Stars. The origin tales of these tipis and of associated rituals which were collected by Wissler state the relationship between

puff-balls and Stars quite clearly (*The Twin Brothers*, *The Fixed Star*, 1908:40-43, 58-61; 1912:237, 240).

Whether Napi possesses creative power is unclear and ambiguous. Little conclusive evidence can be found regarding this either in the existing literature or from modern informants. In fact, in the modern situation it is often apparent that Napi has been given various characteristics of the Coyote-Trickster which do not form a part of earlier versions of the stories, and since Coyote possesses power to create this could account for references to Napi's creative power in the modern retellings. Such an explanation does not, of course, shed further light on why Napi should have been considered as a creator by Grinnell's informants, since these tales were collected before the identification of Trickster with Coyote became widespread. I assume, since Grinnell was among the Southern Piegan who had more regular contact with other tribes of the Plains than the northern groups, that some intrusive characteristics of the Pan-Indian Coyote-Trickster had already begun to appear in the tales he collected.

It is also possible, given the variability inherent in Blackfoot story-telling, that the gulf which exists between Grinnell's and Wissler's comments about Napi's creative abilities reflects the individual opinions of the different story-tellers; although this is unlikely. Grinnell and Wissler are consistent in their own views whereas we should expect ambiguity to appear in both collections if this was due to different versions by different story-tellers. A more likely reason is again that Grinnell's Southern Piegan informants had been more exposed to intrusive influences than the traditionalists Wissler came into contact with via Duvall. Napi is, in any case, too major a figure to be given arbitrary characteristics and the freedom of the story-teller to innovate and invent applies to his exploits rather than to any creative power he may or may not possess. My informants gave no indication that a story-teller is free to alter or reinterpret the character of Napi, but instead suggest that his character is fixed although changes in the details of his activities are permissible.

A possible explanation of the confusion as to whether Napi is a creator and/or transformer is suggested by Radin in *The Trickster* (1956). Radin believes tales of origin are intrusive in the Trickster cycle and belong to a different culture-hero. His study concentrates on the Siouan speaking Winnebago, where he found a distinction being made between Wakdjunkaga (Trickster) and the culture-hero Hare. From these studies Radin posits the theory that the Trickster was originally a minor character who has been "clumsily elevated" to the position of a deity: an opinion exactly opposite to Wissler's comment that the Trickster tales of the Blackfoot represent an older body of belief and that Napi has declined in importance due to the intrusion of a newer belief which has elevated the Sun to the position of principal deity (see the introduction to Wissler/Duvall 1908). In support of this Wissler refers to Maclean and Petitot, both of whom suggest that Napi is a secondary figure. These statements could, of course, be used equally in support of Radin's argument that the Trickster's was originally a minor role.

Radin did not make any specific study of Blackfoot Trickster tales, where certain aspects he attributes to the culture-hero - such as the origin of death and hunting (1956:166) - appear only in the context of the Napi series (*Old Man and Old Woman*, Appendix; *Old Man Makes Buffalo Laugh*, Lowie in Wissler 1908:36-37; *Order of Life and Death, Why People Die Forever*, Wissler 1908:19-21, 21; *The Elk*, Grinnell 1892:158), where they serve to define Napi's character more clearly. If Radin is correct in assuming such elements should be attributed to a culture-hero and not to the Trickster and that these have been introduced as a "mixed" myth-cycle (1956:167), any indication of where these "intrusive" elements in the Blackfoot series originally come from has been lost. This in itself does not refute Radin's argument, since intrusive elements could obviously have been adapted to fit into the Napi series. However, since the Blackfoot use these to define Napi's character rather than simply to describe his activities it is unlikely that they are later additions.

Some further clues as to whether Napi should be thought of as a creator or transformer are provided in other stories in which he is asked to demonstrate his power or does so through anger. In these he is able to move mountains from one position to another (*Napi and the Great Spirit*, Wissler 1908:23-24) or he fills the buffalo jump (piskun) with earth when he stamps his foot (*The First Marriage*, Wissler 1908:21-22). From these it is apparent that he has the power to alter existing features of the physical environment, but this does not necessarily mean he has the true power of an actual creator.

Even in the creation tales the world is already thought to exist, although it is covered by water (*The Making of the Earth*, Lowie in Wissler 1908:19; *The Creation Myth*, Maclean 1893:165-166; *The Creation*, Hale 1885; *The Creation*, Henry & Thompson 1897). These tales, however, contain intrusive elements which are not apparent in all the versions of the Napi series and which are at times inconsistent with one another: sometimes Napi is alone, or he may be accompanied by some or all of the animals; he is at times depicted as sitting on a mountain, but is elsewhere floating on a raft. It is also apparent that these tales do not define his character: he is selfish and there is nothing in the tales which motivates him to make the world. Only in the modern *Trickster Cycle* (Appendix), which is Pan-Indian in origin, is the Trickster's (who is referred to by the Pan-Indian designation Coyote) motivation for making the earth explained in selfish terms as a result of boredom. Since versions of the flood stories are widespread in Native American oral tradition there is a very high possibility that they have been introduced to the Blackfoot.

Also significant is the relative lack of importance attached to the stories of creation. They are a minor part in all the cycles of tales, including the modern versions, and merely serve, as it were, to "set the stage" for the adventures that follow. In comparison with other tales in the Napi series, those concerned with the creation and/or transformation of the world form only a small part or are entirely absent. Even in *The Blackfoot Genesis* collected by Grinnell

which credits Napi with making people (1892:137-144), the actual creation is very summarily addressed: he merely fashions them from clay, covers them with a blanket, and then leaves them to gain life of their own volition. In comparison with this, similar episodes among other tribes often deal at length with the painting of the figures and ritual acts through which life is breathed into them. We might, of course, expect this dearth of creation tales if Radin is correct that these themes originate elsewhere and are later additions to the Trickster series.

In connection with the above, it is interesting to look briefly at a more recent Blackfoot creation tale recorded by the Siksika storyteller Ben Calf Robe, *The Origin of Life* (1979:3-5), although this is not credited to Napi but simply to "the one who made us". In this the people are fashioned from buffalo bones tied with sinew, and are then plastered with mud. These lifeless dolls are given buffalo blood and have breath and sight breathed into them, before being purified with sage and taught to sit, stand, and walk. Many elements of this tale are clearly related to the oral traditions of neighbouring tribes, with Blackfoot adaptations. It is significant that the tale fails to credit creation to Napi but to a more generalised Plains Creator figure.

By far the larger part of the Napi versions of the creation are concerned not so much with making the people but with a dialogue between Old Man (Napi) and Old Woman during which Napi is worsted by greedily demanding the "first say" and then finds every decision he makes is changed by Old Woman's "second say". It is evident that when Napi is seen as a creator the emphasis in the tale nevertheless lies elsewhere. In these introductory stories Napi initiates actions and has apparent power by which he is able to put these into effect, yet Old Woman - who has little apparent power - is able to control and modify what he decides. In *The Order of Life and Death* collected by Wissler (1908:19-21) she adopts the ruse of the "first say" and "second say" to enable her to prevent Napi placing people's genitals at their navel, giving them ten fingers on each hand, and placing their mouths

vertically in their faces. It is his decision that people should have genitals, fingers, and mouths (as is his right by being granted the first say) but it is her right to decide (by virtue of the second say) what form these should take.

The principle of the "first say" and "second say" is also applied in Wissler's version of *Why People Die Forever* (1908:21), although here Old Woman is credited with some transformative power of her own since she is able to turn a buffalo chip (dried buffalo dung) into a rock when it is thrown into the water to decide if people should live forever. When the rock sinks the decision is made that people have to die to prevent the world becoming overcrowded (reversing Napi's first say that they should live forever); a decision Old Woman later regrets when her own child dies. It is, however, only in this single version that she is credited with the power to transform things. In all the other versions of this tale she merely uses her second say to make the decision as to whether a buffalo chip or a rock should be thrown.

These tales accounting for the origin of death also place other cultural facts in place in opposition to Napi's intent. Old Woman's common sense approach contrasts sharply with Napi's belief that everything should be obtained for nothing and that life should be easy. Thus Old Woman insists that women will have to work hard at dressing skins and men at hunting, since she believes satisfaction will only be derived from difficult work so that accomplishment can be recognised. A number of factors are being expressed here that are significant in understanding the Blackfoot conception of the character of Napi and the manner in which he interacts with others. He believes that he is all-powerful, but is nevertheless easily tricked when Old Woman plays up to his vanity by permitting him the first say and making him feel important. Also, although Old Woman has no real power of her own she is able to modify Napi's activities because she is a better judge of character and because her actions are not the selfish ones that Napi continually expresses.

Old Woman in fact sets a precedent for the entire Napi series. Her betterment of him suggests that Napi will always fall prey to his own sense of self-importance and his failure to recognise the abilities of others. This is emphasised throughout the series, and his short-sightedness and desire to have things easy frequently place him in predicaments from which he is unable to extricate himself without recourse to the assistance of others whose power he then deprecates (see for example *The Trickster Cycle*, Appendix; *Old Man and the Rolling Stone*, Wissler 1908:24-25).

Napi also gives the impression of being concerned only with the immediate: he does not look ahead to any long-term future, nor does he give special thought to what has happened in the past or what consequences may have resulted from his actions - indeed, he seems to "forget" things as soon as a new adventure absorbs his attention. There is no indication that he has a conscious awareness of the ways in which his actions may affect others. Thus the character of Napi and his moral (or amoral) outlook are not conducive to crediting him with populating the world by creating people and do not suggest that he has any particular concern about the way people should live. Beneficial actions on his part occur accidentally - they are not what he intends - or serve to fulfil an urge of his own. The general impression from the stories is that the power Napi possesses is the power to transform rather than to create.

In all the tales, whatever the degree of transformative or creative power that is credited to Napi by a story-teller, it is apparent that he is never regarded as an infallible and omnipotent god: any creative/transformational power that he might possess is always limited and is often subject to forces beyond his control. In fact, it is characteristic of him that he is easily duped and continually misjudges the power others possess.

Self-interest is perhaps the most striking characteristic of Napi. Even the tales accounting for the origin of death are related as

an opposition between the selfishness of Napi (Old Man) and a concern for others and for the future expressed by Old Woman. It is significant that when the first death occurs of Old Woman's own child (*Old Man and Old Woman*, Appendix; *Order of Life and Death, Why People Die Forever*, Wissler 1908:19-21,), Napi dismisses this as a matter of little importance. He tells her she has already had her "second say" and "they have fixed things once" so they must stay as they are. Napi's lack of concern requires further comment. The significance of such a major fact as the origin of death is completely lost on him. He does not realise what the future consequences of this might be, neither does he appreciate that the introduction of death might also apply to himself. He actually makes himself vulnerable through this act - something on which much of the humour in the Napi series depends - but apparently does not recognise that he has done so. All the subsequent stories show that Napi's failure to appreciate the reality of a situation leads him into believing that he is indestructible even though everyone else knows he is not. Self-deception is as much a part of his character as selfishness.

Napi, unlike many other Trickster characters, is not invulnerable and is unable to put himself back together if he is destroyed. His vulnerability is crucial to an understanding of his character: the tales suggest he does, in fact, know that he can be defeated but he acts as though he does not believe it. There is, therefore, the introduction of a dichotomy between what he knows and the way he acts, and the humour in the tales is often attached to his attempts to cajole others into preventing his destruction in ridiculous circumstances that might easily have been avoided had he stopped to think about them beforehand.

The origin of death is also important for another reason. Old Woman expresses remorse when her own child is the first person to die but these are emotions Napi cannot share, partly because of his failure to understand the significance of death but also because he does not have the capacity to express regret. This is because he does not think

about others and their feelings are therefore of no concern to him. Following the death of her child, Old Woman disappears from the Napi series. We are given no clues as to her fate or what has become of her. Her disappearance does, however, enable the tales that follow to present Napi's excesses without the direct censure of human feeling, emotion, or conscience represented by Old Woman. He can do what he likes because there is no longer anyone with the power to modify his actions. Old Woman's prior existence does, however, mean the concepts of foresight, remorse, and so forth have been introduced. Without these the tales of Napi's adventures that follow would carry no moral messages and would lose much of their meaning and humour.

A contrast is already made between the instinctive responses of Napi and the considered responses of Old Woman, through which we can appreciate that Napi acts the way he does because he lacks any understanding, or at least any recognition, of the refinements of culture that characterise human interactions: his actions are ordered only by his base instincts rather than by any imposed cultural or social conditioning, as well as by his desire to accomplish things easily and without the need to think about what the consequences might be. In this latter respect it is interesting to note that although Napi is depicted as fully human (since he has none of the animal characteristics of other Tricksters), the people and the animals are not differentiated in the Napi stories. They live and act in much the same way, engage in the same activities, and speak a common language. It is sometimes impossible to tell whether the tales are referring to people or animals, and when Napi seduces the chief's daughter (*The Trickster Cycle*, Appendix; *Old Man penem trans flumen mittit*, Wissler 1908:36) it only becomes apparent part way through the story that she is actually Beaver. Through this device we are transported into the "other world" of Napi where distinctions between people and animals - but also between nature and culture, rational and irrational, real and unreal - do not exist. Napi's world is like no other, yet at the same time it encompasses all possible worlds including those purely of the imagination. Unlike the world of humans (the present) with its

restraints and constraints and the need to modify behaviour to ensure communal interaction and cooperation, that of Napi permits anything to become possible.

At this point it is useful to jump ahead to tales of *The First Marriage* (*The Trickster Cycle*, Appendix; *The First Marriage*, Lowie in Wissler 1908:22; *The First Marriage*, Wissler 1908:21-22) which close the Napi series and render him theoretically impotent, since a device is used here which shows close parallels to the relationship between Old Man and Old Woman established in the introductory stories. The intervening Tales of Adventure are looked at in more detail in the following section. We have already seen how Napi's irresponsible behaviour is modified in the opening stories of the series by the intercession of Old Woman, who introduces ideas of common sense and foresight. We also noted that Napi's excesses are only allowed full rein once Old Woman's control of the situation via her "second say" is removed. In *The First Marriage* Napi is again subject to control by a woman who modifies his intentions through the principle of the first and second says.

In *The First Marriage* men and women live in separate camps, that of the men being poor in comparison with that of the women. The men do not know how to dress hides: their tipis are consequently shabby and ill-constructed, and they have difficulty in making skins supple enough to fashion clothing from them. By telling the men of the disadvantages they suffer, Napi persuades them to elect him chief (or pretends to be chief) so that he can make representations to the women when the time comes for them to choose husbands to live with them. His motivation, as always, is to satisfy his own desires: he wants to possess the beautiful Woman Chief but can think of no other way of seducing her (the binding arrangement of a marriage would, of course, have no meaning for Napi). The institution of marriage is actually introduced by the Woman Chief in an interesting play on Blackfoot social customs, where marriage arrangements are made between the fathers of the couple or between the father of the bride and the prospective son-in-law, and

when the woman usually goes to live with her husband's family (Wissler 1911:9-11). Grinnell notes that "the girl ... had very little choice in the selection of a husband. If a girl was told she had to marry a certain man, she had to obey" (1892:216). Even the existence of the Woman Chief is an anomaly, since in Blackfoot society chiefs are men. In this we can already see that Napi has been duped by his failure to recognise reversals of social convention.

Napi, without realising the socially absurd context of *The First Marriage*, attempts to adapt the situation to suit his own ends. The Woman Chief, however, is able to modify Napi's conditions, since all the men are chosen as husbands except for him. This is because he fails to recognise who she is and rejects her when she first appears wearing old clothing: there are other women in rich costumes whom he considers more attractive. As a punishment for having spurned her, the Woman Chief turns Napi into a pine tree and roots him to the spot.

The First Marriage employs similar devices to the introductory stories. The Woman Chief, like Old Woman, has the power to control and modify Napi's decisions, but she does so via a clever reversal of the principles of the first and second says, since it should, after all, have been Napi who made the proposal. A structural principle in the stories that open the Napi series is therefore reversed when the series is brought to a conclusion. It is also interesting that both Old Woman and the Woman Chief fool Napi by introducing elements that can be considered "human". Old Woman disappears from the stories when she introduces the human quality of remorse; Napi is removed from the stories when the Woman Chief introduces the human institution of marriage, leaving Napi in both the abnormal state of an unmarried man - looked at as an unfortunate and degrading circumstance in Blackfoot society, where a reliable man is a respectable marriage partner: Schultz notes that "One-Unable-To-Marry" was a very bad name in Blackfoot (1935:139) - as well as in the abnormal condition of being turned into a pine tree. Once again there is a reversal of structural principles between the opening and closing stories: in the first Napi

is enabled and the woman disabled, in the second the woman is enabled and Napi disabled.

In both cases a distinction is being made between the way humans behave in an ordered and structured social world and the behaviour of Napi, and this is used to create a framework through which Napi can be controlled due to his failure to recognise the reality of the situation. Napi's disruptive excesses cannot be permitted in the formal and controlled social frameworks that serve to make people human: in the introductory series the human element is removed to permit Napi to engage in his various activities; in *The First Marriage* Napi is removed to permit the people to initiate the ritual of marriage and social interaction.

From this it would seem apparent that the world of Napi is the antithesis of the world of human beings; yet the Blackfoot do not think of Napi as anti-human. If anything he is considered to possess a super-abundance of all the failings human beings are capable of expressing: jealousy, irresponsibility, short-sightedness, cowardice, greed, lust, and so on. These are not animal qualities but are present in the human world, although among humans they are socially suppressed whereas Napi expresses them fully. Without an awareness of what makes people human Napi's adventures would be meaningless. The opposition is not therefore one between Napi and humans, but is one between control (by humans) and lack of control (by Napi) of all those aspects of human behaviour that are unacceptable to society and which can cause disruption and division in community life.

The conditions that pertain when Napi is present in the world are made possible by the removal of Old Woman from the tales and then reversed by the actions of the Woman Chief. In this respect it is not surprising to find that after Napi is finally brought back under control and his direct influence is removed that he continues to exercise indirect influence. His power is pervasive and is likely to erupt at any time, and in this respect the humour of the Trickster

tales contains serious messages and warnings about the dangers and divisive consequences of excess. Napi therefore presents a curious paradox: he is so fully expressive of human weakness and anti-social behaviour that he cannot live among the people, where his presence would be disruptive, but his character is one which can be neither expressed nor understood except by reference to the codes of moral and social behaviour that separate people from animals. The contradiction is that Napi is fully human but cannot live among humans. This does not mean he has no interest in or relevance for human activity. In a discussion with a Siksika Elder I was told:

Napi is not a god. The Pikanni [Piegan] and the Blood, they are our people and their stories are the same. The Sarsi and the Stoney, they are not our people but Napi looks out for them too because they are close to us. Napi watches over the people who are thinking nice - not good for no one is perfect - but who think nice. It is not only Blackfoot, not only Indians, who think nice - some white people too. Not many, but more than there were five years ago. Thinking nice is not difficult, but it is not something you can teach someone. Thinking nice is humanity. It is generosity and responsibility, both to yourself and to other people around you. It is belief, and it is honesty. In the old days all the Blackfoot thought nice; this is not true anymore, but the old people and the children still have this.
(personal communication)

This quotation - apart from the interesting perspective that it places on the views of a traditional Elder in contemporary Blackfoot society - emphasises the paradox in Napi's character: why should Napi "watch over" those people who embody the qualities of humanity, generosity, responsibility, belief, and honesty, when all of these are reversed in his own character? A definition of Napi would be that he rejects humanity, is greedy, irresponsible, a disbeliever, and a liar. Napi is far from being the embodiment of this Elder's definition of "nice". Another paradox is also evident: immediately before he made the above statement this same Elder related a version of the story of Napi being turned into a pine tree by the Woman Chief and commented "this was the end of Napi's adventures".

We are therefore faced with a puzzle: an apparently defunct figure whose adventures are over and who is not a god, but who is

nevertheless charged with responsibility for watching over people who express characteristics that are the opposite of his own. In addition, such people are not limited to the Blackfoot, nor even to Native Americans, but can include white people who have no direct involvement with or knowledge of Native American culture. When Grinnell was faced with similar contradictory statements suggesting that Napi was both "good" and "bad", he attempted an analysis of the word Napi and decided that it meant "Dawn-Light-Colour-Man" or "Man-Yellowish-White", and related this to the work of an academic of the time, Dr Daniel G Brinton, who had advanced a theory that:

... the most important of all things to life is light ... the beginning of the day served, by analogy, for the beginning of the world. Light comes before the Sun, brings it forth, creates it, as it were. Hence the Light god is not the Sun god but his antecedent and Creator. (1892:256)

Grinnell, whose own view was that Napi was himself the Creator, therefore deduced from Dr Brinton's theory that Napi was "merely light personified". He noted however that:

It would be absurd to attribute to the Blackfoot of today any such abstract conception of the name of the Creator as that expressed in [Dr Brinton's] quotation. The statement that Old Man was merely light personified would be beyond his comprehension, and if he did understand what was meant, he would laugh at it, and aver that Na'pi was a real man, a flesh and blood person like himself. (1892:256-257)

Grinnell's conception is relevant to the discussion of the relationship between Napi and Natos (Sun) which follows. First, however, we need to look a little more closely at Blackfoot conceptions of Napi. As Grinnell noted, the Blackfoot think of Napi (or at least describe him) in concrete terms. If asked about him they say that he is a flesh and blood human being "just like us". My own informants expressed the opinion that any debate about who he is or where he comes from is pointless: he is simply accepted as always having been here, and although he is a mischievous character when he is on earth he will nevertheless watch out for the people who are thinking nice after his own adventures are brought to a conclusion. Yet it is evident that although he is "not a god" and is "just like us" that he is clearly not

like us at all: he has been turned into a pine tree which still stands on the banks of a river in Calgary (*Men and Women Decide to Marry*, Appendix). It is also apparent that the Blackfoot conception of Napi is that he has not been destroyed, he still exists and will do so forever and will continue to exercise power in the future.

These apparent contradictions puzzled Grinnell and Wissler. On questioning their informants as to the "true" nature of Napi they were given a bewildering array of different interpretations. Wissler tells us that "whenever the writer asked if the Old Man was ever prayed to, the absurdity of the question provoked merriment. The usual reply was, that no one had enough confidence in him to make such an appeal" (1908:9). Wilson reported very similar sentiments: "Equally erroneous is the view that they addressed prayers to, or in any manner worshipped, 'Napi', the Old Man of the legends, the blunderer, the immoral mischief-maker" (1898), whereas Grinnell says Napi "is still addressed in prayer" (1892:258). They, as well as Maclean, Wilson, Lacombe, Hale, and others, were also given various indications that Napi and Natos (Sun) are the same character, that the Sun is only Napi's home, or that Napi and Natos are clearly distinct and no connection is thought to exist between them. Lacombe tells us "Napi^a went to live in the Sun" (1874, recorded in Petitot 1886:504), and three of Grinnell's older informants expressed the view that Napi and Natos are the same by telling him "the Sun is the person whom we call Old Man" (1892:258).

This confusion between Napi and Natos is of particular interest, since Natos (Sun) appears to have characteristics that are the opposite of those of Napi. Natos is universally regarded by the Blackfoot as a powerful and beneficent force: the Life-Giver. Modern Blackfoot consider Natos as part of a holy trinity of Sun, Moon, and Morning Star (Sun, Sun's wife, and Sun's son), and Wissler's informants told him "these three [Sun, Moon, and Morning Star] are in many respects a sacred trio to whom prayers are addressed individually and collectively" (1908:12). Of these, Sun appears as the single most

important deity in Blackfoot cosmology. Wilson tells us "the Sun is the principal deity" (1898), and even today it is customary to offer a short prayer to Natos at dawn.

In addition to greeting Sun and asking for a "good day", there are a number of locations on the Blackfoot reservations where offerings are left and dedicated to Natos. These are places which are considered to possess power that is natoye (of the Sun) and are intended to bring general health and prosperity to the person making the offering and to his/her family. Such offerings today are usually coloured cloth streamers, a practice the Blackfoot have adopted from the Cree, but in former times they were small personal articles such as porcupine quillwork decorated strips, charms and amulets, jewellery, and so forth. The question arises as to why the Blackfoot express opinions that range from presenting Natos as the supreme deity to merely considering Natos as the dwelling place of the Trickster, Napi.

Grinnell believes Napi and Natos are the same, but that the tales can be divided into those concerned with his "serious" aspect and those demonstrating his "absurd" aspect: that is, tales in which his benevolent nature are opposed to those in which he is depicted as a mischief-maker. This view is supported by Maclean who begins his story of Napioa (Napi) by writing "there are two kinds of stories told concerning him. One class reveals him in the character of a good man, and the other class as a bad man" (1893:168). This classification into good and bad has, however, been imposed by Grinnell and Maclean and is not characteristic of the Blackfoot (whose language contains no terms for expressing polarities of this kind). Maclean's tales actually provide no evidence to justify the distinction he makes. My own informants told me:

In the old days there was no evil and no sin among the Indians. We didn't need laws and police then. To sin or commit evil, as we know it now, was to commit a crime against yourself not against someone else. You had to answer to yourself for a sin you committed, and that is why there was no sin. No one could lie to himself in that way, not really deep down in his heart. (personal communication)

Napi, of course, continually "lies", and in a comparison between Napi and Natos, Napi's selfishness opposes Natos' benevolence and concern. These latter qualities are never part of Napi's personality and are not characteristic of the Trickster series. Interestingly, Natos, considered in his role as the supreme benevolent deity, rarely features in tales and is only an incidental character in the stories of the Star People. Unlike Napi, he does not have a series of stories depicting his adventures. Wissler, in support of this, sees Napi and Natos as two distinct characters; although he then expresses the opinion that the tales of Napi have had superimposed upon them newer beliefs in which Natos has become dominant and where Napi is reduced to the level of a buffoon (see the Introduction, 1908).

Both Grinnell (in considering Napi's Trickster aspect) and Wissler assume that Napi is of lesser importance than the benign Natos. They see Napi the Trickster as secondary and as possessing negative qualities. Wissler even goes so far as to say that "for several decades at least, the Blackfoot have considered the Old Man as an evil character, in most respects trivial, who long ago passed on to other countries" (1908:9). This, however, contradicts Wissler's own collection of tales, since in *The First Marriage* (1908:21-22) and in *The Adventures of Old Man* (1908:37-39) he does not in fact "go to other countries" but is turned into a tree in the immediate vicinity of the Blackfoot camps. It also does not follow that Wissler's belief that Napi is "trivial" is shared by all Blackfoot or is characteristic of Blackfoot thinking.

The concept of evil, as shown in the earlier quotation from the Siksika, is alien to traditional Blackfoot thinking, and all my informants expressed the view that Napi is very powerful: not only is he a dominant figure in Blackfoot story-telling, but he is considered to be the originator of human nature (as opposed to human culture). While there is an obvious opposition between Natos and Napi, this does not imply one is "good" (or primary) and the other "bad" (or secondary); such an interpretation has been imposed from outside by

observers who are making value judgements in terms of their own cultural expectations. Such expectations also find expression among modern Blackfoot, and it is not unusual for informants when pressed for an explanation to equate Natos with God (as a benevolent force) and Napi with the Devil (as a mischief-maker).

A more traditional view, however, is that Napi and Natos are contrasting aspects of a single force for which there is no word in the Blackfoot language. In some senses Grinnell's concept of "Dawn-Light-Colour-Man" is correct, if the Napi-Natos equation is thought of as being intermediate between (or encompassing both) light and dark: ie. Sun (Natos) as the light source opposed to his alter-ego Napi, represented in a combined Napi-Natos figure that is equated with the half-light of dawn. The Blackfoot state that there is some kind of nebulous energy source from which all power emanates, but if pressed to give a name simply use the standardised - but non-Blackfoot - term "Great Spirit". I have written elsewhere in reference to the connection between the Trickster and Sun in Plains culture that:

The strongest [of the Medicine Powers] was also the most vaguely defined. It existed simply as a nebulous source of creative energy that never appeared in visions and did not give power directly to man. Its identity is confused ...

The separate existence of Sun and Old Man is confirmed in ritual attitudes. Sun is the primary object of devotion, although not always directly addressed, whereas Old Man is never invoked in prayer; and Sun is rarely believed to be anything other than absolutely good, while Old Man has a reputation as a Trickster and is especially noted as a seducer ... It appears then that Old Man and Sun may be dual aspects of a single Medicine Power. Old Man is seen organising the world and initiating human frailty, ... while Sun ... acts as a renewing power that ensures man's existence and survival. In addition this theory has the advantage of linking both the Crow concept that Medicine derives from First-Worker [Old Man] and the Blackfoot concept that it is natoye, of the Sun, with the tenets of other tribes such as the Cheyenne, who believed that all power came from Maheo, the Great Mysterious One, and the Sioux, who held that supreme power was Wakan Tanka, the Great Medicine.

Although the details may be complex and elusive, the principle is quite simple: all power traces back eventually to a single obscure source, and that as it emanates from this source it divides and subdivides almost indefinitely. (Bancroft-Hunt & Forman 1982:80-81)

The association between Napi and Natos might be taken a little further by suggesting that Napi acts as a symbol for earth powers and Natos for sky powers: Napi is firmly rooted in the earth at the end of the Trickster series, whereas Natos (Sun) is the dominant force in the sky. We should therefore expect them to show opposite attributes: Natos as the possessor of wisdom, kindness, and good is contrasted with Napi's foolishness, greed, and self-concern. It is also apparent that Natos, unlike Napi, acts intentionally and can be addressed in prayers believed to bring direct beneficial results in terms of better relationships with neighbours, good health, and long life.

Yet although Natos is generally thought of as beneficent, he also has the power to punish the people for any transgressions: a mistake in a ritual, failure to observe taboos associated with the Medicine Bundles, even a word said out of place, might ignite Natos' wrath and result in famine, disease, and death. Natos is prayed to not only because of the benefits he brings but also because a failure to so brings swift retribution. In his other guise as Napi, however, he is laughed at and his name may be used contemptuously to describe someone whose behaviour deviates from accepted standards. Fear of retribution is absent from any Blackfoot opinion about Napi, and the suggestion that someone might pray to him is considered ludicrous.

There are also suggestions that Napi acts at the individual level while Natos acts at the collective level. Napi is a loner who is concerned only for himself and for the gratification of his personal needs, whereas the presence of Natos is manifested for the benefit of all. The Blackfoot have no conception of a divisive and competitive split between extremes, only a belief in power that might be used for either benevolent or malevolent purposes. A surfeit of either is potentially harmful, and it is believed that an excess of "good" actually causes behaviour which is usually expressed through Napi, since it can result in laziness, self-satisfaction, and indulgence. The Blackfoot ideal is to maintain a balance between Napi and Natos, not to express a division between them.

This can perhaps be better understood by considering briefly the Trickster figure of the Blackfoot's Siouan speaking Dakota neighbours. The Dakota Trickster, Iktomi or Inktumni (Spider), expresses many of the characteristics of Napi: he is a buffoon - and appears as a clown at certain ceremonies - who recognises none of the usual moral restrictions of the tribes and who reverses the normal order of communal living. In this he is much like Napi. However, Iktomi becomes a Trickster because he is angry at having been accidentally left out of a council of the ruling powers. He therefore separates himself from the other powers and plays tricks on them, after which he is banished from the world of the deities and forced to live perpetually among the people, where he expresses his anger by deliberately trying to disrupt ritual activities (Walker 1980:53). A distinction between Iktomi and Napi is immediately apparent: apart from his animal identification as Spider, Iktomi lives perpetually among the people and acts deliberately. Napi, of course, has no animal association, cannot live among the people and behaves without deliberation.

Someone inspired by Iktomi becomes a Heyoka, or Contrary, whose every act reverses the order of social behaviour: when feasts take place he eats alone, when he is happy he cries, laughs when he is sad, wears many layers of thick clothing in summer but goes naked in winter, ridicules the most sacred ceremonies, has many affairs but is not permitted to marry, talks and acts "backward", and always does the opposite of what is requested of him. In all these respects he is not unlike Napi, but the Heyoka's foolishness stems from Iktomi's anger and not from Napi's blithe ignorance of social rules and etiquette. Beneath the humour of the Heyoka there is a deep concern that this masks the destructive and disruptive intent of Iktomi, and the Heyokas are feared because their power can be neither rationalised nor determined. It is impossible to know how much power a Heyoka possesses or in what form it will eventually be made manifest. The Heyoka's use of this power may just as readily be indiscriminate and destructive as focused and constructive. In exercising power a Heyoka might resort to

force, trickery, or witchcraft, and this power can be directed against the Heyoka's own tribe and kin. There is also a feeling that the Heyokas, even though they form a kind of dance fraternity, may employ their power against each other.

The attitudes and actions of the Heyokas are in sharp contrast to those of Napi, where any destructive tendencies are attributed simply to his inability to consider any point of view that differs from his own or which is not to his advantage. There is no evil inherent in Napi's temperament, and when he gets furious about things his anger is forgotten as soon as something else happens to distract his attention and is as often directed against himself as it is against others. Thus in *Old Man Roasts Squirrels in Hot Ashes* (Wissler 1908:25-27) he instructs his anus to watch his food while he sleeps. If danger approaches his anus is to pass wind and wake him up. Napi, however, falls so deeply asleep that his anus is unable to wake him, and Lynx steals all his food. As punishment Napi burns his anus with a stick from the fire, and then suffers considerable pain and soreness because he "forgot" it was a part of himself.

Thus although Napi and Iktomi are often thought of as "typical" Plains Tricksters, they are in fact very different and the relationship between Napi and Natos cannot be considered as expressive of the antagonistic relationship that exists between Iktomi and the beneficent powers of the Dakota tribes. Napi is not in competition with the other powers, and in terms of a good:bad continuum Napi and Natos are complementary forces: the super-divine qualities of Natos are balanced by the super-profane qualities of Napi. It follows from this that if Natos is prayed to then Napi is not; if Natos is bound to the sky, then Napi must be bound to the earth; if Natos is venerated, then Napi must be ridiculed. Thus it is only when Natos is considered primary that Napi must be thought of as secondary; but a reversal of these roles is equally possible.

This complementary relationship between Natos and Napi is further supported by the fact that Napi is considered human whereas Natos is not. Natos as "chief" of the Star People, and therefore inherently non-human, is discussed later; but we can note here that when Natos and the people attempt to live close together the people turn black (Scarface version a, Wissler 1908:61-65) or have to hide in caves to escape the great heat (*Natos Turns People Black*, Appendix). Although neither Napi nor Natos can continue to live among the people, the tales define this as because Natos is "non-human" whereas Napi is "too human". Napi's human qualities stem from an abundance of everything that relates to human nature (rather than human culture), and in this sense he gives full rein to the instinctive qualities that human beings generally suppress.

It is only among the Blackfoot and some closely related Algonkian speaking tribes that Napi's excessively human characteristics are so strongly emphasised, and it is therefore impossible to consider Napi as a typical Plains Trickster. That Napi represents human failings - or that he can be considered as some kind of prototypical human - was already noted by Wissler, who states that the human attributes credited to Napi may represent an Algonkian sub-group in the Trickster tales of the northern Plains (1908:12).

In this section I have attempted to establish the essential character of Napi. The Blackfoot have no difficulty in recognising the basic aspects of his nature: his greed, indifference, lack of foresight, foolishness, and his determination to satisfy his own desires without regard for others. All of these aspects might be made manifest in the human world through his influence on individuals who fail to conform to accepted standards of behaviour. But behind this there is a deep recognition that Napi possesses power which takes him beyond the world of human beings and links him with the creative force of Natos. This refutes Burt's statement that the Napi tales "did not as a rule contribute to Blackfoot knowledge of events of power and mystery for in these tales such events had little significance beyond

the humorous effect for which the tales are recounted" (1976:35), and also answers some of the problems raised by Grinnell, Wissler, and others concerning confusion over Napi's identity. In the following section I look specifically at the tales of Napi's adventures and at the meanings these have for a Blackfoot audience.

NAPI:

Tales of Adventure.

The previous section established Napi as an overtly human character but one who is unbounded by the restraints that enable people to live in communities. He is depicted as asocial and amoral, in terms of Blackfoot conceptions of social and moral behaviour. Such judgements can only be made if a framework for them is already established - since there has to be a standard by which they can be judged - and this is introduced into the Napi series through the activities of Old Woman in the opening tales and of the Woman Chief when the series is brought to an end by the tale of *The First Marriage* (Wissler 1908:21-22; Appendix). The main body of tales in the Napi series which occur between those of *Old Man and Old Woman* and *The First Marriage* is what I refer to as Tales of Adventure. This section looks at some of the meanings inherent in the Tales of Adventure, as well as suggesting a theoretical pattern for the tales included in the Napi series.

Napi's human-ness has to be considered in the context that he is directly active only during a period when the people and animals are undifferentiated. This is emphasised here, since an understanding of the tales is dependent on keeping this lack of differentiation in mind. Also, in the Blackfoot language objects or things may be considered as animate and sentient beings, and some of the episodes in the tales under discussion can only be fully comprehended when one is prepared to accept that "inanimate" objects and natural forces can have motivation and will of their own.

Unlike the stories of *Old Man and Old Woman* and of *The First Marriage*, which have a fixed place in the series because they create or

destroy the world in which Napi functions directly, those included in the Tales of Adventure have no fixed relationship to one another. Each is complete in itself, and in modern - and especially during informal - story-telling sessions it is not unusual for the story-teller to relate only one or two of the tales or episodes. It is also evident from the collections made at the turn of the century that the tales were told separately then, since individual tales were collected from different story-tellers who gave no indication that they needed to be related in combination with any other tale. Maclean further suggests that individual story-tellers had their own preferences as to which tales they might relate and that some of the legends had only local currency. He says that different story-tellers knew certain tales (1890:296), and this is also the case today. Even so, when several tales or episodes are told together by a traditional story-teller these will always be ones from the same series: it would be impossible, for instance, to relate a tale from the Napi series in conjunction with a tale from the Star People series.

A number of continuous narratives have nevertheless been collected. Wissler records a complete cycle as *The Adventures of Old Man* (1908:37-39), Grinnell gives us a *Blackfoot Genesis* (1892:137-144) which contains a number of different episodes, and there is also *The Trickster Cycle* which I collected (Appendix). This latter, however, contains numerous incidents of a Pan-Indian nature that are not originally Blackfoot, but which were current among other tribes at the turn of the century when the Blackfoot collections were made. Not all these episodes derive from the Plains, and some elements in the modern cycle were formerly more general to the Subarctic and the Plateau culture areas. Three entire episodes are identical to stories which Lowie published from the Crow in 1918: these are *Coyote Visits the Indians*, *Coyote Exchanges Penises with Mouse*, and *Coyote Marries Whirlwind Woman*. We should note, too, the Trickster's identification with Coyote in the modern cycle: this is non-Blackfoot but is a trait that has become popular in modern retellings of Trickster stories.

Characteristic of many of the Tales of Adventure is that Napi finds himself in threatening but ridiculous situations as a consequence of giving in to impulse or of ignoring advice, and then has to call on others to come to his aid. In other stories he is tricked because he fails to recognise the limits of his own ability or the strengths that others possess. It is during these tales that Napi's mischievous disposition is fully developed. Napi flouts the rules - because he does not realise that they exist or chooses to ignore them, and there is no-one who can make him conform - but by doing so he brings them home quite forcefully and reminds the people of what could happen if they allow the world to revert to the anarchic state he symbolises. The Napi series does not imply a complete lack of codes of social or moral convention during the period he was active, since Napi can only be understood by reference to these codes. The implication is that the rules of social and moral behaviour are in place but that mechanisms for ensuring his conformity to social norms are absent.

It is not made clear in the tales whether Napi's disregard of normal conventions is because he is ignorant of them or because he simply feels they do not apply to him. There is little evidence for a growing sense of awareness in Napi and he apparently fails to learn by experience, yet we are left with the impression that he is not entirely unaware. This is evident, for instance, in the fact that he realises he is in danger after he insults others and they retaliate (*Old Man Frightens a Bear*, Wissler 1908:32; *The Theft from the Sun*, Grinnell 1892:167-168; *The Adventures of Old Man*, Uhlenbeck 1911:63-65). Napi should, of course, have thought of the probability of retaliation beforehand, and the humour in the stories is that he always acts without thinking ahead to what the consequences might be. This is the already familiar contradiction between what he knows and the way that he behaves.

That moral and social conventions are already in place is also expressed through the human-animals which act as foils for Napi's adventures. The Bull-Bats or Night-Hawks are caring parents who punish

Napi for twisting the beaks of their young (*The Trickster Cycle*, Appendix; *Old Man and the Rolling Stone*, Wissler 1908:24-25). Similarly the Squirrels and Prairie-Dogs have a communal life in which concern is expressed for the welfare of every member of the community (*Old Man Roasts Squirrels in Hot Ashes*, *Adventures of Old Man*, Wissler 1908:25-27, 37-39). Tales such as these establish the fact that the codes of moral and social convention are understood.

One of Wissler's tales, *Old Man Gets Fast in an Elk Skull and Loses his Hair* (1908:32-33), suggests ritual convention may have been in place too; although it is probable that this tale, at least in part, is a later addition to the original series and that the introduction of ritual, or, rather, the creation of a possibility for ritual action, should follow the tales of Napi as part of the Star People series. *Old Man Gets Fast in an Elk Skull* is a variation on the popular Plains story of *The Mice's Sun Dance*. The Sun Dance, in the form the Blackfoot know it today, is a relatively late development and was probably not fully adopted by them until the late nineteenth century, although it is based on earlier Blackfoot conceptions centred on the sacred Natoas Medicine Bundle (Part of the Star People series). It is likely, therefore, that similarities to the *Mice's Sun Dance* are intrusive references in the Napi series.

Yet even in the Blackfoot version of the *Mice's Sun Dance*, it is emphasised that Napi is not invincible and is a master fool: his head gets stuck in the elk skull because of his own foolishness when he falls asleep after being warned not to do so, and he then has to seek help to extricate himself. The way he obtains help appears to imply his denial of ritual. By floating in the river with the skull on his head Napi impersonates Elk, a powerful Underwater Person in Blackfoot belief. This is followed by the sacrilegious act of the women breaking the skull open to release him, since the skull of a sacred animal such as elk is often used as an altar in Blackfoot ritual (although this is a buffalo skull in the Sun Dance rather than an elk skull). Although the part of the tale referring to the mice suggests a ritual rather

than a social dance, other elements in the tale may be older or, at least, suggest that ritual is being denied.

The appearance of Elk in this tale is of particular interest. The Blackfoot believe that the world of the spirits consists of the Above (Star) People, Below People, and Underwater People (Grinnell 1892:259). Elk is always associated with water and is one of the most important Blackfoot deities, and it is fully compatible with the older body of Blackfoot stories that Napi should associate himself with such a powerful figure. At a later date Elk Woman is said to have contributed important regalia to the Sun Dance (Wissler 1912:211-214). This suggests the possibility that an original tale featuring Elk has been subsequently adapted to incorporate the episode referring to the Mice's Sun Dance. Calf Robe includes the story of Elk, again associated with water, in connection with the tale of *How Napi Got Back His Eyesight* (1978:103; but also see Wissler *Old Man Loses His Eyes*, 1908:29-30, and Grinnell *The Wonderful Bird*, 1892:153-154), but makes no reference to the Sun Dance.

In these and other tales from the series it is made apparent that behind Napi's buffoonery and foolishness lies a cunning and wisdom which will always enable him to escape from his difficulties, and in this respect, and although it is through his human failings he gets himself into trouble, Napi is still the embodiment of power which equates with that of Natos, the creative force. Despite appearances, Napi is a powerful figure rather than a weak one and laughter at Napi's antics is always tinged with a certain degree of awe. Napi is capable of achieving things which ordinary humans cannot, and it is because of this that he dares to assume he is equal (or superior) to Elk.

All the above are aspects of Napi that would be readily understood if traditional Blackfoot criteria were applied. Perceptions of Napi in the Tales of Adventure are not, however, static and fixed, and while every Blackfoot would agree with the basic definition of Napi as a mischievous Trickster, the variability in Blackfoot story-telling

and the ways in which tales are listened to means that subtle differences and nuances are perceived which cannot be detected from a "cold" reading of the collections of tales. We should be careful of taking the tales at face value or of attempting only to apply structural rules which derive from a Western academic viewpoint. It is important to look behind the "surface" and consider tales with regard to Blackfoot ideals, beliefs, social customs, and morality, since Blackfoot conceptions reveal layers of meaning and interpretation that otherwise remain hidden. It is impossible to appreciate the complexities of the tales without a broad understanding of Blackfoot conceptions, or, as Krupat phrased it "to develop any critical approach whatever to Native American literatures ... one needs an understanding of that people's cultural assumptions" (1993:180). There is an implied criticism that knowledge of the tales by outside observers does not always correlate with an understanding of the tales, and this has led otherwise knowledgeable students of Plains culture to draw the conclusion the tales are illogical.

Blackfoot tales are nevertheless only illogical if inappropriate criteria are applied and if the distinction between knowing and understanding is unrecognised. Blackfoot story-tellers assume their audiences will understand the character of Napi and know that he is not merely a shallow Trickster but is a multi-dimensional figure: a closer reading of the comments made by Grinnell's, Wissler's, and Maclean's informants, despite reinterpretations of these by the various authors, suggest that the multi-dimensionality of Napi was fully appreciated by the Blackfoot at the turn of the century. Reticence on the part of the Blackfoot to explain what to them is obvious means that Napi is often misjudged by those who do not have the requisite background or access to the traditional Blackfoot view, or who attempt to "force" Napi into categories of their own making.

It is difficult in academic studies which follow a tradition of analysing factual or empirical data to accommodate the Blackfoot view, which, in some senses, is the antithesis of an approach in which

questions and answers lead to knowledge, and which through analysis leads to understanding. The Blackfoot reverse this by saying that questions only give you facts, but facts alone can never lead to understanding. The difficulty is compounded by the Blackfoot opinion that asking direct questions is considered to be an indication of ignorance and lack of respect. Acceptance of the way in which the Blackfoot differentiate between knowing and understanding is nevertheless essential to an appreciation of Napi's character in the traditional context.

The tales of Napi's sexual adventures illustrate some of the difficulties encountered in attempting to discover the deeper meanings embedded in the stories. At a very simple level these could be considered as merely expressive - in an exaggerated form - of this aspect of male sexuality. It is part of the complex of greed, insensitivity, self-interest, and so forth that define Napi's primal urges and which tend to depict him as a human being who is out of control. But his character, and thus an understanding of his exploits, is subject to the perceived relationship of the listener to the activities and exploits depicted in the tales, and this, in turn, is modified according to the listener's age and gender as well as by the emphasis an individual story-teller introduces into the rendition.

Thus one perception of Napi's sexual adventures could be that of an adolescent male who might identify with Napi's search for sexual gratification and see in this a reflection of his own sexual awakening and, perhaps, some justification for the sexual horseplay of young men in general. This is easily interpreted in view of the fact that Blackfoot society traditionally encouraged young men in these endeavours: it was formerly said that a young man showed promise if he successfully waylaid a woman on her way to gather water, was able to spy on the women's bathing place in the river without being found out, or who could creep at night into the girl's sleeping place in her tipi without awakening anyone else (for a fuller discussion of Blackfoot social life in the pre-reservation period see Wissler 1911).

As far as the adolescent male is concerned, Napi is a person he can empathise with and who clearly displays adolescent longings. Thus he engages in a game in which the sexual conquest of a woman is the reward, and the higher the status of the woman he seduces then the greater his achievement. Napi, as befits his high opinion of himself, invariably attempts to seduce the chief's daughter (*The Trickster Cycle*, Appendix; *Old Man's Escape*, Wissler 1908:34-35; *Old Man Doctors*, Grinnell 1892:159-164). This, however, introduces a ludicrous aspect as far as a Blackfoot audience is concerned: a chief's daughter would always be carefully chaperoned, and for her to be asleep alone in the tipi, as suggested in the tales, is unthinkable. It was customary for chiefs and other prominent men to offer food and shelter to elderly widows, and they in return acted as chaperones to the daughters of the family and had a place reserved for them next to the tipi flap where they could prevent or warn against any unwarranted intrusion. According to Grinnell:

young men seldom spoke to young girls who were not relations, and the girls were carefully guarded. They never went out of the lodge after dark, and never went out during the day, except with the mother or some other old woman. (1892:216)

Much of the humour in these tales as understood by an adolescent Blackfoot male is therefore lost without a knowledge of Blackfoot customs. An entirely different interpretation would be made by a young woman, who understands these episodes as a warning. The consequences of yielding to Napi's importuning are inevitably disastrous: the chief's daughter and the girl picking strawberries are both killed when they engage in intercourse with Napi (*The Trickster Cycle*, Appendix; *Old Man's Escape*, *Old Man Sees Girls Picking Strawberries*, Wissler 1908:34-35, 36). There is a clear indication that the gratification of male desires is at the woman's expense. In some ways this can be read as a punishment of the woman for failing to maintain the high value placed on female virtue by the Blackfoot: preparation of ritual food can only be done by girls whose chastity is undoubted, and the major role of the Sacred Woman in the Okan (Sun Dance) can only be filled by someone who has been steadfastly true to her marriage vows.

But there is further subtlety in these stories. The female roles in which virtue is demanded are ritual rather than social ones, so Napi is striking a blow not only against the moral tenets of the Blackfoot but also against the ritual roles of women. This, of course, is similar to the destruction of the elk's skull, or altar, in *The Mice's Sun Dance*. Thus Napi's conquests not only express his desires and the "antagonism" between men and women, but can also be seen as striking against the Blackfoot ideals of female purity which are essential in any ritual context.

The encouragement of the young men in their amorous adventures and the chaperoning of young women creates a double-standard in Blackfoot society which is apparent in the Napi series: the licence permitted to young men is set against the strict upbringing of young girls. There is also the suggestion that feminine purity equates with ritual, which can be destroyed by Napi's indiscriminate sexual conquests. I indicate in the section on Ritualistic Origins how the discriminate use of sexuality by chaste women in ritual contexts serves to reverse the values expressed in the Napi series, but note here that such a reversal would be apparent to a Blackfoot audience listening to the tales of Napi's adventures although it might not be noticed by an outside observer. These, however, are only some of the meanings inherent in this group of tales as they would be understood by adolescent males and females.

In the tales of Napi's amorous adventures he is often thwarted or suffers some form of punishment as a consequence of his actions, as in the tale recorded by Wissler, *Old Man penem trans flumen mittit* (1908:36), in which Muskrat is scolded for carrying Napi's penis too slowly and thereby delaying his seduction of Beaver. Muskrat, infuriated by this chastisement, thrusts the end of Napi's penis into a thorn bush. Such elements can be thought of as discouraging the young men from emulating Napi: they are warned of the dire consequences that might result should they be found out. At the same time they introduce the idea of a challenge and of overcoming a

difficulty that was appropriate to the warrior ethos of the pre-reservation period. They also introduce an erotic comic element which is characteristic of the humour in many of the Napi stories. The equivalent episode in the *Modern Trickster Cycle* (Appendix) replaces Muskrat by Fish; but to the traditional Blackfoot fish are "poisonous" creatures and are therefore not accorded a prominent position in Blackfoot belief or in tales that do not have a Pan-Indian connection.

Napi's impatience to conclude a successful seduction, since Beaver is unaware that her vulva is exposed or of the threat to her virginity, leads to its failure. Napi is, in a sense, his own worst enemy. A Blackfoot understanding of the tale carries the moral message that a man should remain calm and will then succeed but that a woman should be alert to danger and not leave herself in an exposed position where she can be taken advantage of. The tales invert the "normal" relationship between young men and young women: Napi does not persevere as a young man should, and Beaver does not take care to protect her modesty as befitting a chief's daughter.

A similar inversion of the relationship between men and women is apparent throughout all the stories of Napi's sexual adventures. In these tales the women are invariably seen as "victims" and Napi may be ostracised for taking advantage of them, whereas the traditional Blackfoot view is that women are responsible for their own destinies and any illicit liaisons are felt to be due to their encouragement. Napi also acts against the fact that Blackfoot men are generally very shy in their approaches to women and would be unlikely to make any advances unless they felt they would be well received: without a sign from the woman to indicate their attention is welcomed most "traditional" Blackfoot men will refrain from being too forward with members of the opposite sex. This reticence and shyness on the part of males appears to be true also of the pre-reservation period. There are numerous anecdotes referring to young men waiting along the path the girls took to the river to gather water, but almost invariably the young men pull buffalo robes or blankets over their heads to conceal

their identities in case their appeals should be rejected. This extreme sensitivity on their part was to avoid ridicule if their advances were spurned, and this is also the reason why the difficulty of overcoming his shyness and concluding a successful sexual conquest was applauded by the young man's peer group.

The double standard apparent in Blackfoot society, whereby young men are encouraged in their sexual adventures while young women are closely watched, does not, in fact, imply the inferiority of women nor does it suggest that girls and women have less freedom in their sexual development than their male counterparts. In reality the situation is very different: reticence and shyness act as brakes on expressions of male sexuality just as surely as chaperoning places restrictions on women. Both are restricted by the conventions of society, and both have developed stratagems for dealing with this: the youth by overcoming his shyness through acts of bravado; the girl by using her power to destroy the youth's confidence by refusing to honour him with a glance or a smile. The demands that Napi makes on women and the fact that he forces his attention on them in such conspicuous ways are as foreign to traditional practice as are the consequences of his actions.

But despite the meanings adolescents might read into these stories Napi himself is not an adolescent (even though he may at times behave like one). The stories do not refer to him by age, and the translation of his name as Old Man implies respect: the terms "younger" and "older" signify respect relationships in Blackfoot, not age relationships. Thus by referring to him as Old Man he is named as if he were responsible, powerful, and knowledgeable; someone who should be looked up to. Grinnell and Curtis both tell us that Natos, the Sun, is also referred to by the respect name of Old Man when he is addressed in prayer (Grinnell 1892:258; Curtis 1911:64). This is partly responsible for Grinnell's confusion as to the true identity of Napi, since he had failed to recognise that the name was being used as a respect term rather than as an explicit statement that Napi and Natos were the same character. Thus even Napi's name is a comic inversion of

the way he is perceived, since his ridiculousness is emphasised by naming him as if he were a respected and mature person, but one who nevertheless acts with the irrepressible foolhardiness of youth.

Napi's assumed role of respected Elder is further emphasised by his use of the term "Younger Brothers" when speaking with the human-animals in the stories. Although some modern versions of tales explain that he is called Old Man because he precedes other aspects of the creation, it is nevertheless clear he expects everyone else to regard him as the "Elder Brother": meaning that he should be shown respect, not that he is elderly. His age is never indicated in any of the stories in the Napi series, and his own behaviour towards others is, of course, always disrespectful.

Few of the subtleties that are perceived by Blackfoot adolescents in the Napi stories and briefly outlined above would be appreciated by an outsider who did not have an understanding of the traditional Blackfoot view as opposed to a knowledge of the contents of the tales. Rather than being the simple, illogical, tales of an untutored people, as Grinnell (1892), Taylor (1994b), and others believe, the stories begin to take on a complexity and depth of meaning which is highly sophisticated.

Similar depths of meaning are read into these same tales when viewed from the perspectives of children, mature people, and Elders: my informants told me that a major function of the tales of Napi's adventures is to teach respect to children, responsibility to youth, and understanding to mature people, as well as encouraging reflection among the Elders. Napi focuses attention on each of these aspects by disregarding them: he is disrespectful, irresponsible, misunderstands situations, and fails to reflect on what the consequences of his actions will be. By mocking, ignoring, or refusing to recognise the rules of society the Napi stories serve to reinforce them. The joke in the Napi tales is that he always comes unstuck because he is apparently unaware of everything that is so obvious to anyone else.

Throughout the series we find Napi in awkward situations because of his failure to conform and listen to good advice. He always knows better. Thus in the *Eye-Juggling Trick* (*Old Man Loses his Eyes*, Wissler 1908:29-30; *The Wonderful Bird*, Grinnell 1892:153-154; *Napioa*, Maclean 1893:168-169; *How Napi Got Back His Eyesight*, Calf Robe 1979:103) he blinds himself because he performs the trick too frequently against the advice he has been given by Bird. Similarly, when he obtains the magic arrows from Farting Boy he ignores the restrictions on their use and is consequently thrown through the air when he expels wind (*The Trickster Cycle*, Appendix). In all the examples of non-conformity he does the opposite of what is asked or expected of him, and this, of course, is another example of the comic inversion referred to previously. Napi's contrariness is heightened by his apparent inability to recognise that any responsibility might lie with himself. Thus when he loses his eyes by throwing them into the trees too often he seems incapable of connecting their loss with his own disregard of the instructions he has been given. He is unable to distinguish between cause and effect, just as he has no conception of right and wrong.

Because of this inability to have a realistic judgemental view, Napi does not see his failure to conform as a fault in his own character. Similarly, he is unable to apportion blame correctly. When he is tumbled through the air after he has insulted Wind for not blowing hard enough to cool his anus, which he has himself burnt in punishment for not watching his food, Napi then blames his discomfiture on Birch who actually saves him (*Origin of the Wind*, Maclean 1893:166). He fails to realise that he is the initiator of his own misfortunes or that he is unable to direct his anger appropriately, and he also seems incapable of recognising that the various parts of his body belong to him and that by burning his anus he will hurt himself. In similar vein, Wakdjunkaga in the Winnebago myth analysed by Radin (1956:8) causes his right and left arms to fight each other because they do not recognise they belong to the same person. There is, however, a major difference in that Wakdjunkaga realises what is happening and that he

has been a fool, whereas this is something Napi never demonstrates: he seems only to know that his anus is painful but fails to connect this with the fact that he has burnt it himself. Nowhere in the Napi stories is there any indication of a growing sense of awareness: should his anus fail him again in the future we can be quite certain that Napi would apply a similar punishment. It is evident that Napi's experiences leave him no wiser than he had been before.

Napi's lack of awareness also enables him to conveniently forget any incident once danger or trouble to himself is past. Because of this he bears no grudges, but he is also incapable of taking any long term view. Thus he cannot connect the fact that when Coyote (or Fox) steals his food he is acting as an enemy (*The Trickster Cycle*, Appendix; *Old Man Makes a Drive, and Loses Meat in a Race*, Wissler 1908:27-29; *The Race*, Grinnell 1892:155-156), so in a different tale (*The Fox*, Grinnell 1892:169-170) we find Coyote or Fox acting as Napi's hunting partner or comrade: a situation which in the past would have indicated a sworn bond of close friendship or "blood brotherhood" between the pair.

There is nothing in Napi's character to suggest that he makes any grand plans or schemes in order to better his own position or to exact revenge, and most of his adventures are ones in which he is the loser: it is Napi who remains unmarried in *The First Marriage*, who loses the race with Coyote in *Napi Challenges Coyote* (Appendix), and who has his food stolen by Lynx in *Old Man Roasts Squirrels in Hot Ashes* (Wissler 1908:25-27) and in *Old Man and the Lynx* (Grinnell 1892:171-173). It is also characteristic of him, when told an obvious solution to a problem - that, for instance, he should have thrown Farting Boy's magic arrows away - to comment "That, surely, was the one thing I forgot" (*The Trickster Cycle*, Appendix). This needs to be understood merely as a statement of fact: Napi learns no lesson from the problems he creates for himself, and will just as "surely forget" the next time he is faced with a similar predicament. An interesting perspective on this notion of forgetfulness has been forwarded by Lévi-Strauss, who says

"forgetfulness forms a system with *misunderstanding*, defined as a failure to communicate with others, and with *indiscretion*, defined as an excess of communication with others" (1985:186).

It is impossible to see in Napi any indication of a malicious character: he is really only a lovable rogue. He may never be grateful - in fact he does not know what gratitude is because he thinks everything belongs to him as the respected Elder Brother - but he also bears no malice. He is, however, impatient and liable to vent his frustration on whatever is close to hand, which may include himself. His impatience and anger are nevertheless the actions of a frustrated child - although Napi is not a child - and bear no resemblance to the actions of a malicious Trickster such as Iktomi. Napi actually seems sublimely unaware that his actions can have either a positive or detrimental effect: he thinks only of himself and vents his anger explosively but without any real intent to do harm. He reacts in this way only because he has not achieved what he wanted. This in itself is another inversion of Blackfoot ideals, since every Blackfoot feels that each individual is responsible for his/her actions and for the consequences that arise from them. Napi's failure to do so reinforces the fact that he does not recognise the rules governing communal life.

That he is malicious nevertheless continues to be propounded by some students of Plains culture, such as Taylor (1994a:62-63), who perpetuate this myth by referring to the eminently quotable but inaccurate observations made by Grinnell. Grinnell wrote:

The character of Old Man, as depicted in the stories told of him by the Blackfeet, is a curious mixture of opposite attributes. In the serious tales, such as those of the creation, he is spoken of respectfully, and there is no hint of the impish qualities which characterize him in other stories, in which he is all powerful, but also at times impotent; full of all wisdom, yet at times so helpless that he has to ask aid from the animals. Sometimes he sympathizes with the people, and at others, out of pure spitefulness, he plays them malicious tricks that are worthy of a demon. He is a combination of strength, weakness, wisdom, folly, childishness, and malice. (1892:257)

My reading of the tales and the opinions expressed to me by Blackfoot story-tellers cast doubt on Grinnell's observations. Napi is never depicted as all-powerful: his vulnerability is an essential element in virtually every tale in the series, and it is because he is vulnerable that he needs to seek assistance from others in escaping from impossible and ridiculous dilemmas which he creates for himself. But we should be careful of deducing from this that he is at times impotent: he puts himself in these difficult positions through his own foolishness rather than from a lack of power, and it is often because of this same foolishness that he is unable to extricate himself without help. Blackfoot story-tellers stress the fact that Napi is thought of as a powerful figure, and modern Blackfoot certainly do not think of him as impotent. It is nevertheless clear that with foresight he could easily have avoided difficult situations or thought of ways of escaping from them by using his own resources. The notion of a demon and the idea of spitefulness or malice propounded by Grinnell credit Napi with a quality he does not possess: that of deliberate intent to harm others. Napi actually has no concern whatsoever for others, whether of a benevolent or malevolent nature; he also has no respect for others, accepts no responsibility, shows no understanding, and does not reflect on what he has done. Any negative results of Napi's actions are incidental (we might say accidental) and do not result from a spiteful nature.

Napi is, of course, totally asocial, in the sense that he is unable to live within a community, and this is constantly reinforced in the Tales of Adventure. In all of these he wanders, almost always alone, and his only interactions with communities are those in which he hopes to gain some advantage for himself. This is readily apparent in the tales where he roasts the Squirrels or the Prairie Dogs (*Old Man Roasts Squirrels in Hot Ashes*, Wissler 1908:25-27; *Old Man and the Lynx*, Grinnell 1892:171-173) and in his seduction of the chief's daughter (*Old Man's Escape*, Wissler 1908:34-35; *Old Man Doctors*, Grinnell 1892:159-164). In the tale where he seduces the chief's daughter he even enters the village surreptitiously, as an enemy would,

and then stays in the tipi of the poor old women which is on the edge of the camp. As a stranger, and especially one with such a high opinion of himself, he should have entered the village openly and gone straight to the chief's tipi, where he would have been feasted and his presence acknowledged publicly by the camp crier. Instead we find Napi creeping suspiciously around the perimeters of the camp and then rummaging through the tipis when all the occupants go out for a buffalo hunt, although he has promised the old women he will hunt for them.

The above references to Napi need to be understood in light of the fact that the Blackfoot, as is clear from the ethnographic literature as well as modern practice, consider it a dishonour not to receive guests with hospitality and generous feasting and gift-giving. It was customary for the Blackfoot and other Plains tribes to honour visitors in this way, and important visitors, including delegations from the United States or Canadian governments, might be feasted several times during the same evening by prominent families of the community. Even relatively unimportant visitors would be offered this hospitality, though on a less grand scale. The dishonour of not having food to offer a guest is noted by Schultz, who when visiting with Lodge-Pole Chief during the famine of the winter of 1833 records that the old chief enthusiastically welcomed him into the tipi and asked his wives to prepare a meal for their guest. Lodge-Pole Chief was embarrassed by the fact that his wives could only produce three potatoes and two small trout (the severity of the famine is obvious from the fact that they were eating "poisonous" fish) and broke down in tears at the shame that his inability to feed Schultz had brought upon his family (1907:395).

There are a number of elements introduced in the above tales which emphasise Napi's inability or refusal to recognise the social aspects of Blackfoot life and which also add humour because they are unthinkable in Blackfoot society. The poor old women living in an isolated tipi at the edge of the camp is, for instance, an anomaly in Blackfoot terms: tipis were formerly pitched close together for

protection; few people had no kin to provide for them; and the women would have become the responsibility of their late husbands' brothers as far as providing provisions were concerned, or, if there were no kin, would have been cared for by the chief and other prominent men. Also, for Napi to walk into a camp "full of meat" where some people are starving is ludicrous since food is shared in Blackfoot communities and everyone is free to enter any tipi and to help him/herself to whatever is available. Even in times of scarcity, as noted above, a Blackfoot feels it is incumbent on him to provide food for his guests. This sharing of food was noted by William Philo Clark, who was reduced to eating the meat of dead horses during Crook's disastrous campaign of 1876. He wrote:

I have seen white men reduced to the last "hard tack", with only tobacco enough for two smokes, and with no immediate prospect of anything better than horse meat "straight". A portion of the hard bread was hidden away, and the smokes were taken in secret. An Indian, undemoralized by contact with the whites, would divide down to the last morsel. (1885:186)

By behaving as if he were an enemy, Napi reinforces the fact that his relationship with the occupants of the camp will be an adversarial one. He makes promises to the women which he breaks, and he then searches through the tipis while the occupants are away. No Blackfoot would make a promise he cannot keep (he would avoid the issue if he felt unable to meet the commitment) and everyone's personal property was sacrosanct (the Blackfoot say they only need locks and doors since white values have been introduced). All of these serve to distance Napi from any involvement in community life.

His distancing himself from community life is also apparent in those tales where he is depicted as a chief (see, for instance, Wissler's version of *The First Marriage*, 1908:21-22), and is again used for comic effect since it is unclear exactly what Napi should be chief of or what it is that gives him the right to claim such status. We have already seen that his actions are a threat to any stable community and that Napi lacks the tolerance and understanding that enable people to live communally. Chiefly status depends on generosity, the ability

to give wise counsel, to act for the benefit of the poor and needy, and to behave in a manner that shows piety; all of which are qualities that are reversed by Napi. References to him as a chief are all the more ridiculous because of this.

Propp pointed out that "when the hero of the folktale is a 'fool', this means not only that he is foolish, but also that he (and consequently the narrative) is not bound by the listener's norms of conduct and behavior" (1984:26). This definition is useful here in emphasising that Napi is unrestrained in terms of normal human conduct and motivation, but can be understood only by comparison with and in relation to his inversion of the normal - ie. social and moral - standards adopted in Blackfoot communities. Napi steps beyond the bounds to which ordinary humans adhere and which are necessary in normalising relationships between people. By treating the normal as abnormal, he pokes fun at the most basic and sacrosanct principles of Blackfoot life. Propp's definition is nevertheless misleading in one respect, since Napi can only be judged by the "listener's norms of conduct and behavior" as it is the flouting of these norms that emphasises his significance.

Thus any judgemental view of Napi indicates that in place of humility he substitutes arrogance and boasts of his achievements: of which he actually has none to boast. Instead of sharing his food he hoards it: which is unthinkable to the Blackfoot, among whom food is shared and is constantly kept ready so that anyone who visits can be fed. When he challenges anyone it is because he thinks the other is weaker: mocking the Blackfoot ideals of honour and courage (although we should note that Napi is then usually defeated because he has misjudged his opponent). Thus Napi reverses the most cherished ideals of Blackfoot society, and this is one of the factors that makes him so amusing: by laughing at Napi the Blackfoot are effectively laughing at themselves. His foolishness resides in the fact that he continually engages in activities and behaviour that are intolerable in normal everyday life. When viewed in this way, the entire Napi series becomes

a satire on Blackfoot life and customs, and Napi himself becomes a caricature of all the failings to which ordinary people are prone. If Napi is a fool, then he is a very clever fool who knows exactly where to draw humour from Blackfoot society and how to make the Blackfoot laugh at themselves.

The principle of the entire Napi series rests on an inversion - the reversal of normal rules and codes of conduct - which is an important aspect of Napi's character: he reinforces Blackfoot morals and ideals by acting in the opposite manner. In many ways Napi is out of control, and we noted that his demise is finally brought about only when the Woman Chief reintroduces control through the exercise of her "second say" by which Napi is defeated. Napi's asocial behaviour means he can only act directly in ways which are antithetical to human communal living, even though Napi is himself excessively human.

In the Tales of Adventure we find Napi acting in an excessively human manner in a world in which no distinction is made between people and animals. Here his influence is direct but is to satisfy only his own personal wishes. It is interesting to see what happens when Napi's power is brought into the human realm: that is, when the chaotic world he occupies in the Tales of Adventure is replaced by the controlled and structured world of people. If the principles the Blackfoot use to define Napi's character when he is a direct influence are applied here, we should expect to find the opposite when chaos is replaced by order. There should be an inversion of the anarchic state introduced by Napi since any direct use of his power would destroy the order that has replaced chaos. By inverting the character and world of Napi we should therefore find, in a controlled world, that he acts as a spirit power rather than a human one, that people and animals are differentiated, that his power is exercised indirectly rather than directly, and that he acts for the benefit of others and not only for himself. It also follows from this, according to Blackfoot logic, that the people he watches over should be those who possess the high codes of moral and social conduct that my informant defined as "nice".

It is significant that all those qualities which define Napi - his wanderlust, continual hunger, voracious sexual appetite, etc - are rendered impossible when he is turned into a pine tree. This is done through the agency of the Woman Chief, which reverses Napi's use of women as victims in the Tales of Adventure: Napi's overtly masculine appetites have been successfully curbed by the feminine power of the Woman Chief, who also uses her power to reintroduce factors first made apparent by Old Woman in the opening stories and which define human communities and permit social interaction. By controlling Napi - that is, by replacing chaos with order - his positive aspects are brought to the fore. In this respect it is important to note that even though Napi is brought under control he is not rendered powerless. As Grinnell noted "Old Man can never die ... before his departure he told them he would always take care of them, and some day would return" (1892:257).

Controlling Napi is not, however, the same as him reverting to his beneficial aspect as Natos. Natos is responsible for ritual behaviour, whereas all those qualities Napi watches over are human attributes. There remains a distinction between Natos as a sky power and Napi who is rooted to the earth. Thus even when Napi changes from being a mischief-maker to a beneficent protector he remains a Trickster, and it is interesting to observe that when he does try to interfere directly in human affairs - by, for example, encouraging a man to have adulterous or incestuous relationships - the consequences of his interference are conceived as due to his propensity for mischief-making.

Rather than being beyond Blackfoot comprehension, as Grinnell believed, Napi is a highly sophisticated character who ensures stability in Blackfoot communities: any harmful aspects of human behaviour are highlighted and channelled to safety through Napi's activities by being turned into a joke that he plays against himself. Napi therefore provides an outlet through which disruptive influences can be directed and expressed. The paradoxical world of Napi is one in

which the impossible is made possible, and it is because of this that although Napi is vulnerable and can be defeated he cannot be destroyed. His influence is pervasive and can neither be guarded against nor deliberately sought. In these respects Napi is quite unlike many of the Trickster figures that feature so prominently in the tales of other Native American groups, where we often find a Trickster who is able to restore himself after being torn to pieces, who deliberately seeks to make mischief and who has no positive effect, but who can be guarded against through the performance of specific ritual acts.

This latter point again tends to emphasise the specific differences between Napi and the Trickster character of their Dakota neighbours. Napi, as the founder of human nature, cannot be guarded against: his presence is, in a sense, contained within every individual and can become manifest at any time if social controls are dropped or ignored. The malicious intent of Iktomi, however, can be negated by burning sage grass to purify a tipi or building prior to the commencement of any ritual act and to prevent Iktomi's disruptive influence. As Radin has pointed out:

The symbol which Trickster embodies is not a static one. It contains within itself the promise of differentiation, the promise of god and man. For this reason every generation occupies itself with interpreting Trickster anew. No generation understands him fully but no generation can do without him. Each had to include him in all its theologies, in all its cosmogonies, despite the fact that it realised that he did not fit properly into any of them, for he represents not only the undifferentiated and distant past, but likewise the undifferentiated present within every individual. This constitutes his universal and persistent attraction. And so he became and remained everything to every man - god, animal, human being, hero, buffoon, he who was before good and evil, denier, affirmer, destroyer and creator. If we laugh at him, he grins at us. What happens to him happens to us. (1956:168-169)

The impossible behaviour of Napi coupled with the belief that he is an ever-present and pervasive influence is the source of much of the humour in the Tales of Adventure. Indeed, it is difficult to take Napi seriously in the story-telling context, and Blackfoot audiences respond to these tales with a great show of amusement and much laughter. In

this sense Napi is readily accessible. But the buffoon masks a complex character who has a serious function in Blackfoot belief, and laughter at his antics is not a denial of the power he possesses. Propp pointed out that "in many humorous tales, reality is turned inside out, and this is why people find them so fascinating ... the unusual acquires dimensions impossible in life" (1984:19). While this statement can be applied to the tales of Napi's adventures, it is necessary to realise that Napi is not only turning reality inside out but is creating an alternative and contradictory world which is governed by his own conception of what is important. This is Napi's "other reality", a world into which the listener is transported by the story-teller and which is bound to the real world only by Napi's inversion of the normal conventions of social and moral behaviour. It is nevertheless a world through which his amoral, irresponsible, and asocial activities serve to reinforce the importance of morality, responsibility, and sociability. Thus the world of Napi is, essentially, a human world - even though it is peopled by human-animals - but is one in which the normal codes of human conduct, as applied to Napi, are ignored or reversed. As Lévi-Strauss has so aptly pointed out the trickster is a mediator (1967:223): since his mediating function occupies a position halfway between two polar terms, he must retain something of that duality - namely an ambiguous and equivocal character. But the Trickster figure is not the only form of mediation; some myths seem to be entirely devoted to the task of exhausting all the possible solutions to the problem of bridging the gap. It is in the sense of forming a "mediating bridge" between the chaotic world of Napi and the ordered world of ritual that I consider tales of the Star People and of Ritualistic Origins in the following sections.

STAR PEOPLE TALES AND TALES OF RITUALISTIC ORIGINS:

The Rise and Defeat of the Monsters.

Once Napi had gone there was no one who could exercise a power for good (Napi did this even though it wasn't always his intent) and the powers of evil began to take control. These evil powers were all the bad aspects of man - and these forces preyed on man. They had no other food at all.

Of the most important powers that came to the rescue of the people were the Seven Brothers and Blood Clot Boy [also known as the Seven Stars and Smoking Star]. These were important because they defeated the monsters that were threatening the existence of the people. But, although they possessed so much power, these were not human and could not live in a human world. This is the reason why they have gone to the sky. (personal communication)

The previous section established Napi's world as a chaotic realm. It is one in which anarchic behaviour which shows no regard for moral and social codes of conduct is given the fullest possible expression. In this sense it appears uncontrolled, and this is the emphasis I have made so far. However, the quotation above from one of my informants suggests that some control is in place, since we are told "once Napi had gone there was no one who could exercise a power for good". This section begins by examining this apparently contradictory statement, and then considers the more direct forms of control expressed in tales of the Star People.

My premise is that the Star People introduce formal order and create an environment in which ritual can be used to maintain balance and harmony. Ritual itself derives from the Above People, Below People, and Underwater People, each of which may be thought of as consisting of various spirit powers which confer benefits that can be activated through the correct performance of a ritual and the re-enactment of its origin myth. Some Blackfoot place the Star People within the category of Above People. A closer reading of the tales,

however, suggests that the Star People may be differentiated from the Above People since although they make ritual possible they do not generally give any rituals directly to the people. The Star People also act of their own accord, whereas the Above People (in common with the Below People and the Underwater People) more usually act through animal intermediaries.

The presence of the Star People is made necessary by the threat that the monsters pose to the people, and it is therefore important to consider how the destructive forces that the monsters represent are able to become manifest after Napi's demise. Napi, after being rooted to the earth by the Woman Chief, continues to watch over people who "think nice": that is, his indirect power is of benefit to those who think and behave in the opposite manner to himself when he acts directly. This inversion is characteristic of Napi, and it is anticipated that anything he does or which is associated with him will be the opposite of what we might otherwise expect.

The statement given in the opening quotation suggests that the removal of Napi is actually a removal of a direct force for good that functions during the period when Napi is active. However, Napi cannot exercise direct influence for good, simply because he does not differentiate between good and bad and thinks of no one but himself. He is unconcerned as to what may or may not happen to others. It would be difficult to find in Napi any of the characteristics of a hero, and a confrontation with the monsters which threaten the people is so far beyond the behavioural traits exhibited by Napi that to attempt to credit him with any form of direct control of the monsters is unimaginable. Napi is, essentially, a coward rather than a hero.

It is therefore necessary to look elsewhere to understand why the people should be threatened by the monsters when Napi is prevented from exercising direct influence. The clue, I believe, is in the good:bad continuum that exists in Blackfoot logic, where no single power is wholly good or wholly evil but where an extreme of either good or bad

is considered to be a potentially negative and disruptive force. Napi, when he is active, is clearly within the negative side of this balancing of opposing qualities - simply because he is taking human failings to excess - just as his counterpart, Natos, is clearly within the positive. Yet Napi also has positive qualities (when his human failings are removed or controlled), just as Natos has negative ones (when his direct influence is abused by humans). We do not, therefore, have a straightforward binary opposition between negative and positive, or between Napi and Natos, but a rather complex and subtle balance between and within each aspect of the opposition.

If Blackfoot logic is taken to its obvious conclusion we should expect this balancing of opposites to occur at varying levels of intensity in every individual character and in every situation, even when this is not readily apparent. In some of the tales Napi does exercise a power for good, even though it is inadvertent and is not ultimately to his own advantage: he introduces the piskun (buffalo jump) method of hunting, and then has his food stolen and goes without (*The Elk*, Grinnell 1892:158); and he introduces marriage, but is then the only one to remain unchosen (*The First Marriage*, Lowie in Wissler 1908:22; *The First Marriage*, Wissler 1908:21-22). In both these examples the benefit the people obtain from Napi's actions are entirely incidental to his reasons for initiating them: which are in the first instance because he is greedy and in the second because he wants to seduce the beautiful Woman Chief.

I implied previously that we should not try to interpret the Blackfoot tales as literally as some students of Plains culture have tended to do: an analysis of their content provides some clues to a fundamental structure or basis for the manner in which they are organised, but it is also important to consider the deeper significance and meaning the different episodes have for a Blackfoot audience. Given the nature of Blackfoot logic it is not only likely but probable that Napi should exercise other powers for good, although these may be obscure and unstated.

Napi, of course, is a mischief-maker, but he has none of the evil intent apparent in a character such as Iktomi. We cannot look to Napi for any deliberate malicious action, but neither can we expect any deliberate action that is to anyone else's benefit. The codes of good (or proper) behaviour are put in place at the beginning of the Napi series through the activities of Old Woman, as well as by the opposition inherent in the relationship between Napi and Natos; but if good is in place it follows that its opposite, bad, must be in place too, even if this is not stated directly. In the Napi series both good and bad have to be seen as potential forces, not actual ones, since Napi is merely a mischief-maker and his realm is that of mischief rather than of good and evil. He is not presented as the proponent of either extreme. From this we can surmise that when the Woman Chief immobilises Napi she releases the potentials that his mischief-making had previously kept in check. In other words, by her action she permits the development of good but also enables the eruption of evil.

The tales of Ritualistic Origins will be taken up in more detail in the following section, however it is important to note here that the rules which govern human conduct and relationships are ones that have to be learned: these not only include aspects of human behaviour and cultural institutions such as marriage, but, for the Blackfoot, may also be associated with the transfer and/or opening of tribal Medicine Bundles which bring benefit to the community as a whole. The performance of the ritual requires learning a complex sequence of songs through which the power inherent in the Bundle is invoked for the promotion of harmony and balance which provide security. The opposite aspects of disharmony and imbalance associated with a threat to human survival should therefore display the inverse characteristics and be latent powers that merely require a catalyst (or opportunity) to bring them into being. From this it follows that after the demise of Napi and prior to the learning of ritual through which balance and harmony can be maintained, the forces of imbalance and disharmony will gain the upper hand. At this point the rituals which keep them in check are unavailable, but the conduit of safety between harmony and disharmony

and between balance and imbalance that is expressed through Napi's mischief-making has been removed. With the removal of Napi a host of monsters - flesh-eating buffalo, ogres, cannibals, and giants - appear to threaten the existence of the people. The people are helpless and at the mercy of the monsters, until the Star People, who are powerful spirit beings, descend to earth to defeat the monsters.

Star People tales form a relatively coherent body of stories in Blackfoot story-telling traditions; although, if it is possible to judge from the number published by Wissler, they are told less frequently than those which refer to Napi. Wissler published a total of 23 tales of Old Man (Napi), and 8 Star myths (although elements that relate to the Star People series also occur in a number of tales published by Wissler as *Tales of Ritualistic Origins*). We are largely dependent on Wissler and Duvall for the versions of Star People stories as they stood at the turn of the century. Grinnell, who obtained his stories from intimate friends rather than recognised story-tellers, has primarily given us tales which are family entertainment or personal reminiscences. Even so, a number of individual versions of popular Star People tales, especially that of *Scar-Face*, have been published in addition to those we know from Wissler/Duvall (Grinnell 1892; Spence 1914; R.N.Wilson 1898). The apparent imbalance between the numbers of Star People tales and those of Napi may, however, be due to Blackfoot reluctance to relate the Star People stories in informal contexts: modern Blackfoot story-tellers appear to be more relaxed when relating tales of Napi to a stranger than if asked to relate tales of the Star People, and this was probably also the case at the turn of the century.

Like the tales of Napi, those of the Star People have a form that is very characteristic of the Blackfoot, and even when themes common to Plains Indian story-telling appear - such as that of the *Twin Brothers* (*The Twin Brothers or Stars*, Wissler 1908:40-53) or of *The Girl Who Married a Star* (*The Fixed Star*, Wissler 1908:58-61) - these are adapted to fit the structure of Blackfoot tales in which stories of the Star People are opposed to those in the Napi series. The role of the Star

People is, of course, the opposite to that of Napi, since their function is to directly confront the monsters and defeat them: whereas Napi is a coward who thinks only of himself, the Star People display bravery and a conspicuous lack of concern for their own safety.

The distinction between the Star People and Napi is also made evident by the detail contained in the Star People stories as to the origin of the culture heroes. Napi's origins are unclear - he has always been there - but the origins of the Star People are explicit ones. In the tales of the Twin Brothers (*The Twin Brothers or Stars*, Wissler 1908:40-53) and of Blood-Clot Boy (*Blood Clot or Smoking Star*, Wissler 1908:53-58; *Clot of Blood*, Uhlenbeck 1911:34-50; Maclean 1893:167-168; *Kut-O-Yis*, Grinnell 1892:29-38) their origins are little short of miraculous: the Twin Brothers are cut from their mother by a stranger who kills her and are then reared by Beaver and Rock, while Blood-Clot Boy is born from a clot of blood and grows to maturity by being placed against the poles of the tipi. In other tales, such as *Scar-Face* (Wissler 1908:61-66; Uhlenbeck 1911:50-57), *Cuts-Wood* (Wissler 1908:66-68), and the *Bunched Stars* (Wissler 1908:71-72), the fact that they are poor is stressed. The Star People tales give the listener the opportunity to identify with each of the heroes and to view their actions positively, whereas Napi always remains a somewhat enigmatic character.

The enigma of Napi's being compared with the concreteness of the Star People is subject to other subtleties that would be apparent to a Blackfoot audience. Napi is excessively human yet the tales make it clear this disbars him from ever living as a fully functioning member of a human community. In the Star People tales the opposite attribute is found. Star People are definitely not human but are spirit beings, yet they invariably live in human communities, and often as the poorest members of those communities. They may, additionally, be the offspring of human parents, as in the tale of the *Twin Brothers*, or they may marry human beings. The girl who marries Morning Star (*The Fixed Star*, Wissler 1908:58-61) bears his child who later returns to the sky to

become the Fixed Star (North Star or Polar Star). In comparison with Napi the Star People have a number of qualities that are the opposite of his: they are spirit people who live among humans, sometimes have human parents, and may marry humans.

It is also apparent that the Star People tales are concerned with a transition from the human-animal world of Napi to one in which the people and animals are differentiated: one of the tests the culture-hero, Beaver, is given in the tale of the *Twin Brothers* (Wissler 1908:40-53) is to set traps to catch wolves, and in both this tale and that of *Blood-Clot Boy* (Wissler 1908:53-58) the people are hunting buffalo for food. It is clear in the context of the tales that Beaver and his twin brother Rock are not the actual animals or things but are supernatural beings, and the confusion between people, animals, and objects evident in the Napi series is largely absent from the tales of the Star People. Even when Napi introduces hunting (*Old Man Makes a Drive, and Loses Meat in a Race*, Wissler 1908:27-29) the animals he hunts continue to display human characteristics: the buffalo laughs itself to death (*Old Man Makes Buffalo Laugh*, Wissler 1908:36-37), he talks with the animals he persuades to jump off a cliff (*The Elk*, Grinnell 1892:158), and the Prairie Dogs are playing a game (*Old Man and the Lynx*, Grinnell 1892:171-173).

The Star People series, however, creates a distinction between "ordinary" and "non-ordinary" animals. The people's adversaries in these tales may take human form (as ogres, cannibals, etc) or animal form (Bear, Snake, and so forth). In their animal form they are not ordinary animals but are placed within the same category as the human monsters. Both possess immense physical and supernatural power which the culture heroes of these stories need to defeat. Many of the Star People tales make the distinction between ordinary animals and the monsters even clearer by introducing the Star People's adventures with the standard phrase "the people were starving". This implies that some ordinary animals exist as a food source, but a monster animal-human has taken away the (ordinary) buffalo the people are dependent upon for

their survival: the Star People's challenge is to restore the food animals and prevent famine, but also to restore equilibrium between people and animals.

In order to meet the challenges presented to them the Star People are frequently depicted as setting out on a deliberate quest: in the tale of Scar-Face he travels to the Sun to have his scar removed, where he destroys the monster birds that threaten Morning Star (Wissler 1908:61-66; Uhlenbeck 1911:50-57), Beaver and Little Dog transform themselves respectively into a swallow and a horse-fly so that they can travel the great distances needed to locate the buffalo that Crow has secreted (*The Dog and the Stick*, Grinnell 1892:145-148), Blood-Clot Boy travels from camp to camp defeating monsters (*Blood Clot or Smoking Star*, Wissler 1908:53-58; *Clot of Blood*, Uhlenbeck 1911:34-50). The journeys of the Star People thus have a definite objective, whereas Napi's wanderings are presented as being totally aimless. Even when Napi pursues Lynx and punishes him for stealing his food (*Old Man and the Lynx*, Grinnell 1892:171-173) this is not a sustained journey: he comes across Lynx asleep on a nearby rock, and we can assume that if his objective had not been accomplished so quickly Napi would soon have forgotten what it was he set out to do and embarked on a different adventure. Napi has no future plans in mind and simply responds to the immediate. In the Star People series, however, the culture heroes set out purposefully on epic journeys. These journeys are of such dimensions that, at times, they involve not only travelling vast distances but even encompass voyages out of the human realm.

A further distinction between Napi and the Star People is made by implying that the Star People resolve problems through their own efforts whereas Napi often needs to depend on the intervention of others to rescue him in situations from which he is unable to extricate himself. Napi is dependent on the women breaking the elk skull in which his head has become stuck fast (*Old Man gets Fast in an Elk Skull and Loses his Hair*, Wissler 1908:32-33) and relies on various animals to assist him when he is pursued by Rock (*Old Man and the Rolling*

Stone, Wissler 1908:24-25; *The Rock*, Grinnell 1892:165-166), but we should also note that Napi's predicaments are inadvertent ones: they arise from his lack of foresight and could easily have been avoided.

The Star People, by contrast, deliberately seek danger and then solve the problem without recourse to any outside agency. Beaver and Rock, for instance, search for the monsters after they have been cautioned not to go in certain directions where danger lies (*The Twin Brothers or Stars*, Wissler 1908:40-53) and Blood-Clot Boy deliberately enters the tipis of the Bears and Snakes after he has been warned not to do so (*Blood Clot or Smoking Star*, Wissler 1908:53-58; *Clot of Blood*, Uhlenbeck 1911:34-50). The Star People defeat the monsters by using their own power rather than relying on others. Although they occasionally meet various beings during their journeys who assist them by giving advice this is, again, in contrast to Napi: they succeed by following the advice they have been given, whereas Napi fails because he thinks he knows better. In other words, the Star People succeed through the responsible use of their power while Napi fails because he is irresponsible.

There is also a distinction between Napi's grandiose opinion of himself and the humility of the Star People. Napi firmly believes he possesses power beyond that of others, and the humour in the tales is that the audience know he will be outwitted because he underestimates what others can do, whereas the Sky People frequently express feelings that their power is not strong enough to defeat the monsters (although the audience know that it is and that the monsters will be destroyed). It is implicit in the stories of the Star People that they must ultimately be successful so the world will be rid of the monsters which threaten the people (and the existence of the Blackfoot in the modern period is considered proof by the Blackfoot that the rule of the monsters has been broken and a victory achieved).

An interesting comment, which sheds further light on Blackfoot concepts of victory and defeat in the story-telling context was made by one of my informants, an Elder and story-teller, who said:

We told stories about our defeats as well as our victories, but maybe white people didn't always understand this. Our stories are not about what happened, the way white history is, but are stories about what we have learned - and we learnt as much from our defeats as we did from our victories. From defeat we learnt how our people - the Real People - had faced a difficulty and come through it. These are stories of survival - our survival over all different problems: real problems, physical problems, moral problems, and so on. Even the defeats were victories because the Real People are still here. Maybe this is what people mean when they say the Indians don't talk about their defeats. The Real People aren't defeated, they are still here. They are still gaining victories, even over their defeats.
(personal communication)

In comparison with the uncertain consequences of Napi's activities and his eventual demise, the outcome of the intervention of the Star People and their victory is a certain one: to the Blackfoot it is readily apparent that Napi's belief in himself leads to uncertain results while the Star People's more tentative approach has a definite and positive conclusion.

The humility of the culture heroes who feature in the Star People series is further emphasised by the fact that they are depicted as poor orphans or living with a poor grandmother. In the tale of the *Twin Brothers* (Wissler 1908:40-53), Beaver, one of the Twin Stars, is depicted as being so filthy and despicable that he even defecates in his bed. In part, the humble status of the Star People serves to separate them from other people, since they are placed on the fringes of society rather than being fully integrated into it - and thus, like Napi, are seen as different from others - but this device also has a moral function: that of the poor boy who makes good and gains respect, or the young woman who makes a highly successful marriage because she remains true to her vow.

Another literary device is being used here too. This is that the power of the Star People is hidden due to their peripheral nature until

such time as they are called on to solve a crisis, and by the time the people realise their mistake in not having shown proper respect it is too late for the Star People to remain on earth. Thus the Fixed Star goes to the sky because the restriction made by Morning Star that he should not be allowed to touch the ground for fourteen days is broken (*The Fixed Star*, Wissler 1908:58-61). Similarly, Beaver goes to the sky after his wife ignores his warning not to burn sagebrush on the fire (*The Twin Brothers*, Wissler 1908:40-53). In both these examples a restriction which implies respect for a taboo or condition has been disregarded - in that the warnings are ignored, much as Napi ignores the advice he is given. This has to be understood from the Blackfoot viewpoint that any ritual taboo or condition will always be strictly adhered to.

Often the poorest people - the grandmother who cares for an orphan boy, or the chief's youngest daughter who patiently cleans Beaver every time he soils himself - are those who are rewarded by the Star People. They grow old peacefully or are provided with bountiful supplies of meat for the rest of their lives. The Blackfoot understand this as recognition of those who are prepared to make personal sacrifices for the benefit of others: in former times the hunter shared meat with the poorer members of the community, and the wealthy man loaned horses to the poorest members of the band when camp was moved. A miserly person, however, lost respect and could never aspire to a prominent position as a chief or spokesman for the group. Even today it is a commonly held belief that it is somehow "wrong" for an individual to gain wealth or success for his own benefit, and it is evident on the Blackfoot reservations that people who, in Western terms, would be considered successful small businessmen are frequently derided if their success is not employed for some larger communal gain. The obligations and responsibilities of a small store-keeper, for instance, put pressure on him to give stores free to family members and other relatives (which can encompass a very large extended family) who are unable to pay for them, as well as to other "deserving" members of the community.

The rewards given by the Star People are because the humans who have helped them have shown concern for the least attractive or most unfortunate members of society. Again, of course, we should remember that such gratitude is never a feeling expressed by Napi. It is already possible to see a number of ways in which the Star People stories are the inverse of those told about Napi:

Napi's origin is uncertain.
Star People may have human parents.

Napi's place in the universe after his defeat is unclear but his presence is pervasive.
Star People after their defeat of the monsters are associated with specific stars and their presence is remote.

Despite a "magical" presence Napi is excessively human.
Star People, although having "normal" births, are not human.

Napi is asocial and unable to live in human communities.
Star People are social beings who live in the people's camps and villages while they are on earth.

Napi does not marry.
Star People often marry.

Napi stories focus on an individual.
Star People stories introduce a succession of different culture-heroes.

Napi tackles seemingly simple tasks and is defeated.
Star People tackle impossible odds and are successful.

Napi thinks only of himself.
Star People act for the benefit of others.

Any benefits deriving from Napi's activities are accidental.
Benefits deriving from the Star People are deliberate.

Napi is vain.
Star People are humble.

When Napi's power is controlled he becomes fixed to the earth.
After Star People exercise their power they go to the sky.

There is also an underlying assumption that Napi might return to exercise direct influence and force the world back into anarchy and chaos, which contrasts with a statement made by the Star People that

they can never again live among the people. One of my informants stated this categorically when he said:

When the monsters were finally destroyed the Above People [Star People] went to the sky. They went to the sky so that the people would always be reminded of them even though they no longer lived on the earth. They are there, the people can see them, but they won't come back to the earth again. Even so, the people will be reminded of them because they can always see them there. (personal communication)

The opposition between Napi and the Star People is too obvious and direct to be governed by chance, and has to be considered as a structural device which is inherent in the stories: a means whereby the Blackfoot offset the chaos of the Napi tales against the order that the Star People put in place. In this sense the two series are complementary: neither is fully understandable without reference to the other, and both depend on a structural form in which one set of assumptions is balanced against its opposite. Neither series can therefore be thought of as complete in itself, even though both can be read as separate cycles of stories and each contains episodes (or aspects of individual tales) which can be told individually or together as part of a longer narration.

Wissler, nevertheless, believes that only the tales of *Cuts-Wood*, *Scar-Face*, and *The Bunched Stars* appear to be wholly original to the Blackfoot (1908:12), although he does not discuss this in detail. My impression, however, is that all the Star People tales, regardless of any intrusive elements they may contain, have been adapted to fit into the Blackfoot structure of an opposition between Napi and the Star People. I will later elaborate this to suggest that the chaotic and anti-ritual aspects of Napi's behaviour contrast with the introduction of order by the Star People which enables rituals to be established. Before doing so it is necessary to investigate the relationship between Napi and the Star People a little further.

The statement by the contemporary Piegan story-teller with which I opened this section indicates that the Napi and Star People cycles of

tales do relate to one another, as well as that this relationship is one in which the Star People tales logically follow those of Napi. It is also clear, though rarely expressed so directly, that the Star People series is seen by the Blackfoot as being in opposition to the Napi stories. This is evident from the statements of my informants such as "the Star People put things right after Napi" or, as in the opening quote, "once Napi had gone [the Star People] came to the rescue of the people". Throughout the Star People series there is a suggestion that they are "putting things right" and an implication that they are unable to do so while Napi remains as an active influence. Napi has to be removed, both to permit the monsters to gain the ascendancy and to enable the Star People to come to earth to help the people. The paradox appears to be that Napi and the Star People can not occupy the same territory at the same time, but that they must co-exist at some form of temporal level if either is to have relevance: Napi's amoral activities only make sense when they are seen as flouting the values the Star People represent, and the Star People, in turn, only have a function in introducing (or reintroducing) those values after Napi's direct influence is removed but while a return to the anarchic state he represents remains a possibility.

The monsters which the Star People defeat are "all the evil aspects of man": that is, they are all the human failings usually channelled to safety by Napi, but which have become malignant. It is here that the significance of Napi as a channel for neutralising evil or, at least, for turning it into relatively harmless mischief becomes clear. Napi does not however defeat evil, since he apparently has no comprehension of it, and his function is primarily to act as a safety valve or vent.

It is useful to go back here to the conception of Napi and Natos (Sun) as opposite poles of a single nebulous creator figure. Modern Blackfoot, when asked about the identity of Natos, reply to the effect that he is the supreme Above Person (Star Person), but because he is unable to give power directly this is channelled from him via the Above

Persons, Below Persons, and Underwater Persons of whom Natos is the chief. This is logical if Natos is the opposite of Napi: we should expect to find in Natos a beneficent power-giving body that works through a number of discrete beings for general good, in contrast to the extreme individualism of Napi who uses power only for his own benefit and is unable to realise this through the intercession of others. Although this relationship between Napi and Natos has not been expressed directly by my Blackfoot informants, it is nevertheless implicit in comments they have made: Napi is "not to be trusted" whereas Natos is "the supreme energy force"; Napi "only plays the fool" but Natos is "the source of all wisdom".

Given that Napi and Natos are opposing aspects of the same creator figure, we can postulate that the Star People stories are expressive of the power possessed by Napi in his role as Natos. This explains why Napi and Natos (or the various powers of Natos represented by the Star People) cannot both be present at the same time: they are opposite aspects of the same character. Thus Napi is the single anti-hero of Blackfoot story-telling contrasted with the multiple culture-heroes who feature in the Star People series. This also explains why the Star People stories should invert the elements expressed in the tales of Napi, since they can be considered as representing the activity of his alter-ego: his personification as Natos. If this hypothesis is correct, Blackfoot tales of Napi and the Star People can be considered as representative of some kind of cosmic battle taking place between the opposing aspects of the creation: there is a struggle for supremacy between the forces of chaos (represented by Napi) and those of order (expressed through the Star People as representatives of Natos). Yet this is a battle that cannot be won: too much order creates regimentation (which is anathema to the Blackfoot) and ignores the individual weaknesses which make people human, but too little results in anarchy and a breakdown of the structure of communal living.

The retreat of the Star People to the sky after the defeat of the monsters is indicative of their introduction of excessive order or control, which is the inverse of the excessive disorder and chaos associated with Napi. If this is so then the Star People are unable to stay with the people because human frailty mitigates against the exacting demands that the Star People place upon ordinary humans: ordinary people cannot be expected to match the super-human qualities expressed through the activities of the Star People. It is also significant that the Star People return to the sky after the people begin to show disrespect (that is, when the people begin to revert to behaviour more appropriate to Napi) or because of a breach of a condition or taboo by which the people are bound: the son of the woman who married Morning Star is returned to the sky as the Fixed Star after she breaks her promise by failing to prevent the child touching the ground (*The Fixed Star*, Wissler 1908:58-61); similarly, Cuts-Wood is killed and goes to the sky after an impure woman pledges the Sun Dance and is therefore unable to fulfill her vow of chastity (*Cuts-Wood*, Wissler 1908:66-68).

In all the Star People stories the culture-heroes are different from ordinary people as well as being different from Napi: the Twin Stars, Ashes-Chief and Stuck-Behind, are cut out of their mother by an ogre (*The Twin Brothers*, Wissler 1908:40-53); Blood-Clot Boy, or Smoking Star, is born from a clot of buffalo blood (*Blood-Clot Boy*, Maclean 1893:167-168; *Blood-Clot*, Wissler 1908:53-58; *Clot of Blood*, Uhlenbeck 1911:34-50); Scar-Face, or Mistaken Morning Star, is marked by an ugly and disfiguring scar (*Scar Face*, Wissler 1908:61-66; *Scar-Face*, Uhlenbeck 1911:50-57); Cuts-Wood, an unidentified star, is a runny-nosed orphan (*Cuts Wood*, Wissler 1908:66-68); the Seven Brothers, Ursa Major, go to the sky after killing their sister who has married Bear and become an ogress (*The Seven Stars*, Wissler 1908:68-70).

Also in contrast to Napi, whose physical form is never described, we are given considerable detail in the Star People stories about the appearance of the culture-heroes. Although they are different, they

are nevertheless prevented from becoming remote and it is possible to identify and empathise with them quite readily. This creates yet another paradoxical state: we are distanced from Napi's excessively human behaviour by a device that presents him as remote and unidentifiable, even though we know he is ever-present and exerts a direct influence; whereas we are encouraged to identify directly with the miraculous activities of the Star People by being given clues enabling us to visualise them clearly as part of the communal life of Blackfoot camps, though at the same time we know that they will ultimately become remote and use their power indirectly.

The contrasts and oppositions between the stories of Napi and the Star People indicate the shift that occurs from chaos to order. Thus the culture-heroes of the Star People stories are conceived as "putting things right", that is as establishing order, but, once they have done so, they permanently leave the world of the people, unlike Napi who, although immobilised, remains as a pervasive force. The Star People imply their help can be called on again in the future, though they will not themselves return to earth. Before leaving the earth they therefore charge the people with responsibility for maintaining balance and harmony in the world. To ensure this happens they introduce the possibility of ritual activity which demands strict adherence to the prescriptions and proscriptions of ceremonial acts which are only effective if carried out in the correct order. But, with rare exceptions, the Star People do not themselves initiate ritual: this is done via animal intermediaries who are able to communicate directly with the Above, Below, and Underwater Persons. It is through such intermediaries that the rules of ritual conduct are taught to the people, yet it is only as a result of the introduction of order by the Star People which provides for the establishment of rules that the potential for effective ritual activity is put into place.

In only two of the Star People tales - those of *Cuts-Wood* and *Scar-Face* (Wissler 1908:66-68, 61-66) - is ritual given directly, and both relate to the Sun Dance which is a late innovation among the

Blackfoot. Curiously, however, both these tales are among the three Wissler felt to be entirely original to the Blackfoot (1908:12). This raises the interesting possibility that the Star People tales are late additions to the Blackfoot tradition of story-telling, in agreement with the view adopted by Wissler who felt the Napi series represented the older body of Blackfoot belief. My view, however, is that it is possible the adaptation of older tales has taken place to incorporate elements of the Sun Dance, and that the Star People stories are contemporary with the Napi stories. Star People tales contain structural elements which are not only uniquely Blackfoot but are also in direct opposition to the elements found within the Napi series, which suggests the two series form a complementary pair rather than one representing an earlier body of belief. I discuss in the following section that a tale such as Scar-Face actually displays characteristics typical of Blackfoot tales of Ritualistic Origins, which supports the view that elements referring to the Sun Dance are an adaptation and do not imply a later series.

The Napi and Star People series together provide a foundation for human activity which incorporates the weaknesses of people as well as their strengths, but as opposite extremes of the Napi:Natos complex either is considered excessive on its own. This can be rationalised by saying that any power derived directly from the Star People (as representative of Natos) would be beyond human comprehension and ability, just as power expressed directly by Napi destroys social order. There needs to be a compromise between the two extremes which is capable of being expressed in the human world: an ideal that balances one extreme against the other and which it is possible for people to maintain. In other words, there has to be an adjustment of opposing principles to make human intervention in their own fate possible and effective since the extremes of Napi and of the Star People are both beyond human capabilities. I would emphasise again that an excess of any kind is considered negatively by the Blackfoot: too much good introduces a sense of complacency; too much bad creates a sense of despair.

The Napi and Star People series are structurally opposed, but the direct confrontation which takes place in the Star People stories is between the culture-heroes and the monsters. The culture-heroes go out on deliberate quests to seek and defeat the monsters, whereas Napi merely keeps the monsters in check by indirect action: he never confronts the negative qualities they represent since such qualities are meaningless in Napi's chaotic world; yet it is apparent that he does function to prevent those qualities from becoming apparent while he is active on earth. Thus there is not only an opposition between the chaotic world of Napi and the ordered world of the Star People, but also between the expression of good:bad in the Star People tales and the absence of such values in the Napi series. Significantly, good and bad are manifested in the human world and come into direct conflict only when Napi's influence is removed, but they are apparently established during the period of Napi's adventures (although he makes no differentiation between them), since his exploits carry little meaning unless set against these values and judged in terms of what would be considered normal. Conversely, the Star People tales make both good and bad manifest, and in doing so create an opposition between them that was formerly impossible.

Since the Blackfoot do not have a true conception of good and bad, only one in which any force has a potential for either, it follows that in the human realm the pure evil of the monsters and the pure good of the Star People are equally impossible. It is therefore essential that both are removed to enable the people to become fully human: as already noted, the Star People are not human and cannot remain in a human world. It is equally apparent that the monsters feed on the people and would, if not kept in check, ultimately destroy a human world. Napi provides this check, although it is via a remote and indirect device, and because of this it is obvious that even though he has been rooted to the spot he is far from being rendered impotent; the implication is that Napi can always return. Thus the defeat of the monsters and the return of the Sky People to their homes in the sky creates the possibility for a fully human world to emerge, but also

removes the Star People's direct control of the monsters and reopens the possibility of the world returning to the state it was in prior to Napi's defeat by the Woman Chief. This, in turn, reopens the possibility of emergent chaos, immorality, and asociability. It is therefore important structures are put in place which will enable the people to maintain order, and these are explained in the tales of Ritualistic Origins which I discuss next.

This section has established the oppositions inherent in the structural forms of the Napi and Star People series, especially the rise of the monsters and their defeat by the Sky People through devices which are essentially the opposite to those employed in the Napi series. But it has also introduced the suggestion that Napi may be thought of as a mediator who, though not deliberately, creates a balance between the different potentials for good and bad. Furthermore, the direct presence of the monsters, of the Star People, or of Napi would be antithetical to the values which enable people to establish and maintain functioning human communities.

STAR PEOPLE TALES AND TALES OF RITUALISTIC ORIGINS:

Medicine Power and the Origins of Ritual

In most ceremonies the origin of the ritual is regarded as the result of a personal relation between its first owner and its supernatural giver; each ceremony, or demonstration of the ritual, being a reproduction of this formal transfer.
(Wissler/Duvall 1908:13)

The previous section established that a possibility for ritual is created by the introduction of order via the activities of the Star People, and that their return to the sky means that disorder can be reintroduced once the restraints they impose on Napi's activities become invalid: the absence of the Star People reopens the potential for the anarchic presence of Napi. Thus with the removal of the Star People's control of order the possibility for chaos re-emerges.

This section investigates the means whereby the excessive disorder of Napi and the excessive control of the Star People are prevented via the use of rituals which give the people a measure of indirect control and impose on them the responsibility to ensure that balance and harmony are maintained. In this sense the tales of Ritualistic Origins present another reversal of those of Napi: Napi exercises an ability to control the balance between good and bad in an anarchic and chaotic world; rituals enable a balance to be maintained between good and bad in the structured and ordered world of human beings and communal life.

In many respects the tales of Ritualistic Origins and those of the Star People are closely linked. They both involve interactions between people and the spirit powers, and both result in benefits that are bestowed for the people's good. The connection between them is close and many Blackfoot do not make a distinction between the forces

expressed by the Star People and those inherent in power obtained via the Above People, Below People, and Underwater People: the givers of ritual. Thus the Star People may be spoken of generally as Above People, and Natos (Sun) is frequently mentioned as being chief of the Above People. To conceive of a chief of the spirit powers may, however, be a Blackfoot rationalisation of the Christian concept of a single god, or Great Spirit; as already noted, I consider the Natos:Napi dual character as an unnamed creative energy force. The distinction is made here that the Star People do not generally give rituals, and that the monsters are absent from tales of Ritualistic Origins. The difference between the two categories of tales should not, however, be understood as clear-cut: in two of the Star People tales (*Scar-Face* and *Cuts-Wood* Wissler 1908:61-68) some ritual control is given to the people. It is also evident in the tales of Ritualistic Origins that the Star People are not totally excluded, as in the tale where Sun provides sacred tobacco seed (*Tobacco Seeds and Beaver Medicine*, Wissler 1908:79-80).

Given that the distinction between the two is unclear and modern Blackfoot opinion is divided, I intend to treat the tales of Ritualistic Origins as being primarily concerned with the transfer of power from spirit animals to humans, although I do note some important exceptions. The Blackfoot consider the spirit-animals or beings as the source of beneficent power (Grinnell 1892:258-263; Wissler 1912:252). Such power may ultimately derive from more remote sources, and, of course, all power is considered to be natoye (of the Sun) and must eventually trace back to the nebulous and unnamed creative figure which I have identified as Napi-Natos. For all practical purposes, however, the Blackfoot conception is expressed in the quote with which I opened this section: ritual power is seen as deriving from an original supernatural giver, most frequently a spirit-animal, and the performance of the ritual is a re-enactment of the original transfer of power from the spirit-animal to its human recipient.

Since ritual power has to be manipulated and invoked by humans it must therefore avoid the excesses expressed by either Napi or the Star People: in order to function successfully in the human world ritual must mediate between good and bad and ensure a harmonious balance between the two. Thus ritual seeks a balanced middle ground which avoids both the chaos of Napi and the excessive supernatural control of the Star People. This middle ground is apparent in the origin tales of transferable rituals. These, although considered to be individually owned, are rituals which are used for tribal benefit and can, therefore, be thought of as a form of tribal property. The owner of such a ritual is merely a temporary custodian, referred to as the Medicine Bundle Keeper, and during the performance of the transference ritual some or all of the Bundle's power is passed to a new owner through the re-enactment of the original formal transfer of power from a spirit being to the first owner. In this respect the Medicine Bundle Keeper is a story-teller and ritualist, since the ritual itself is a dramatised version of the origin tale.

Such tales are associated with the major Medicine Bundles, or Saam ("something wrapped up": ie. a wrapper of hide or cloth containing tokens of the spirit forces, such as feathers, animal skins, paints, aromatic herbs, etc., which are used during the performance). At this point it is necessary to make clear that there are numerous other personal Medicine Bundles and non-transferable rights which are not considered here. These range from small amulets which bring good luck to entire costumes of decorated shirts, leggings, and feathered headdresses which, formerly, were associated with status as a band leader (chief) or prominent warrior. These, however, are unique to the individual - or to the individual's family - and are not "public property" in the same sense as the transferable Bundles used for communal benefit.

In the transferable rituals power is passed from the spirit-animals to an individual and is brought into the public domain. Such power is for general good - which is described by the Blackfoot as the

maintenance of balance and harmony - rather than for the achievement of more specific aims and objectives. Unlike personal Bundles which formerly gave an individual success in hunting or war (and which today are felt to bring success in, say, business ventures) a major Bundle, such as the Medicine Pipe, will be opened as a general tribal blessing. Ownership of major Medicine Bundles passes from one individual to another through successive transfers - when the former owner of the ritual stands in the relationship of "ceremonial father" to the recipient, or "ceremonial son". This effectively places responsibility for the performance of rituals of a public nature and for public good into the hands of a few private individuals. Knowledge of the ritual - which, in effect, means learning the performance of the origin tale - is therefore vested in individuals but considered to have tribal significance.

Because power is moved continually from one individual to another via the transfer ceremonies it is of a non-specific, or generalised, type: thus the Keepers of Bundles containing power derived from Beaver are charged not only with ensuring the good health of the community but were formerly responsible for sponsoring the Calling the Buffalo rituals during periods of scarcity (*The Beaver Medicine*, Wissler 1908:74-78; *How the Beaver-Bundle was Introduced*, Michelson 1911:238-244), while Medicine Pipe Keepers are expected to open the Bundles in spring at the first sound of thunder (Thunder gave the original pipe) and also to lead camp movements since the decorated stems were felt to "clear the way" and provide protection (*Origin of the Medicine Pipe*, Wissler 1908:89-90).

The story-teller's (Bundle Keeper's) function in formal Medicine Bundle transfers, as well as in the more general use of the Medicine Bundles as a tribal blessing, is to repeat the tales of their acquisition, and each Bundle includes objects representative of various episodes contained in the origin tale. Thus if Otter was the original giver of power an otter skin will be contained in the Bundle and the narrator will perform with this while relating the episode referring to

the manner in which Otter passed his power to the people. If the Bundle derives from Bear, it will contain some tangible token relating to Bear. In practice, most major Medicine Bundles are complex accretions of various powers, each of which has its own token or tokens (see, for example, *The Beaver Medicine*, Wissler 1908:74-78), and each of these in turn has its own tale of origin together with rules for handling the objects and sets of songs and face- and body-paints that accompany its use. Thus the tale becomes a dramatised narrative linking a number of diverse elements which it places in a logical and cohesive relationship with the original spirit-animals that granted power and with the people to whom the right to use that power has been transferred.

The responsibilities attached to ownership of major Medicine Bundles has, however, resulted in a modern decline in their use. Many annual rituals, such as the opening of the Medicine Pipe Bundles, now take place only at very irregular intervals and the performances are often incomplete. The Beaver Bundle, which in theory is opened annually to replace the sacred tobacco seed it contains (*The Beaver Medicine*, Wissler 1908:74-78; *How the Beaver-Bundle was Introduced*, Michelson 1911:238-244), has not been opened at all for a number of successive years. Today when the Bundles are opened they may simply be unwrapped and their contents purified by holding them in a "smudge" of smoke made by burning aromatic herbs, but without performing the entire ritual. In respect of this decline, I was told when visiting the Glenbow-Alberta Institute in Calgary during the 1980s that Medicine Bundle use on the reservations was virtually lost. It was estimated that only three major Medicine Bundles remained in use among the Northern Piegan at this date. Many had been sold to curio collectors or museums between 1940 and 1960 (the Glenbow itself purchased about fifty Bundles during this period), and the scarcity of Bundles since 1960 has added financial incentives to sell the few that remain.

My Blackfoot informants, however, stress the fact that a Medicine Bundle consists of two parts: the physical Bundle containing the

tokens of power, and the face- and body-paints and songs by which this power is activated. They claim that only the physical parts were sold and that this does not affect the Bundle's power since the contents of these are, in any case, regularly renewed. It was suggested that new Bundles (using the old songs and paints) have been made and are still in use and considered very potent, but that the identity of Bundle-Owners is kept secret to avoid the attentions of unscrupulous dealers and collectors. It was nevertheless acknowledged that the distinctive functions of the old Medicine Bundles have largely been lost and that those in current use all have the single function of promoting health and well-being.

Despite the modern decline in Medicine Bundle usage, it is still evident that the Blackfoot believe in a host of benevolent spirit-animals which are prepared to share their greater wisdom and superior power with people. Unlike the Star People - who we must remember are unable to live among the people and who do not give power directly - the spirit-animal givers of ritual are very much part of the same environment as that occupied by the people. They, like Napi, are tied to the earth; but, unlike Napi, they express a generosity and willingness to give power that is associated with the Above People, Below People, and Underwater People. They are mediators between the spirits and humans, and as such must be unlike either but akin to both.

The nature of these spirit-animal requires further definition. No Blackfoot believes power derives directly from the ordinary beaver, eagle, buffalo, or bear, even though each of these possesses a unique (and often supernatural) power of its own. In fact, it is possible for anything in the Algonkian language of the Blackfoot to be considered as possessing power, will, and motivation. This is applied even to objects which, in Western terms, are clearly inanimate: mountains, rocks, trees, buildings, and so forth. Thus everything in the Blackfoot world contains some degree of power which is natoye (of the Sun), and each animal or object possesses this energy in a form appropriate to its kind: the bear has strength, the eagle the ability to see everything,

the snake to strike swiftly, the buffalo the power to sustain life. Even the mouse possesses power to enter small spaces and thus escape from his enemies. Similarly, "inanimate" categories possess power appropriate to them: mountains the power of solitude, rock that of permanence, and buildings power of various kinds. I was told the power of a building is considered greater the more traditional the structure: a tipi acts as a symbol of the original Blackfoot world and therefore possesses more power than a frame building; but a Painted Tipi (one with designs on its cover and which is associated with an origin tale) has more power than an ordinary tipi. Sweat-lodges (enclosed dome shaped structures in which water is dripped on to hot stones to create a purifying steam) are, in turn, more powerful than Painted Tipis, and the one-hundred-willow sweat lodge (so-named because one hundred willow sticks are used in its construction) which is used to purify participants prior to the performance of the Natoas rituals at the Okan (Sun Dance) is the most powerful of all. As Jenness notes, it may be inappropriate to think of the power possessed by the spirits or vested in other spirit objects as "supernatural". He comments, with reference to the Ojibwa-Chippewa but equally applicable to Blackfoot concepts, that such spirits are "a part of the natural order of the universe no less than man himself, whom they resemble in the possession of intelligence and emotion" (1935:29).

In terms of ordinary categories of animals and objects such power is exclusive to the species or object: no one expects to gain any personal benefit from an ordinary bear, even though all bears (as a category) are powerful beings and are treated with reverence and addressed by the respect term Elder Brother. But within these categories are other beings, animals, and objects which are considered non-ordinary. Thus Bear is a being distinct from - though not always obviously distinguishable from - other ordinary bears as well as from humans. We could write Bear-Person, or Beaver-Person, Buffalo-Person, Eagle-Person, Rock-Person, and so forth to make this distinction clearer, although in common with current Blackfoot usage I have chosen throughout this text to capitalise the animals/objects whenever a

Spirit-Animal-Person is referred to. It is these non-ordinary beings that share power with the people. In the Blackfoot conception these are often referred to as powerful beings in their own right rather than the intermediaries of some greater force: when Beaver gives power it is "Beaver Power" that is given and not power which is attributed to some other source. Similar power deriving from an inanimate source is evident in the stories of the Iniskim, or Buffalo Rock, in which Weasel Woman is given power to call buffalo when the people are starving (*The Buffalo Rock*, Wissler 1908:85-89). Yet it is at the same time understood that all power - whether of an ordinary or non-ordinary nature - is natoye, and that it is therefore ultimately linked with the power of Natos and, consequently, of Napi.

When the distinction between ordinary and non-ordinary animals and objects is made, some of the difficulty in understanding Blackfoot ritual concepts is removed: if someone obtains a ritual from Beaver it comes from the Spirit-Animal-Person and not the ordinary animal. This distinction is already made in the Star People series, where the animal-monsters and the animals the people depend upon for food are distinct, although in this series, of course, the animal-monsters are malign forces and not the beneficent animal powers of the tales of Ritualistic Origins. Who the beneficent animal powers decide to bestow their favours on varies considerably from tale to tale, but it is frequently someone who has suffered loss or humiliation: Scabby-Round-Robe, for instance, is helped by Beaver because the people laugh when he declares his love for the chief's younger wife (*Scabby Round Robe*, Wissler 1908:81-83). We are reminded here of the humble character of the Star People, which results in the exercise of a power for good. The people the spirits favour are almost invariably those who have fallen from grace or for whom circumstances have dictated an unexpected and often unfortunate turn of events.

Also frequently expressed, and in this respect highly characteristic of Blackfoot story-telling, is the predominance of power being passed to women rather than directly to men, even though the

exercise of power is largely (though not exclusively) in male hands. This reintroduces the concept of female power, or control, that we have already seen in Old Woman and the Woman Chief of the Napi stories. Without the women's intercession Blackfoot ritualists would be effectively powerless. The female role is very apparent in the tales of Ritualistic Origins. When Beaver, for example, wishes to pass on rituals to the people he does so by persuading the wife of a successful warrior to accompany him to his den (*The Beaver Medicine*, Wissler 1908:74-78). She lives with Beaver (who adopts his human guise) as his wife for four days - which in Beaver's world is four years - before returning to her husband with Beaver's gift in the form of a Medicine Bundle ritual. Her human husband can only accept this gift by humbling himself before Beaver and denying any emotions or feelings of anger, outrage, jealousy, or revenge.

The relationship between Beaver and the woman's husband is a reversal of Blackfoot social norms. Chastity and faithfulness to her marriage vows are essential prerequisites of the woman in any ritual context, and a successful warrior should by custom reject his adulterous wife and seek to exact retribution from the one who has so publicly shamed him. Beaver's transfer of the gift though an act of abduction creates a non-ordinary situation, and by this fact marks the transfer as sacred. A similar device occurs when Elk abducts a woman to transfer some of the Sun Dance regalia (*The Elk Woman*, Wissler 1908:83-85) and when Thunder wishes to transfer the Medicine Pipe (*Origin of the Medicine Pipe*, Wissler 1908:89-90). The regularity with which the theme of abduction appears in these tales was already noted by Wissler, who comments on it by saying:

... characteristic of [tales of ritualistic origins] is the frequency with which a woman plays an important part in the transfer of rituals and other powers - the Elk-Woman, the Otter-Woman, the Woman-who-married-the-Buffalo, the Woman-who-brought-the-Pipe, etc. In almost every case the woman has sexual relations with a male being from whom, or by virtue of whom, the ritual or power comes, and such grant is often manifestly to appease a wronged husband or parents. (1908:15)

The use of abduction as a means of transferring power appears to violate the Blackfoot rule that only chaste and virtuous women can perform the role of the Sacred Woman (the woman via whom the transfer takes place) in Medicine Bundle rituals. Abduction serves to create a "non-ordinary" situation, and it is clear in the tales of Ritualistic Origins that her unfaithfulness to her human husband is done willingly and there is no indication that she resists these advances. She, instead, appears to welcome them and in one tale (*The Beaver Medicine*, Wissler 1908:74-78) the woman actively encourages Beaver to visit her in her tipi and has sexual relations with him over a long period before she finally decides to go away with him. This apparent paradox is difficult to explain, partly because the Blackfoot have always shown reticence about revealing certain aspects of Medicine Bundle transfers and the "secret" parts of the ceremonies were not recorded in ethnographic reports at the turn of the century. Also, among the modern Blackfoot, many of the rituals have become defunct, or have been modified or simplified, and may only be remembered in partial form.

A clue to these rites does, however, exist in a passage recorded by Wissler (1913:413-415), which he wrote in Latin to avoid offending the Victorian sensibilities of the period. It refers to the transfer of membership in the Horns Society. The Horns was a senior Warrior Society - age-graded groups to which all men "of the same age or experience" belonged. Periodically the members of a younger Society purchased membership into the next highest group, until they finally retired and assumed the status of Elder (for a fuller discussion of Blackfoot Societies see Wissler 1913. McClintock 1910, 1937 also discusses them in some detail, and other references are made by Curtis 1911, Schultz 1907, and Uhlenbeck 1911. For a comparative study see Lowie 1916, and for a broader discussion of the warrior complex see Bancroft Hunt 1995a). The Societies no longer function among the Blackfoot, their place having been taken by modern dance associations (such as the Blackfoot A1 Club) which give public performances of Blackfoot dances and songs.

It is apparent that the Societies were already rapidly falling into disuse even when Wissler collected his information. He tells us he was only able to obtain information about the secret parts of this ritual through Duvall's acquaintance with members of the Horns Society, and that at the time he acquired this the practice was extant only among the Kainah (Blood). Wissler's comments refer to the "fathers" (retiring members) transferring membership to their "sons" (the incoming members), which, of course, is already familiar from the transfer of Medicine Bundle rituals from "ceremonial father" to "ceremonial son". Since the Origin of the Horns Society tale is in all respects similar to other tales of Ritualistic Origins, it is very possible that transfers of Medicine Bundles formerly followed similar procedures to the transfer of Society memberships.

In the origin tale of the Horns a man seduces Buffalo-Cow-Woman and, after being trampled to death because he is human but then restored to life (and thereby acquiring some of the characteristics of a spirit-being), he is given headdresses, songs, and some crooked sticks as power objects. It is said that all the members of the Horns Society had to have wives, since the Buffalo all had wives. In the process of transferring membership the "son's wife", or another close female relative, plays a crucial role, since without her participation and cooperation the transfer cannot be fully completed. Wissler tells us that at the climax of the transfer ceremony, the "son's wife", naked except for a buffalo robe wrapped about her, offers a pipe to the "father" by holding it out horizontally from beneath the robe. He, by accepting it, agrees to complete the transfer. The "father" and the "son's wife" then walk some distance out on the prairie beyond the precincts of the camp (all the people in camp having been warned to stay indoors during this part of the transfer) where she lays on the ground and the "father" folds back her robe to expose her genital area. He then moves her knees to the side and touches her vulva. Following this he moves her legs apart and they have sexual intercourse, after which she is considered to have been "painted".

The woman can refuse the "father" at any point, although this will prevent the transfer from being completed. If, however, the ceremony is completed then the "father" kisses the "son's wife" and transfers a piece of prairie turnip root that he has been chewing from his mouth to hers. On returning to the tipi the woman then kisses her husband and transfers the prairie turnip root to him to indicate she has fully complied with all her obligations. Her face and body are then painted in a fashion which indicates whether the ceremony has been fully completed or not. Wissler tells us:

Some of the women are refused by the fathers because they themselves are not of good repute or because their husbands are not worthy men. In any case, it is a disgrace to the husband not to have his wife properly painted. (1913:417)

If we compare this transfer of membership to the Horns with the transfer of Medicine Bundles some striking similarities are evident. The spirit-animal, or "father", who is transferring Bundle ownership or Society membership persuades the wife of the "son" to go with him (or accepts her invitation) and passes power/membership to her through her willingness to engage in a sexual relationship (*The Beaver Medicine, Otter Woman, Elk Woman*, Wissler 1908:74-78, 78-79, 83-85). The likelihood that this was formerly acted out in Medicine Bundle transfers as well as in Society membership transfers is indicated by the fact that the Bundle rituals are re-enactments of the original tales through which power is transferred; that is, we should expect a re-enactment of the original abduction to take place in order to enable power to pass from "ceremonial father" to "ceremonial son" via the intermediate acts of the "ceremonial son's wife".

Her role as an intermediary is nevertheless a voluntary one. It is her choice (although, as Wissler noted, there were social pressures on her to conform), and in recognition of the sacrifice she has made the "father" (or spirit-animal) gives her the paints and songs relating to the ritual, which she, in turn, transfers to her husband. The transfer is therefore one of particular paints and songs through which the potency of the Bundle can be activated or whereby Society

membership can be secured. We should note the stress on "painting" the woman properly, as well as the fact that it was considered a disgrace not to be properly painted.

On the wife's part, bearing in mind that chastity and faithfulness are prerequisites for the role of the Sacred Woman, she is in fact offering her most precious possession - the sanctity of her own body - in order to receive power on her husband's behalf in the form of the sacred prairie turnip root. When she passes this to her husband he is placed under an obligation to show respect to his "ceremonial father" for the gift he has received. The prairie turnip is also a symbol of the separation between the sacred and the profane realms: when the woman who marries Morning Star disobeys her instructions and digs up the sacred turnip which acts as a barrier between the sky and earth worlds, she is no longer able to remain with Sun's family in the sky and is compelled to return to the camps of the people (*The Fixed Star*, Wissler 1908:58-61). When she returns to earth she brings with her the turnip and the digging stick, as well as the Natoas (Sacred Turnip) Headdress, which are used in the Okan (Sun Dance), together with the songs and paints that go with them.

Thus it is through the woman that power is received and passed on from "father" to "son" in both membership transfers and in ritual transfers. This thesis is not, however, directly concerned with the transfer of Society memberships. The example of the Horns is given simply because this is the only concrete statement in which the role of the woman during transferable rights is clearly defined, and because the tales of Ritualistic Origins refer to similar transfers in which women play an equally important part.

The nature of the transfer also points up another difference between the tales we are considering here and those of Napi. Medicine Bundle transfers and the recitation of the tales associated with them involve only a small group of people (Lowie 1954:172) and are, at least in part, conducted in secret. We therefore have Bundle rituals which

are in theory owned individually and performed by or before a very select audience but which are of general benefit, and these are contrasted with the Napi tales that refer to an individual's exploits but are performed publicly before audiences comprised of members from all segments of society. It is further evident that the story-teller who relates a tale of Ritualistic Origins has to obtain the right to do so from the previous Medicine Bundle Keeper through a repetition of the teaching of the first recipient by the first donor. Thus the right or privilege to tell the story has to be sanctioned through the performance of the ritual. The principal participants here are "father", "son", and "son's wife", who act respectively as giver of power, recipient of power, and mediator of power.

The limited number of essential participants in the dramatisation of a tale through ritual performance has tended to be obscured in literature on the Blackfoot. This is because the major Medicine Bundles - Beaver, Medicine Pipe, and Natoas (Sun Dance) - have attained such prominence that their rituals have taken on tribal proportions. Thus the Natoas is frequently referred to as the "Annual Renewal Ceremony" of the Blackfoot tribes, and the opening of the Medicine Pipes at the first thunder in spring is a moment of tremendous tribal significance. While this brings the Blackfoot conveniently into line with the popular notion of Plains Indian annual ceremonies and restatements of tribal identity, it nonetheless overlooks the fundamental principles outlined in Blackfoot tales of transferable privileges. We can look a little more closely at the use of the Natoas Bundle in Okan (Sun Dance) rituals to see how these principles apply.

Blackfoot use of the term Natoas does not refer to the Sun Dance itself, but to the headdress worn by the Sacred Woman. This headdress is said to have been given by Elk after he abducted a young woman (*The Elk Woman*, Wissler 1908:83-85; also 1912:211-214), and therefore follows the already familiar pattern of Medicine Bundle transfers. The Natoas is not, however, as straightforward as this, since associated with the Natoas are the prairie turnip which formed a barrier between

the sacred sky world and the profane earth world and the digging stick with which it was removed. There are also numerous animal skins, paints, and so forth which refer to various episodes in the origin tale (Wissler 1912:209-220). There might thus be contained within the Natoas Bundle an elk skin robe, bunches of feathers, a white rock arrowpoint and earrings, small dolls, weasel tails, owl feathers, the skin of a woodpecker, tail of a wildcat, and buffalo hooves, each of which has its own associated songs and paints. Every Natoas Bundle contains the headdress, digging stick, and elkskin robe (Scriver 1990:228-237), but the ancillary items - which can be numerous - vary considerably.

The prairie turnip digging stick is an essential component of the Natoas Medicine Bundle, and the Blackfoot when referring to the Natoas may render it as "Sacred Turnip Headdress" (Wissler 1912:209). Yet the prairie turnip and the digging stick derive originally from a completely separate tale from that of the Natoas headdress itself. This is the tale of *The Woman Who Married A Star* (*The Fixed Star*, Wissler 1908:58-61) in which a young woman makes an idle promise to marry a star which she is then forced to honour. She marries Morning Star and is given the prairie turnip digging stick as a power object to bring to earth after she disobeys the warning of Morning Star's parents, Sun and Moon, not to dig up the sacred turnip. This, at first, appears to contradict my earlier statement that Star People do not give power directly. However, the turnip is actually dug by Crane-Woman because the young wife is unable to do this on her own. The power she receives derives from Crane-Woman in a tale that is itself separate from that of the Natoas and which does not credit the gift to the Star People. The acquisition of the prairie turnip digging stick therefore follows the same general principle of other ritualistic origins since it is received via an animal intermediary. The Natoas also contains juniper seeds which Scar-Face, in yet another separate story (Wissler 1908:61-66, Grinnell 1892:93-103, Uhlenbeck 1911:50-57), brought back with him from his visit to the Sun.

The Natoas is therefore a combination of at least three different major powers - those of Elk, Crane-Woman, and Scar-Face - and there are also suggestions it may originally have been part of the Beaver Bundle (Wissler 1912:211; Curtis 1911:62), which is the largest and most complex of the Blackfoot Medicine Bundles. It is more likely, however, that the Beaver Bundle Keepers attempted to incorporate the Natoas within the Beaver Bundle as a means of consolidating their power and authority. It is no longer possible to demonstrate with any certainty what former relationship existed between the Natoas and Beaver Bundles, yet it is clear that the Natoas itself demonstrates the Blackfoot predilection for combining different powers within a single Bundle and thereby increasing the complexity of both the ritual and the various origin tales associated with it. The essential structure of "father", "son", and "son's wife" becomes complicated and obscured by the introduction of other elements which will be re-enacted as part of the ritual and incorporated in the origin tale.

The Natoas is complicated further by the fact that it is acquired by a woman who makes a pledge to purchase the Bundle from a former owner during a period of personal crisis, usually when her husband or son is in grave danger (formerly this might be during a war expedition, today it is often related to serious illness). Her pledge is a vow to sponsor the Okan (Sun Dance) - that is, to act the role of the Sacred Woman - if the crisis is averted (Curtis 1911:33-34). Thus the initiative for the Sun Dance among the Blackfoot stems from an individual plea, not from any sense of a collective tribal renewal ceremony. It also follows that, because it stems from a pledge, it is not necessarily an annual event (although the Blackfoot certainly feel that it is beneficial if it does take place every year). The ritual follows a schema in which the pledger approaches a couple who own the Natoas - a former Sacred Woman and her husband - and requests the transfer of the Bundle. This man then becomes her "ceremonial father" and the Natoas is transferred to her and her husband (i.e. via "son's wife" to "ceremonial son"; although we should, of course, remember that this is a woman's headdress, not a man's, and she is therefore the

central figure in the ceremony). The re-enactment of the Natoas tale begins the Sun Dance; but although the Sun Dance is dependent on the Sacred Woman's pledge, a transfer of the Natoas can take place under other circumstances and on different occasions, and even at Sun Dances the initial rituals - the actual transfer of the Natoas - take place secretly and involve only the principal participants.

Due to the fact that the Sun Dance takes place in late summer - formerly the time of year for annual tribal buffalo hunts, and now the period of modern tribal Pow-Wows (Indian Days) - there are always large numbers of people in attendance. This tends to give the ceremonies the character of a "tribal" ritual. The accumulative nature of major Blackfoot Medicine Bundles also means that in addition to the primary use of the Natoas, the re-enactment of the origin tales of several other separate rituals may occur at the same time (Wissler 1912:194). It is also likely that minor dancers may perform in answer to personal pledges which, although not part of the Natoas, nevertheless take place at Sun Dance encampments. Additionally, Weather Shamans may conduct rituals to ensure fair weather for the four main days of the ceremonies, and all of this is accompanied by family gatherings, visiting, feasts, and social dances. The net result is an impression of a complex annual tribal event. It is, however, a composite of many different ritual and social happenings rather than the expression of a single ceremony. The grandiose nature of the camp merely masks the fact that in the ritual transfers, and hence in the recitation of their origin tales, the principal performers are always the "father", "son", and "son's wife".

The function of the story-teller and the role of the audience in the tales of Ritualistic Origins is therefore very different from that evident in tales relating to Napi, since they are closely tied to the narration of the tale referring to the original gift of Medicine Power and expressed through the performance of the ritual. It follows from this that these tales are less flexible in certain respects than those of Napi, simply because they are so intimately linked with the tokens

contained in the Medicine Bundles. They are not absolutely fixed, as is evident from the fact that different versions - and different origin tales - for similar Medicine Bundles exist. Curtis estimated there were between ten and fifteen Beaver Bundles in use among the Southern Piegan in the early twentieth century (1911:69), and the narration of the origin of each Beaver Bundle varied in certain details according to its constituent parts. As Wissler noted "almost every object in the bundle has its own individual myth" (1912:194).

The variability in the tales of Ritualistic Origins is not however the same as the licence to innovate apparent in tales of Napi's adventures. It is not possible to question modern Blackfoot directly about the details of Medicine Bundle rituals and much of the lore concerning these has in any case been lost, nor is it generally possible for an uninitiated outsider to witness their performance. For information on these we are therefore primarily reliant on Wissler's (1912) informants. While it is apparent that the Blackfoot were reluctant to reveal full details of some aspects of the rituals, Wissler does provide us with clues as to permissible variations in the tales of Ritualistic Origins and how these came about. An important factor here is that once a transfer had been made the original owner often retained some rights in the Bundle, and also that part-ownership of a Bundle was possible. Wissler tells us:

While the contents of a bundle must be kept intact, some of the minor parts may be owned by others. Thus a man selling may retain the ownership of certain birds or animals; or one may vow to purchase any one or more parts of a bundle. In transferring these parts, the bundle is opened and the whole ceremony performed. The part owner then takes a place in ceremonies and when the proper point in the ritual is reached he dances with his bird, etc., leading in the songs relating thereto. Such part owners have no obligations in the care of the bundle. They are not required to sell out when the bundle changes hands. Yet, they may in time come to a considerable knowledge of the ritual and ultimately be considered beaver men, without ever having owned a bundle ... The tendency now is to consider all part owners as beaver men. (1912:175)

Former or part-ownership in other complex Medicine Bundles of tribal significance follows the same principle as that described by

Wissler for the Beaver Bundle. This means that a number of individuals will have some right to the tales of a Medicine Bundle's origin. Since each of these part-owners has the right to relate only that part of the origin tale which refers directly to their personal interest in the Medicine Bundle, some recitations will be fragmentary, whereas others will have been transferred in a complete form with the new owner entitled to recite the entire narrative. Accretions of power over time introduce further diversity, so that each Bundle of one type becomes differentiated in detail from others of the same type. Thus although the original gift of Beaver will be retained, different Beaver Bundles will contain tokens from other subsidiary powers and the origin tales will accordingly vary in detail as well. Any tale relating to a major Medicine Bundle will therefore vary with the narrator's relationship to the Bundle as well as with the passages referring to the different tokens it contains.

In this and the previous section I have looked at the way in which the tales of the Star People and of Ritualistic Origins invert the structure apparent in the Napi stories, and by changing chaos into order provide the possibility for people to acquire transferable rituals that can be used for communal benefit. These rituals are, in turn, acquired from non-ordinary spirit-animals and are encapsulated in Medicine Bundles containing tokens of the spirit-animals' powers. Through subsequent transfers the original tale of the acquisition of power is re-enacted in dramatic narratives involving the donor of power, the recipient of power, and the recipient's wife or close female relative as a mediator. Such transfers may involve the entire Medicine Bundle but can also apply to part-ownership, so a variability in the tales of Ritualistic Origins is established which is different from that found in the tales of Napi. A structure has nevertheless been determined which applies to tales of any type that enjoy tribal currency, in that power is mediated via a feminine role so that it can be expressed (usually by men) as power of another kind elsewhere. This applies to all the tales we have considered so far and can be summarised in part as follows:

Napi	mediated by Woman Chief	monsters enabled
monsters	mediated by Star People	spirit power enabled
spirit power	mediated by abducted wife	ritual power enabled
ritual father	mediated by son's wife	power passed to ritual son

Similar logic can also be applied to the overall structure in the relationships between the series, or cycles, of tales. Thus the chaotic world of Napi is mediated by the Star People who introduce order, and the extremes of both chaos and order are mediated by the performance of rituals expressed in the tales of Ritualistic Origins. In addition to the above, in the majority of examples the mediating force is related to feminine power: Napi is enabled and disabled by Old Woman and the Woman Chief respectively (*Old Man and Old Woman*, *The Trickster Cycle*, Appendix; *The First Marriage*, Lowie in Wissler 1908:22; *Order of Life and Death*, *The First Marriage*, Wissler 1908:19-21, 21-22), and the "ceremonial father" can only pass power to his "ceremonial son" through the mediating function of the "son's wife".

This feminine principle is not so immediately evident in the Star People stories. It is nevertheless significant that in the Scar-Face myth he is received into Sun's home by Moon, Sun's wife, and it is she who persuades Sun to help Scar-Face by removing his disfigurement (*Scar Face*, Wissler 1908:61-66; *Scar-Face*, Uhlenbeck 1911:50-57). Similarly, in the original acquisition of the Medicine Pipe the girl who is abducted by Thunder brings the Pipe to the people (*Origin of the Medicine Pipe*, Wissler 1908:89-90). It is, in fact, only in the story of the *Bunched Stars* (Wissler 1908:71-72) that we fail to find a woman playing a major role. This, however, seems to be an alternative version of the *Seven Stars* (Wissler 1908:68-70) in which the younger sister features prominently. It is probably also significant that the *Bunched Stars* is the only Star People tale in which the brothers are depicted as acting for purely selfish reasons: they exact vengeance on the people with Sun's help because they are unable to obtain red robes. Even so, it is Moon who pities the boys rather than her husband, Sun. The *Bunched Stars* appears to be an aberrant tale within those of the Star People series, even though it is one of the three tales Wissler

claims to be totally original to the Blackfoot (1908:12) and despite the fact that the Bunched Stars (Pleiades) are very important in Blackfoot cosmology.

This section has looked at tales of Ritualistic Origins and defined a number of aspects relating to the ways in which ritual is both conducted and conceived in Blackfoot society, as well as the importance of story-telling in the ritual context. In the following section I take this a stage further by contrasting the role of the ritualist with Napi in his guise as a prototypical shaman, and claim this follows the same structural pattern of inversion as seen between the different cycles of tales.

Radin, in his undated lecture notes for the University of California, Berkeley, identifies two types of people in Native American societies: the man of action and the thinker. On this basis he determined that an understanding of the structure of tales (which he relates to concepts of power) and debate about their meaning is limited to the thinker - that is, to the ritualist or shaman. This agrees in principle with the observations of Walker among the Oglala, where the shamans conduct rituals and use an esoteric language to discuss meaning which is said to be inaccessible to ordinary people (1980:93-96). DeMallie and Lavenda take a similar point of view, although they suggest that there is a continuum between the man of action and the thinker which means that a series of successive different levels of meaning are read into the tales (1977:153-164).

In this section I argue that Radin's "thinkers" - the shamans and the ritualists - are diametrically opposed in Blackfoot society, and that the opposition between them is apparent in the structures found in traditional Blackfoot story-telling. I claim, instead, that the ritualist and the shaman are distinct figures who have clearly different roles and who do not form a cohesive group separate from "men of action". While agreeing with Radin that Blackfoot tales relate to concepts of power, I suggest that the types of power which can be utilised by the shaman and the ritualist cannot be equated with each other. They are of very different types and need to be differentiated. I also question Burt's assertion that power in Blackfoot society is related primarily to individual attempts to gain social standing through the acquisition by purchase of rights to Medicine Bundles (1976:125-133) and suggest that this is, in fact, one of the factors

that serves to separate the shaman from the ritualist and to define the different concepts of power each employs.

The preceding sections considered a number of aspects of traditional Blackfoot story-telling and the structures inherent in them, which are now considered in terms of shamanic and ritualistic manipulation and utilisation of power. The tales, whether considered as disparate series, single episodes, or as interrelated narratives, have an internal structure which refers to the manner in which power is moved from one realm to another via a mediator. This structure is so strong that even tales introduced from outside the Blackfoot area are rearranged to meet the Blackfoot conception and to permit them to fit into the individual series as well as to be in accord with structural principles governing the relationship between the different series. This structure depends on what I have called inversion: that is, the role of the mediator serves to enable power derived from one dimension to be used effectively in another dimension but in a different form. I will here look specifically at the way control of power is used respectively by the shaman and the ritualist.

Before taking this discussion further it is necessary to make some attempt to determine what the Blackfoot mean by the terms shaman and ritualist. Prior to doing so we should note that "shamanism is an analyst's category" (Riches 1994:382) and that Native conceptions do not necessarily agree with those of the anthropologist or cultural historian. Linguistically the Blackfoot make little distinction between shamans and ritualists. All Medicine People, which includes the ritualist and the shaman as well as spirit beings and objects, are Natosi: that is, a person (or being or object) having power, and derives from the same root as Natos (Sun). In the ethnographic literature Blackfoot shamans and ritualists are often referred to alike as medicinemen, and this is the word the Blackfoot generally use today when speaking in English; although some Elders, such as Calf Robe (1979), prefer the term Holy People. Wissler (1912) makes more restrictive use of the term to refer only to Medicine Bundle Keepers,

whereas Grinnell notes that the Blackfoot word for medicineman is *Ni-namp-skan* but claims "no one among the Blackfeet appears to have any idea as to what the word means" (1892:276). Occasionally the Blackfoot may use the word *Aisokinakiu*, which was also recorded by Uhlenbeck (1934). This refers to a doctor, that is someone who has power over specific illnesses and which Grinnell translates as "heavy singer for the sick" (*l-so-kin'-uh-kin*, 1892:284). The power of the doctor is generally personal and non-transferable, so there is already a distinction here between the practice of doctoring and the transferable power of the ritualists or Medicine Bundle Keepers.

The important point, however, is that to the Blackfoot all medicinemen and medicine beings, shamans and ritualists, as well as some doctors, possess great amounts of power which is *natoye* (of the Sun), but this *natoye* power is additionally possessed by everything in the Blackfoot world, although to differing extents, and is not limited to that owned and used by humans. *Natoye* power "animates" the Blackfoot world and gives everything purpose and meaning. Such animating power is present in a rock, a grain of sand, an animal, or a person. Thus the Blackfoot do not consider themselves as separate, or different, from any other part of the environment they occupy, and the belief that humans have a different consciousness of their world from other things within it is alien to Blackfoot thinking. To the Blackfoot the principal difference is that people are charged with specific responsibility for maintaining balance and harmony which is defined for them through the tales of Ritualistic Origins, where it is made clear that it is only through the actions of people - originating with their disrespect shown to the Star People - that balance and harmony can be disrupted. Such disruption is, of course, made explicit through the character of *Napi*, whose excessively human nature shows total disregard for others and a lack of responsibility, and who causes complete chaos and disharmony.

The Blackfoot conception is therefore that everything and anything is capable of containing *natoye* (Sun) power and can

accordingly become *natosin* (possessed of medicine power). Thus the power of the medicineman is not limited to shamans and ritualists, nor even to humans; neither is it limited to things which are given a masculine gender: many powerful Blackfoot "medicinemen" were and are female. The absence of female informants in Grinnell's collection and their under-representation in Wissler's notes and comments reflects the biases of the observers rather than a lack of female participation in the ritual or medicine life of the Blackfoot. Wissler, admittedly, does qualify this by stating:

Neither are [Blackfoot] myths peculiar to women or men, as the case may be, any one being at liberty to render any myth whatsoever. However, persons not versed in a ritual are often reluctant to narrate the myth accounting for its origin, because in a general way it is improper for one to speak in detail of medicines concerning which they have little knowledge. As women take important parts in most ritualistic ceremonies, such restrictions are not correlated with sex differences.
(1908:17-18)

Although medicine power pervades everything it is not considered to be constant or equally divided between all people and objects, but is invested more heavily in some people and objects than in others or may be more fully expressed in particular circumstances or at specific times. Thus a Medicine Rock, or *Iniskim* (Buffalo Rock), is distinguished from an ordinary rock. It is said to "sing" to the people (*The Buffalo Rock*, Wissler 1908:85-89), which is how it may be distinguished from other rocks, and people make prayers and sacrifices of personal effects so they may be granted health, happiness, and a long life. The *Iniskim* is personal, but it is not unusual, even today, to find natural rock formations festooned with brightly coloured ribbons left there as offerings, and there remains a firm belief that Medicine Rocks can influence future events: a power also invested in the shaman and the ritualist.

Since humans also possess *natoye* power in varying amounts, it follows that everyone is to some degree capable of practising medicine and is able to use this power to his or her advantage and, on occasion, for the advantage of a wider social group. At its basic level, *natoye*

power is the energy force one is born with and is manifested by the amount of "good" that adheres to one during a lifetime. Thus a handsome man or beautiful woman, a happy marriage, healthy children, and a long life are all cited by my informants as evidence of individuals having been especially blessed with natoye power, and prayers are offered every morning at sunrise to ask Natos to continue to look favourably upon such people. These good qualities are felt to radiate out to others who come in contact with them, and to be close to someone who is happy will result in greater happiness for oneself, just as a weak child who befriends a healthy one will derive benefit and grow stronger.

Although the positive benefits of natoye power - or at least their potential - are available to everyone they are not taken for granted. Only those who "live right" will see tangible benefit, whereas those who, for instance, are miserly or who show little consideration for others will gradually lose this power: there will be sickness in their families, business ventures will fail, or their horses will grow weak. Ultimately the mean person will sicken and die. This conception of personal power provides a stimulus to acquire it in greater quantity, both for the good it does oneself and for the benefit it brings to others. To some extent this is achieved through the daily invocation of Natos, by the making of prayer offerings where there are concentrations of power, and by avoiding excess - which, in some ways, means avoiding becoming like Napi (although this is an oversimplification and Napi, in his physical absence, is charged with responsibility for watching over those who "think nice", which equates with "live right").

A more direct means of increasing one's personal power is through dreams and visions. Formerly these were sought by all male members of the tribes, and by some females, during vision quests. The seeker of power spent a four day vigil at some lonely and dangerous place, such as a path frequented by bears, where he fasted and prayed for the spirit-animals to grant power. Although comparatively few Blackfoot

today undertake vision quests, they do still occasionally take place and there has, in recent years, been a resurgence of them among younger Blackfoot who are seeking to establish their Indian identity. There are a number of recognised localities within the reservations - often on the tops of high bluffs where there are eagles and relics left by previous vision seekers - which are said to be imbued with power and where a vision is more likely to be achieved.

The vision quest was never uniformly successful, but when it did succeed a spirit-animal appeared in a dream and gave a song (the origin tale of the vision) and face- and body-paints through which the powers granted by the spirit-animal might be reactivated. It should be noted here that the Blackfoot vision quest was not one in which the seeker presented himself as a pitiable object and begged for power. Demonstrations of humility and ritual phrases such as "Pity me, Grandfather", which are characteristic of the quest, are formal ways of showing respect. The quest has to be viewed more accurately as a challenge, and when the spirit-animals appear power is demanded from them, not begged of them. To gain such a vision, even today, is felt to increase the medicine power one is able to utilise and, therefore, the amount of natoye power that accretes to the individual.

Yet to achieve status as a medicineman - in the restricted sense of this word to refer to shamans and ritualists (Bundle Keepers) - an even greater degree of power needs to be acquired. The manner by which this exceptional degree of power is obtained is a primary distinguishing feature between shamans and ritualists. Blackfoot society provides two avenues by which it might be achieved. One is to receive a vision, or revelatory dream, from a particularly powerful spirit being - often from Thunder appearing in his guise as Eagle; the other is to purchase the right to conduct the ritual of a major Medicine Bundle. According to the specific nature of the vision or the importance of the Medicine Bundle such medicinemen can control varying degrees of power: as medicinemen they are not all equal, even though

all shamans and ritualists are prominent personages in Blackfoot society.

Blackfoot medicinemen (shamans and ritualists) have access to power of diverse types - from personal vision experiences to purchasable privileges - and each of these may be ranked according to its effectiveness, intensity, and tribal importance. The use of a single term to indicate people with control over these very different types and levels of power has inevitably led to confusion when Blackfoot concepts are discussed. I intend to show here that the term shaman should only be applied to the vision-inspired medicineman, and that the term ritualist more accurately describes the medicineman who is the owner of purchasable (i.e. transferable) power.

Although the Blackfoot have used the term medicineman indiscriminately since at least the late nineteenth century, this does not mean that they fail to recognise a distinction between the shaman and the ritualist. As previously mentioned, they may distinguish between the two by referring to them as "doctors" and "Bundle Keepers", but this, too, leads to some confusion. The Blackfoot had and have many doctors who are not inspired by visions (people specialised in skills such as the use of herbal remedies, setting of broken bones, and so forth) but they have only a few shamans; similarly, Bundle Keepers may have only a temporary right of custodianship and no permanent claims to ownership or to the right to perform the ritual. It is also evident that the Blackfoot make other distinctions between the shaman and the ritualist, and in order to understand how these relate to the structures inherent in story-telling we need to briefly consider what these distinctions are.

Shamans receive their power involuntarily and often reluctantly. It is said that this power "takes over" the shaman and imposes such stringent conditions that it would never be sought deliberately. Sometimes it is gained on a quest for power of a lesser degree - when it might initially be resisted - but it more usually occurs at a time

of personal crisis. This may be during serious illness if the initiate falls into coma, or could be due to external factors: Thunder shamans, for instance, may receive power if stunned by a nearby lightning strike. The Siksika Thunder shaman, Wolf Collar, for example, received his initial acquisition of shamanic power at the age of seventeen while out hunting with his friend, Heavy Runner, when their camp was struck by lightning. Wolf Collar recalled only a sudden flash, waking some time later to see Heavy Runner lying dead nearby. Wolf Collar then lapsed into a coma during which an enormous bird appeared to him and, turning into Thunder Woman, gave him power to cure those who had been struck by lightning. As tokens of this power he was given songs, a special form of face-paint, and a design that he should paint on his tipi. Thunder Woman's son, Iron Voice, appeared in a second dream and gave him a Medicine Shield (a personal Medicine Bundle) and two songs that would ward off danger (after Brassler, 1975; see also Calf Robe 1979:94-95).

Wolf Collar's experience is the classic death and rebirth of the shaman which Eliade describes for shamanic initiations, though there is no indication that the Blackfoot initiate is subject to dismemberment and reassembly by the spirits as occurs, for instance, among tribes on the Northwest Coast and among the Eskimo (Eliade 1964:50-52). More usually the Blackfoot spirits place something inside the initiate as a sign of their presence (Wissler 1912:105; Brassler 1975:16). Modern shamans are reluctant to discuss this since it is felt that discussion - or, at times, even naming - of their power will in some way "turn it in on itself". This reluctance was apparent, too, in Wissler's time, since he says "discussion of this aspect of a Blackfoot's inner life is a delicate matter admitting of no cross-questioning" (1912:71). It is nevertheless clear that the "turning in of power" is felt to be dangerous to the shaman, who is said to lose control of the ability to protect him or herself against its potentially dangerous influences. In this respect it is relevant to note that Wolf Collar's comments were recorded in his old age, after he had adopted Christianity and given up his shamanic practice. The power objects placed within shamans can

vary considerably: I was told of a Piegan woman shaman who was said to have a horse inside her, and Wolf Collar is reported as vomiting the source of his power in the form of a small stone shortly before his death in 1928.

Whatever the nature of the power source, the shaman carries this force within his/her body at all times. It is a permanent presence through which the shaman is in constant contact with the spirit beings. Such power might manifest itself unexpectedly - and not always benignly - with the consequence that the shaman is in a continual inner struggle to maintain control and to subdue any possible adverse effects his/her power might have. This is not always possible and unexpected adversity is frequently thought to be the result of a loss of shamanic control when it is not explicable by other means. For this reason Blackfoot shamans are both respected and feared.

The greatest shamans are those who can exercise the greatest control, but since their power is directly related to that of the spirit forces they carry within themselves the inner battle they must fight is also greater and more difficult. Loss of control by the most powerful shamans is therefore of danger to the entire community. Conversely, successful control can throw a protective shield around everyone else. According to Lewis, "In the person of the shaman, man triumphantly proclaims his supremacy over elemental power which he has mastered and transformed into a socially beneficent force" (1989:169). The Blackfoot example, however, suggests that such mastery can never be absolute and that the shaman has only a partial ability to control the spirit not to transform it. A continual struggle takes place between the shaman's will and the elemental powers, and the outcome of this struggle is finely balanced: as the shaman attempts to overwhelm the spirit power and bring it under control, so the spirit attempts to overwhelm the shaman who must be constantly on his/her guard not to be caught unawares or unprepared.

For the shaman this struggle is a life-long battle: just as the "shamanic calling" cannot be refused, neither is the shaman able to avoid the struggle since shamanic power can not be transferred to anyone else. Even though Wolf Collar renounced his faith in shamanism and converted to Christianity he nevertheless continued to carry the stone within himself as a symbol of his shamanic power and of the presence of the spirit-animals within his body. This stone, as noted above, was only vomited out of his body on his death. The release of this power after a shaman's death means it remains as a potential and uncontrolled danger until it can be harnessed and brought back under control by another shaman. When viewed in this way, the concept of the shaman as a "doctor" seems inadequate. During the near-death experience when power is given the shaman is spiritually transformed: he or she may emerge physically unscathed but with heightened curative, spiritual, and perceptual powers. Yet this is also the onset of a perpetual struggle with an uncertain outcome, and we should be careful in placing too strong an emphasis on the healing powers of Blackfoot shamans: most traditional doctoring in Blackfoot societies is by herbalists, bone-setters, and so forth, who, although they may have some vision-inspired Medicine by which they work their cures, are not necessarily shamans. A Blackfoot shaman, in fact, is only involved in healing when the situation reaches a crisis: that is, when all other attempts have failed or when death is imminent. At these times the shaman's spirit power is pitted against the powers that afflict his/her patient in a manner akin to the personal battle that takes place within the shaman.

When a Blackfoot shaman calls on, say, the power of Bear for assistance in a cure, the shaman becomes Bear. That is, the shaman exerts his/her will over the Bear spirit and, by becoming Bear, uses this power to fight whatever spirits are felt to be causing illness in the patient. If unsuccessful then the Bear spirit might kill the patient or even turn against the shaman, causing possible insanity or death. To entertain the risk involved in utilising such forces is beyond the concept implied by doctoring and rules out the intervention

of the shaman except in crisis situations. I have suggested elsewhere (1995b) that a more appropriate term for Blackfoot shamans than "doctors" would be "arbiters of crisis". The crisis is both a personal one (the inner conflict and turmoil of the shaman) and a societal one (the shaman's intervention in any situation that is life-threatening: which in addition to individual cures formerly included tribal crises such as famines, lack of game animals, violent storms, and pestilence).

We have, then, a situation in which crisis is dealt with by the shaman intervening directly by utilising power contained within him/herself, but which power is already subject to its own turmoil and conflict of an intensely personal and private nature. The widely held opinion suggested by psychologists and anthropologists who follow Devereux's view "that the shaman is a neurotic who uses socially sanctioned defenses" (1961:1088) is refuted by the Blackfoot example. Despite Devereux's assertion that the shaman is "mentally deranged [and] neurotic or even psychotic" and La Barre's comment that he "is preposterously and magniloquently a fatuous child ... the paranoid 'father' of his tribesmen" (1970:107), Blackfoot shamans tackle crises at the personal, group, and tribal level and have to be constantly aware and prepared to take action that could prove beneficial yet could equally have disastrous consequences. In this respect they carry a heavy responsibility which can only be carried out successfully if they remain constantly stable and mentally alert. They are the strong minds of the community, not the weak ones.

Cures and the management of crises at the tribal level nevertheless occupy only a very small proportion of the Blackfoot shaman's time. The greater part of shamanic activity is carried out at an intensely personal level, but this has not been reflected in the literature because it is not readily observable and because the shamans themselves are reluctant to name or discuss their powers. Public demonstrations of power in crisis situations have, however, been readily observed, and have attracted attention because of their spectacular quality: there is something appealing to both the public

and the anthropologist in the "exotic" performance of a shaman dressed in animal skins and giving a wildly exaggerated impersonation of a spirit-animal helper. Catlin gives us a typically exciting view of a Blackfoot shaman's appearance in the nineteenth century:

[His] dress, in all its parts, is one of the greatest curiosities in the whole collection of Indian manufactures which I have yet obtained in the Indian country. It is the strangest medley and mixture, perhaps of the mysteries of the animal and vegetable kingdoms that ever was seen. Besides the skin of the yellow bear (which being almost an anomaly in that country, is out of the regular order of nature, and, of course, great medicine, and converted to a medicine use), there are attached to it the skins of many animals, which are also anomalies or deformities, which render them, in their estimation, *medicine*; and there are also the skins of snakes, and frogs, and bats, - beaks and toes and tails of birds, - hoofs of deer, goats, and antelopes; and, in fact, the "odds and ends," and fag ends, and tails, and tips of almost everything that swims, flies, or runs, in this part of the wide world. (1965:35-41)

Catlin was one of the more sympathetic and reliable observers of Plains customs in the 1830s, but his exuberance here is perhaps understandable since this was the first shamanic performance he had witnessed. Wissler, in a more restrained manner, tells us the Blackfoot shaman's costume might indicate his link with the cosmos and that he "wears a robe embellished with the sun, moon, and stars, much like a medieval wizard" (1911:76). The opinion expressed by modern informants is that these dramatic representations in a public forum were often put on "just for show". They were, certainly, far more inspiring and interesting to outside observers than the contemplative, and lonely and often secret, activities that were more commonly part of the shaman's daily life. My informants stress that the intellectual development of the shaman - the constant striving to gain increased skills in spiritual perception and understanding - is of far greater importance than the dramatic public displays.

Western observers, who have often failed to recognise the similar use of elaborate regalia and power demonstrations in the religious activities of their own cultures, often refer to the "savage" notions of the shaman, and have frequently reduced the shamans to the level of

charlatans who only pretend to be possessed by spirit power in an attempt to deceive superstitious audiences. It is, however, obvious that Blackfoot shamans - and I suspect most shamans - have a deep belief in the spirit powers through which they work. The "calling" is involuntary and often resisted and the personal anguish they go through is very real. Nobody would be likely to subject themselves willingly to the private torment of the shaman. It is also evident when talking with modern shamans that their sincerity, as well as the precise clarity of their thinking, is not to be doubted.

The shaman, then, is one aspect of the medicineman among the Blackfoot. The other aspect is the ritualist, and we need to consider how the ritualist's use of power differs from that of the shaman. The Blackfoot concept of transferable power means that Medicine Bundles which have tribal value can be passed from one ownership to another. The powers contained in these Bundles are intrinsically the same as those used by shamans: they derive from contact with spirit beings who give people the ability to utilise their strengths if certain restrictions and observations are kept. This accords closely with shamanic power, which is also derived from spirit powers and is similarly subject to rigid prescriptions and proscriptions. A major difference, however, is that in transferable Medicine Bundles power is externalised rather than internalised: it resides in the Bundle, or, rather, in the songs and paints associated with the Bundle and with the accurate performance of the rituals associated with these. It is not taken within oneself in the same way that a shaman takes in power.

The ritualist is offered a choice: to purchase the Bundle or not. While this may be governed by other factors, such as the ability to raise the purchase price (the transfer of a Beaver Medicine Bundle at the turn of the century cost between ten and thirty horses), it is nevertheless up to the individual whether to proceed. Various other considerations may also be involved. A decision to purchase the Natoas, for instance, may be conceived as a means of protecting close kin in grave circumstances, whereas purchase of the Beaver Bundle is

more likely to be associated with prestige and as a means of gaining status. Yet regardless of the reason, Bundle transfers are not subject to the forced acceptance of power the shaman faces and no one is under any obligation to accept the care of a Bundle. It is a personal and voluntary decision.

The entirely voluntary nature of Blackfoot Bundle transfers is subject to only one single exception: that of the transfer of the Bear Knife Bundle (Wissler 1912:131-133). Ownership of this is forced, but this relates to the rough handling of the initiate and his wife during the transfer - when they are held naked on thorns while being painted - and, formerly, the dangerous obligations imposed by ownership, since the owner could never flee from an enemy regardless of how great the danger might be. In the pre-reservation period when warring with neighbouring tribes was frequent, Bear Knife Owners were usually killed in battle soon after the transfer had taken place. This, of course, is a very different situation from the shaman's forced acceptance of power given by a spirit-animal. Custodianship of major Medicine Bundles ensures a prominent place in Blackfoot society, and this was often a goal to be achieved rather than acceptance of an obligation which could not be refused.

That the choice of accepting power through Bundle ownership is voluntary already distinguishes the ritualist from the shaman, but there are several other important distinctions as well. The shaman learns by personal experience, and this knowledge is guarded and prevented from passing into the public domain since this would threaten the shaman's power as well as making any weak points in the shaman's defences obvious. In this sense shamans are vulnerable to outside threats at a number of levels: from other rival shamans, from spirit forces opposed to their own, and even from the power they personally profess to control. A shaman is in constant inner turmoil and it would be foolish to risk exposing any vulnerabilities that might give an advantage to the forces against which he or she struggles. Thus it is

in the shaman's interest to remain as reticent as possible about the exact nature of the power that he or she possesses.

The ritualist, by contrast, learns by being taught. The entire transfer ceremony is one in which the previous owner teaches the initiate the correct order of the ritual, the words of the songs, and the face- and body-paints that go with it. In the transfer of complex Medicine Bundles the previous owner may continue to act as an assistant until the new owner is fully conversant with the lengthy and difficult procedures, and, as we saw previously, it is even possible for Medicine Bundles to have part-owners who will be present and actively involved in the performance of the rituals. It is also evident that the Bundle Keeper is not thought to possess power in the same way as the shaman. Power resides in the Medicine Bundle and is brought into the public domain through the correct performance of the ritualist's learned procedure. Any benefit is therefore not directly attributable to the Bundle Keeper - other than that the performance must be accurate - but is due to the supposed presence of the spirit helpers invoked by the ritual. In their respective performances the shaman becomes Bear, but the ritualist requests Bear's presence. Thus the shaman calls on forces which are internalised and accepted reluctantly, whereas the ritualist relies on the intercession of powers which are voluntarily sought and which remain externalised, or remote, from himself.

The differences between the shamanic concept of power and spirit contact and that of the ritualist can be tabulated as follows:

SHAMANIC POWER	RITUAL (BUNDLE) POWER
Non-transferable	Transferable
Derives from vision	No vision required
Involuntary	Voluntary
Individual	Collective
Permanent	Temporary
Internalised	Externalised
Acquisition through death and rebirth	Acquisition as gift
Learns by experience	Learns by being taught
Based on inner turmoil	Promotes outward calm
Uncertain outcome	Certain outcome
Controls crises	For general well-being
Potentially life-threatening	Theoretically life-asserting

The differences and oppositions laid out briefly above can be equated with the structural patterns of Blackfoot story-telling, and specifically with the oppositions apparent between the tales of Napi and those of Ritualistic Origins. In the tales the mediating force is the series of stories referring to the activities of the Star People: they introduce order which makes ritual possible, and it is by this that the human Napi functioning in an essentially non-human (or pre-human) world is placed in opposition to the non-human spirits exerting influence in the human world (through the ritual activities of the people). Since spirit power is natoye (of the Sun) this pattern is reinforced by the division and opposition between Napi and Natos as twin aspects of the original creative force. My proposal is therefore that the opposition between the shaman and the ritualist is the same as that between Napi and Natos (or, more accurately, between Napi and the spirit-animals through whom Natos' power is made manifest: which, in turn, serves to reinforce the collective nature of ritual power versus the individual nature of Napi and the shaman). In this schema the Star People (whose own position is an anomalous one) mediate between the shaman and the ritualist just as they do between the tales of Napi and the tales of Ritualistic Origins, and this challenges the assumptions implicit in the literature by use of the term *medicineman* to refer to both the shaman and the ritualist. My position here is that there is a mediated opposition which accords with the story-telling structure, and that Napi is, in fact, the first shaman and is in opposition to the ritualist.

We have already seen that the shaman is in turmoil, he or she is an involuntary carrier of power which is an intrinsic part of him/herself. Such power is unavoidable and is also a constant source of struggle. Even when the shaman is apparently at ease this inner battle is taking place. It is relentless and never-ceasing. For such a person the ordered and directed ritual world of the Blackfoot which comes into force at specific and pre-determined periods is meaningless, since the shaman's world can be thrown into chaos at any time. The shaman is always on the brink of an abyss: at any moment the spirit

power could become overwhelming and throw the shaman over the edge. Lewis' comment that "the shaman is not the slave, but the master of anomaly and chaos" (1989:169) applies, for Blackfoot shamans, only to the immediate moment. Anomaly and chaos are always hovering just beyond the shaman's grasp and any relaxation would allow them full rein. It is this marginal world, characterised by Napi, that is the domain of the Blackfoot shaman: a world where the only certain thing is its uncertainty. But it is also a powerful world. As Mary Douglas notes "to have been in the margins is to have been in contact with danger, to have been at a source of power" (1994:98).

In contrast to the uncertain and marginal world of the shamans, that of the ritualist is very clearly defined. The tales of Ritualistic Origins detail the process whereby the ritualist's wife accepts a gift of power from the animals and then transfers this to her husband, and this is accompanied by very specific instructions as to the sequences of songs, face- and body-paints, and so forth that must be meticulously followed. The actual performance of the ritual repeats this process exactly and might be determined by other equally precise external factors: Wissler tells us, for instance, that the Medicine Pipe Bundles could only be opened on one of four occasions - the sound of first thunder in spring, on transfer to a new owner, when the sacred tobacco in the Bundle is renewed, and in accordance with a vow (1912:147). It is implicit in the tales and the performance that strict adherence to the procedures revealed in the original gift must be maintained if the ritual is to be effective, and this is in contrast to the shaman's continual struggle with forces and conditions that can become manifest in any form at any time.

When we consider Napi more closely, other characteristics that differentiate him from the ritualist but link him with the shaman begin to emerge. Napi thinks only of himself: that is, he is a loner whose efforts are intended to deal with issues concerning himself alone even when they involve other people. The shaman, too, deals with a fundamental issue that is his or hers alone, an inner struggle. Even

in cures the shaman's conflict is still, essentially, a personal one: there is little attempt to directly involve the patient in the cure, nor is there any call on resources beyond the direct reach of the individual shaman. In this respect it is interesting to note that if the attentions of a shaman fail to achieve the desired result, then another shaman with different skills will be asked to try to effect a cure: in this way a succession of shamans might intervene during a crisis situation or period, each working individually - and sometimes competitively - and each with different abilities (Grinnell 1892:283-284). There is little sense of the sharing of skills between Blackfoot shamans, and such a system precludes the possibility of shamanic societies or fraternities such as those reported for the Dakota, Pawnee, or Ojibwa/Chippewa (Lowie 1954:161; Feest 1986:16-19).

Both Napi and the shaman contain power within themselves, but the outcome of the use of this power is always uncertain: at times it is beneficial to others, but it can just as readily turn back on itself. Napi and the shaman also both operate at the extreme limits of what is considered acceptable: Napi at the extremes of excess and of social and moral convention, the shaman at the extremes of endurance and in the marginal (and paradoxical) limits between the human and spirit worlds. This can be taken a little further to suggest that at this extreme the shaman defies death, and this is true of Napi too. Napi must both die and not die, and it is evident from the shaman's acquisition of power through a near-death experience that he or she too must both die and not die to become a shaman.

The ritualist's power, however, is an impersonal one which, unlike the personal extremes and limits of Napi or the shaman, is always called upon and invoked for the benefit of the community. The opening of the Medicine Pipe Bundles, for instance, despite the fact that they are theoretically in individual custodianship, is intended as a general tribal blessing. It is also apparent that the Blackfoot believe a ritual correctly performed will always have beneficial results: any failure is considered to be due to a mistake in the

ceremony or because some ritual transgression has occurred. Thus Cuts-Wood was killed after an impure woman made a vow to obtain the Natoas headdress and to fulfil the role of the Medicine Woman, since she was unable to meet the ritual demands of unimpeachable moral standards, chastity, and obedience to her marriage vows (Cuts Wood, Wissler 1908:66-68). The performance of rituals is an assertion of community life and a statement of the people's willingness to adhere to the strict ritual and social requirements put in place by the Star People, whereas the shamans continually confront death and operate in a liminal zone that is neither human nor spirit. It is also apparent that the ritualists function at a collective level, and they may even form fraternities of ritualists owning or part-owning similar rituals, in contrast to the shamanic performances which are always individual and highly personal.

Direct references to Napi as a shaman are nevertheless rare in the tales, and when they do occur they are inconclusive. His attempts to doctor the two women or the chief's daughter back to life (*Old Man's Escape*, *Old Man Deceived by Two Women*, Wissler 1908:34-35, 35-36; *Old Man Doctors*, Grinnell 1892:159-164) are presented as comic examples of the women's ability to fool him or of his ability to save his own skin by fooling others. In either case it is suggested that he possesses (or believes he possesses) shamanic power, but whether this is really true is left in doubt. The only other reference to Napi as a shaman is when he tricks the buffalo into laughing itself to death (*Old Man Makes Buffalo Laugh*, Lowie in Wissler 1908:36-37). He does this by adopting the characteristic "top-knot" hairstyle of a Blackfoot shaman. In this tale the humour stems from confusion as to whether the buffalo dies because of Napi's shamanic power or because it finds Napi's disguise as a shaman to be so improbable as to be laughable. Such devices are a means of getting an audience to laugh at, or with, Napi, but they serve another purpose too: Napi is mysterious because we never know what power he really possesses. Similarly the shaman's mysterious power is known only to him or herself: indeed, as noted earlier, the shaman's power cannot even be named.

By suggesting an equivalence between Napi and the shaman and opposing this to the powers represented by the Star People and the ritualists, another important question is raised. This is to what extent Napi's reputation as a Trickster bears any relation to shamanic practice. It is evident from all the tales that Napi will fool others and will do so by whatever means happen to present themselves. At one level this still fits the general pattern of oppositions, since it is in sharp contrast to the solemnity and exactitude of the ritualist's performance where any deviation from the formal procedures would be disastrous. A failure to conform to the requirements imposed by Natos via the spirit-animals brings swift retribution.

An immediate, but unsatisfactory, answer to the question of whether the shaman is a Trickster is suggested by references that make out the shaman to be a charlatan who fools others with magic tricks and sleight-of-hand. Grigg notes of shamans in general that they "pretend to cure the sick with conjurations and charms" (Thwaites 1904a:334-335), and even as recently as 1991 in the reprint of Campbell's *Masks of God* the "basic form of the shamanistic crisis" was still being summarised as "a career of magical practice ... by various tricks and parodies of power" (1991:265). Such comments need to be treated with a great deal of caution. They are often made by people who tend to view any ritual practice other than their own as "savage" or "primitive", and who too often feel a need to undermine the shaman's credibility. This is particularly true of early missionary reports, where there was a vested interest in undermining the role of the shamans and breaking their resistance to the adoption of Christian ideals, but is also endemic in other reports from the turn of the century and still finds its proponents today. These reports cannot be trusted, and do not reflect Blackfoot opinion. There is no doubt whatsoever in the minds of the Blackfoot regarding the powers the shamans claim, and there is a strong belief in the sincerity of the shamans.

Yet it is patently obvious that Napi is a Trickster. Details of curing rites also immediately suggest that the shamans do, in fact, resort to trickery and "conjurations and charms" in attempts to provide tangible evidence of their power. This aspect of their practice was formerly kept secret but is readily admitted today. A "disease-causing" object sucked from a patient's body might, for instance, be no more than a wad of absorbent material which the shaman holds in his mouth and soaks with blood by biting the inside of his cheek. This may then be triumphantly produced as "evidence" that a cure has been effected. Modern shamans explain this by saying that the power they possess is real but is beyond the comprehension of others, and that the presentation of a disease-causing object helps the patient to believe a cure has been made. Thus trickery is not an essential part of the cure but simply provides a "focus" for a patient who may be in severe distress. This focus is a major factor in the recovery process, since it boosts the patient's morale and gives him/her the will to get better. There is, nevertheless, some evidence here to suggest that a Trickster aspect is part of the shaman's persona, at least in those situations where he or she is called upon to act publicly, and that Napi's use of tricks to achieve his own ends has a counterpart in shamanic practice.

But curing is only a small part of the shamanic vocation - and should, for the Blackfoot, be included within the category of crisis management rather than that of doctoring. This suggests we need to look elsewhere to find what if any connections exist between the Trickster and the shaman that might help to explain the apparent opposition between the shaman and the ritualist. I believe this is contained in the structure of the tales. Each tale within the Napi series has an inherent structure which is the opposite of that found in the tales of Ritualistic Origins. A number of these oppositions are already familiar; but their characteristic pattern can be taken a stage further and applied to a comparison between shamanic and ritual practice.

1: Napi is driven by impulses he apparently cannot control.

The woman in the tales of Ritualistic Origins makes a conscious decision to cohabit with a power-giving spirit-animal.

The shaman, as we have seen, is driven by a force which is imposed and never sought. It is involuntary and in some senses it controls the shaman, since it dictates any subsequent actions by the shaman and sets up an inner conflict. The shaman carries within him/herself the seeds of dissent and conflict. The difference between the shaman and Napi is that Napi expresses all human instincts and brings conflict into being, whereas the shaman expresses spirit power and uses this to reduce conflict. The existence of a conflicting force within both Napi and the shaman - since these are internalised and are basic to the characters of either Napi or the shaman - is that of an opposition between spirit power and human behaviour. The ritualist, however, seeks power from outside himself, which is transferred from the spirit world into the world of people and which is mediated by the willing intercession of a third party (the ritualist's wife).

2: Napi seeks opportunity to satisfy his impulses which appears to meet his own ends.

In the tales of Ritualistic Origins benefits are brought into the human world for the good of all.

In order to resolve the conflict between spirit power and human behaviour the shaman enters a state that is both spirit and human. These two worlds are separate ones - humans cannot live in the spirit world - so the shaman occupies an "abnormal" position in a liminal zone. He is spirit and person, and needs to function in the transitional world between the two. Blackfoot shamans therefore enter the paradoxical world of Napi where anything is possible and where a perpetual state of conflict cannot be avoided. The shaman exists in non-real time as both person and spirit, or as neither person nor spirit, and the shaman's world is one in which normal expectations no longer apply. The ritualist, however, has his options clearly stated. The opening of Medicine Bundles is controlled and predetermined by other factors, and the ritual follows a clearly defined order. Unlike

the shaman, who must react instantly to deviations from the normal state of affairs, the ritualist's function is to re-establish procedures that are fixed by custom and former observances.

3: Napi commits himself to a course of action which is always uncertain.

A ritual correctly performed is infallible.

The loss of normality in the shamanic world enables anything to occur - which includes the direct interaction between spirit and human that occurs within the person of the shaman but is impossible elsewhere. Despite Eliade's comment that North American shamans are distinguished from the lay community by the fact that "he alone succeeds in acquiring a technique that enables him to undertake ecstatic journeys at will" (1964:298), Blackfoot shamans do not enter ecstatic trances and travel into other realms to conduct cosmic battles: the spirits are summoned to the shaman, and the shaman's physical shell is the space in which battle takes place. This paradox - the person as place as well as the shaman as spirit - precludes the shaman from viewing events other than in terms of his/her own person. In these circumstances there can be no outward controls or guidelines by which future consequences can be judged, and results are therefore always uncertain. The performance of the ritualist, by contrast, is always certain provided that precautions are taken to ensure the ritual is carried out correctly and in exact detail.

4: Napi is either fooled himself or fools others.

The ritualist introduces stability by ensuring that predetermined ideals of harmony and balance are maintained.

The possibility of the shaman being fooled or fooling others is implicit in the fact that things cannot be predicted in the shamanic world. The shaman must be continually aware of and alert to anything by which he or she may be overcome or through which he or she can exert dominance. The shaman must expect the unexpected to avoid being fooled and lulled into a false sense of security. Kalweit says "... shamans are the incarnation of paradox. What they teach is the negative way of

the fool who turns everything upside down" (1992:227). The Blackfoot "way of the fool" is used as a positive means of combatting a paradoxical world in much the same way as the monsters are indirectly controlled in the paradoxical world of Napi. The ritualist relies on correct procedures to ensure a predicted outcome which is already stated in the tales of Ritualistic Origins, where the animal powers have told the people exactly what they might expect of them and what they will give in return. If specific actions are carried out the animal powers will respond in a clearly defined manner.

5: As a consequence of Napi's actions a chaotic world results in which his actions trigger laughter.

Ritualists demand solemnity in order to appeal to the powers that ensure order.

The shaman's world, in which the unexpected becomes expected, must by definition be chaotic. Nothing is ever what it seems. In a world that is both real and unreal, possible and impossible, the semblance of order can readily become a symbol of disorder. Faced with a realisation that nothing can be taken for granted and that everything may be other than it appears, the shaman's strongest defence is laughter. It is a powerful force that cuts through fear and uncertainty and demonstrates the shaman's defiance and strength. The ritualist demands solemnity, and Bundle openings are marked by strict adherence to formal standards and to pre-ordained forms of conduct. The severity and formality of a ritual performance is in marked contrast to the apparent abandon of the shamanic performance, and when clowns appear in Blackfoot ritual no one is permitted to laugh at their ridiculous, and often obscene, antics (Schaeffer 1969:15).

6: When Napi is unable to extricate himself from a problem he calls on others whose power he then deprecates.

Ritualists call on powers which they hold in awe.

Shamans continually grow in power, since every successful demonstration is an indication of growing confidence and ability. But the inner struggle is perpetual and constant contact with increasingly

powerful spirits brings the shaman into ever more difficult conflict with these forces. The shaman thereby repeats Napi's process of calling on additional sources of power with which he is then in conflict. The ritualist, however, is only in possession of the power purchased in Medicine Bundle transfers, and this is limited to the particular Bundle in question and to the degree of full of part-ownership.

7: Despite dangers that are life-threatening Napi recovers from one calamity only to initiate another.

Failure of the ritualist would be disastrous to the community as a whole.

The shaman's world is always life-threatening. He or she lives in a world where life and death meet face-to-face, and the near-death experience of the initial vision means that the shaman is both dead and alive. Shamans can cure, but can also kill. Life and death coexist within the body of the shaman, and it is only through death that the shaman's spirit powers can be released. The ritualist receives the ability to manipulate power via the transfer ritual, but the power is purchased and remains with the Bundle. The ritualist's vow is that well-being should ensue and death be avoided, whereas the shaman goes to the very edge and operates within a world where either life or death can be welcomed.

There can be little doubt that the shaman is a Trickster - though not a charlatan - who is capable of "bringing the past into the present, shuffling cause and effect, and mediating life and death" (Schmidt 1987:72) and that the character of the shaman is established through the way Napi is presented by the story-teller. The opposition of shaman to ritualist is established by a simple reversal of the qualities expressed in the tales of Napi when compared with those of Ritualistic Origins. The ritualist is (1) in possession of power that is deliberately purchased and not governed by impulse, (2) performs the rituals at the requests of others using highly formalised procedures, (3) performs a ritual that has specific results if carried out

correctly, (4) does not employ any form of trickery, (5) restores balance and harmony through a process of extreme decorum and solemnity, (6) can utilise only those powers to which he has purchased the right, and (7) reaffirms life. All of these reverse the principles evident in the Napi series.

In this section I have attempted to show that the shaman and the ritualist, although both are referred to as medicinemen, represent opposing forces in Blackfoot society. I have pointed out that this opposition is apparent in the tales of Napi and in those of Ritualistic Origins, and that the Star People series mediates between the two. Napi is presented as the first shaman despite Rickettes's comment that "trickster stories are told to ridicule the shaman" (1966:195, my emphasis) because he operates in a world which is ungoverned by the strictures of human society and where anything is possible, whereas the ritualist is obliged to adhere to formal procedures through which power can be brought into the human world through the intercession of the ritualist's wife. These structures are evident in the tales and are reinforced and restated by the story-tellers. We have also seen that the shaman's personal powers are utilised in situations of crisis management, after events have progressed beyond the point where other forms of intervention can be effective, whereas the ritualist's impersonal powers are more frequently used as a means of crisis avoidance and commonly as a general blessing for tribal benefit.

CONCLUSION

The central points made in this thesis have already been summarised in the preceding section, but will be briefly reviewed here. I have attempted to show that there is a consistency in Blackfoot belief and opinion which extends from the pre-reservation period through to the modern period, and that this is evident in traditional story-telling. I have also suggested a theoretical structure based on inversion which enables Blackfoot tales to be understood at a deeper and more intense level than can be gained by simply responding to their contents, and have emphasised that the tales have to be read with some knowledge of the Blackfoot perspective to fully appreciate the messages that they contain. I have also shown that such messages vary with the individual attitudes and opinions of every member of the audience and should not therefore be considered as static entities which are subject to a single interpretation.

There is, nevertheless, an underlying structure that is consistent: different series of tales invert the preceding or succeeding series, and the relationship between these needs to be mediated. This structure, I suggest, is implicit in the stories, but also extends into other aspects of Blackfoot social and ritual life. I have further suggested that this inversion is made explicit in the relationship between the shaman and the ritualist, but have inferred that this might be carried forward into discussions of Blackfoot belief and social organisation in general. While I believe this would prove fertile ground for further study, these aspects are beyond the scope and space limitations of this thesis.

An important emphasis I have made throughout this thesis is that story-telling needs to be understood from the Native rather than the

Western historical view. Blackfoot history does not follow the tenets imposed by Western historians, and when subject to scrutiny by Western logic it often fails to live up to the imposed criteria of the "outsider": it is implicit in this text that "Blackfoot history" should be the guideline when reading meaning into tales that have traditional value. This thesis therefore adopts a liberal, or non-literal, approach to the study of Blackfoot cultural systems through the medium of indigenous concepts expounded in the collections of tales. It suggests a number of possibilities for recognising the traditional views and opinions of tribal peoples as valid indicators of adaptation and adjustment to changing circumstances, as well as of constancy.

The essential points I have tried to establish are:

1: That the collections of tales made at the turn of the century accurately reflect a traditional point of view, in that they were gathered from Elders and story-tellers whose primary concern was to ensure these traditions were recorded before they fell into disuse. Also, that the Blackfoot themselves were active participants in ensuring the tales were recorded and were not passive participants in "salvage anthropology".

2: That the Blackfoot retain a traditional view and structure in their story-telling which has not been materially affected either by the imposition of white concepts or by the opinions of Pan-Indian pressure groups, and that this traditional view is still evident in modern story-telling sessions. It is acknowledged that changes have taken place, but it is implied that these changes are superficial rather than fundamental ones and should not be confused with a corpus of non-traditional (Pan-Indian) tales that is read in parallel to the traditional view.

3: That changes in Blackfoot social, economic, and political status during the late 1800s and early 1900s had little material affect on the

tradition of story-telling, which continued at varying levels of intensity throughout the period of their subjugation and incarceration on reservations and which is still relevant today. It is, however, noted that this tradition is stronger among the Northern Piegan, Kainah, and Siksika of Canada than it is among the Southern Piegan of the United States.

4: Difficulties with source material were discussed at some length and the fact that unavoidable biases and prejudices may be present in the collections of tales was acknowledged. I concentrated in particular on the different biases introduced into their collections by George Bird Grinnell and by Clark Wissler/David Duvall. My opinion, however, is that the principles on which Blackfoot story-telling is organised transcend these difficulties and that we can read beyond them to find underlying functions and structures. Blackfoot story-telling is here presented as a complex, sophisticated, and interactive part of Blackfoot social relationships.

5: That the Blackfoot Trickster (Napi) has a number of qualities which are unique to the Blackfoot and which should not be considered as derivatives of (or compounded from) other Tricksters found in Great Plains traditions of story-telling. I noted especially that he is mischievous not malevolent and that any negative results of his activities are simply because he is unable to think about others or to consider what effect his actions might have. He is seen as blithely wandering through his own private world.

6: A structural principle has been established based on the Blackfoot's own conception of what constitutes a tribal history. This shows that when Napi is removed from direct influence by the Woman Chief this enables the monsters to gain ascendancy and gives cause for the Star People to come to earth to restore order, which in turn opens up the possibility for the introduction of ritual by which the people themselves can influence future events. It is significant here that Napi is concerned only with the immediate and does not think ahead,

even though his actions have future consequences, whereas rituals have a specific and controlled function in determining what happens in the future.

7: That the character of Napi is expressed by the untutored activities of the shaman whereas the ritualist invokes powers that are ordered and which derive from instruction by the spirit-animal intermediaries of the Above People, Below People, and Underwater People who are representative of Napi's alter ego, Natos (Sun). It is noted that the shaman is involved in interactions with a chaotic and uncertain world, contrasted with rituals which if correctly performed have certain results.

Throughout this discussion I have maintained that the movement of power from one realm to another has to be mediated by another force, and I have suggested that this force relates to the feminine principle: Napi's excesses are controlled by Old Woman and the Woman Chief, and the ritualist can only obtain power through the intercession of his wife (or another close female relative) as a mediator. This suggests that power in Blackfoot society is not only expressed through direct binary oppositions, but that a tertiary mediating force is required in order to make power available for human usage.

An important point I am making, however, is that Western historians, anthropologists, folklorists, or other students of oral tradition need to stand back from their own disciplines and the restraints that these impose and consider the Native view. There is still a tendency for "us" to view "them" in terms of our own cultural expectations and beliefs, and to forget that we may have lessons to learn by paying closer attention to what our informants actually say to us and by accepting that their lines of enquiry, though based on other less formal criteria, are equally valid. We need to acknowledge that academic enquiry based on a search for empirical evidence is only one way forward, and that this may not always give us the understanding - as opposed to knowledge - that we seek.

While I endorse Krupat's view that it is important to adopt an "ethnocritical" stance and that it is impossible for any reading of the tales to present a totally "Indian perspective" (1996:121), it is important to recognise that modern reworkings and rewritings by both Native and non-Native authors and researchers introduce their own meanings, forms of interpretation, and bias, but do not necessarily challenge the "authenticity" of the collections of tales made among the Blackfoot at the turn of the century by Grinnell and Wissler.

I would like to conclude with a quote from one of my Siksika informants:

There are many ways of looking at things, and each of these may be equally valid. Your beliefs and mine may not always coincide, but this doesn't mean that either of us is wrong. Respect for what others believe - even when we do not share that belief - is important. But for respect to be shown that belief has to be sincere. Too many White people question what the Blackfoot believe and try to deride much of our traditional knowledge and ancient wisdom as superstition. But it is clear these people have no true beliefs of their own. You can tell their attitude by looking at their eyes and by the questions they ask (or don't ask). There needs to be acceptance and tolerance between people - an acceptance that the other person's view may differ - not an imposition of one person's, or nation's, beliefs on another. Our history, since the first contact we had with Europeans, has been beset by misunderstandings, and in most cases the Native view has been ignored. But if you look at our stories and really think about what they mean, then it is obvious that we have always been prepared to accept that responsibility lies with ourselves, and that we have the power if we use it correctly to keep this earth whole and to live in harmony with one another. Even Napi knew this - although he wouldn't admit it. (personal communication)

In this Appendix I give full versions of those tales which have been recorded by me and to which I refer in this text. These were collected during various visits to the Siksika and Northern Piegan reservations and in discussions with the Blackfoot but have not been previously published elsewhere. Other references to Blackfoot "explanations" of their own history which were given to me by different informants are included within the text. They are a small part of a much larger body of material reflecting modern Blackfoot opinion, including a substantial number of tales, anecdotes, explanations, etc., which it is hoped will be published as a separate monograph on Blackfoot Customs and Beliefs.

The material collected by me, as already discussed in the text, was not the result of a specific line of enquiry or a sustained anthropological study. Such approaches among the Blackfoot tend to impart information about traditional views that is in many cases derived from the existing ethnographies of the confederacy and other northern Plains tribes. It is clear that the Blackfoot, as are many Native American tribes, are reconstructing their own past from documentary evidence that was collected at the turn of the century.

It is nevertheless apparent that this reconstruction is taking place within a framework which is different from that applied in Western criticism, and that it is informed by (and subject to) opinions and ideas stemming from a sense of national identity and of tribe, band, and familial ties and responsibilities. The "family trees" of the Blackfoot, especially those of the more prominent and prestigious families among the northern tribes, are well maintained and trace family links (including oral traditions) which have been passed down through many generations.

The "truth" of these traditions is underscored by the fact that the Blackfoot, even today, still feel one has to have the inherited (or transferred) right to make particular claims, and that the veracity of these will be tested against the knowledge held within other families. Anyone claiming rights to which he or she is not entitled is thus subject to the censure and ridicule of the community. It is in this light that we need to remember that the tales being recorded and preserved at the Tribal Museum in Gleichen are those of Elders who are communally recognised and acknowledged as story-tellers.

Much of my information, including the explanations given in the text, comes from this Elder generation of Blackfoot, particularly from people living on the Northern Piegan and Siksika reservations of Alberta. It is worth noting here, however, that traditions are consistent throughout the Blackfoot nation and, as Wissler already noted, the variations in the tales told by different story-tellers are no greater between the reservations and bands than they are within the bands and families (1908:6). A partial exception can be made for the Southern Piegan of Montana, who have been more heavily influenced by Euroamerican ideals than the northern tribes; but even here the essential structure of Blackfoot story-telling has been retained.

In keeping with the traditional content of this thesis I am unwilling to name the sources for the tales appended here, but some background needs to be given to the tales and to manner of their collection. The traditional tales I have included here are from two informants and were collected in the early 1980s on the Siksika reserve in Alberta, Canada. One of these informants was a full-blood Siksika with status as a minor chief, acknowledged story-teller, and Medicine Bundle Keeper. At the time of collection he was in his late 80s/early 90s. His tales were told in English with various asides to explain different interpretations that might be made if they were related in Blackfoot. He was fluent in both Blackfoot and English. The other traditional informant, then aged 57, claimed full-blood Northern Piegan descent and was an acknowledged story-teller and tribal historian.

Again fully bi-lingual, but relating the tales to me in English. The Pan-Indian tale, The Trickster Cycle, was collected off-reservation during a later visit to Indian Days in Oklahoma from a mixed-blood claiming "Blackfoot" affiliation and registered on the Southern Piegan reservation in Montana. Details of his genealogy were unclear, although he claimed his father was full-blood Piegan. Bi-lingual, speaking modern Blackfoot fluently but not conversant with more archaic terms. Aged between early- to mid-30s. In all cases the tales were written down as they were told to me and the transcribed versions were read back to and approved by the informants.

OLD MAN CHALLENGES COYOTE (Siksika)

Old Man [Napi] had decided that he did not want to have all the trouble of getting his food: he had to make his weapons, he had to hunt, he had to prepare his food by skinning and cleaning it, he had to cook it; all this before he could even think about beginning to eat. This wasn't good enough for Old Man. He didn't want all this work. So he decided that it was time for him to hunt and collect all the animals, all the berries, everything the Indian uses for food, and that he would hoard everything so that he would no longer have the problem of finding his food.

Old Man hunted and collected everything. He walked all around a big lake to collect all the different things that people eat [the story listed all the things he did not collect: this eliminates anything that belongs to water]. All that he was unable to eat immediately he dried and preserved. He hung the buffalo tongues [a delicacy, and formerly used as consecrated food in the Okan (Sun Dance)] high in a tree to keep them away from other animals.

Well, this was fine. When Old Man had finished there was a great pile of bones and entrails. Old Man thought he could not throw these away since the animals would get them and Old Man didn't want to share anything with anyone else; he thought they could get their own food, why should he work for anyone else? So he found a big pot [clay? - explained as an old-time method of making pottery, long in disuse, by placing mud around the outside of a willow basket and baking it]. In this big pot Old Man made a broth from all the remains so nothing was left.

Well, just then coyote came along [coyote was "just an ordinary coyote, not a Trickster"]. Coyote had always been greedy, and when he saw Old Man's food he thought he had to have this. So coyote pretended to be lame and limped up to Old Man. Now, coyote was wearing a shell necklace and when Old Man saw this he thought: "I just have to have that shell necklace."

"I like your necklace, coyote" he said.

"Ummm" said coyote.

A second time Old Man tried. "I would like to have that necklace myself" said Old Man.

"It is a sacred necklace, it is medicine" said coyote.

"I really do want that necklace" said Old Man. "I want to use it to stir my broth. Just let me borrow it for a little while, and then I will give you some broth for letting me use it."

"No" said coyote. "It is medicine. I am the only person who can wear this necklace. No one else is able to wear it."

"Well, then" said Old Man "in that case, if you won't give or lend it to me, I will race you for it." [This is the fourth, sacred, time of asking so coyote could not have refused this request].

"But I'm lame" said coyote "you can see that I am hardly able to walk. I can't possibly race against you."

Anyway, Old Man persuaded coyote that he should race; with coyote's necklace as the prize. He only persuaded coyote by agreeing that coyote should have a head start. Coyote was to go as far ahead as he wanted; when he looked back over his shoulder then Old Man would start to race.

Well, coyote walked far, far ahead and then he looked over his shoulder. This is the reason that coyotes always keep stopping and looking around now.

When Old Man saw coyote looking he began to run. Coyote was limping along and it was not long before Old Man passed him, for although Old Man was an old man he was still very spry and fit. As he ran past coyote he shouted at him and taunted him.

Coyote let him go past and saw him vanish over the top of a hill. Now coyote stopped pretending. He ran around the hill and came out way in front of Old Man. Old Man knew coyote's trick; he knew coyote wasn't lame at all.

Coyote stopped on top of the hill and taunted Old Man. He howled and yelled, and this is the reason that coyote's howl on the tops of hills today. Coyote kept on doing this; he really made fun of Old Man.

Then, when Old Man was exhausted, coyote called all the animals together and between them they ate everything that Old Man had stored away. Old Man thought that the buffalo tongues at least would be safe, but even these were eaten. The mice ran up the trees and ate the meat; all they left were the empty skins hanging from the branches.

OLD MAN AND OLD WOMAN (Northern Piegan)

___ In the beginning Napi travelled about, then he created everything: the earth, the moon, the animals, the people [one male and one female]. Old Woman came along. She did not like everything he had done. They decided that Napi couldn't do just as he wanted, because there were going to be more people in the world. They made more people, and Napi gave them water to drink: the ones he gave black water became the Blackfoot. The others, who had different coloured water, spoke other languages and went away to live somewhere else. Old Woman did not like the fact that people would live forever, because the world would become full up and this would lead to fights.

Napi said he would throw a buffalo chip on the water: if it sank then people would die; if it floated they would only die for four days. Old Woman disagreed. She would throw a stone and if this sank people would die. She threw the stone. Since then people have had to die.

There were many things that Napi wanted to do; but each time Old Woman disagreed and eventually had her own way.

MEN AND WOMEN DECIDE TO MARRY (Northern Piegan)

___ There were originally two tribes of people; one was all men, the other all women. Napi decided to bring the two tribes together so that people could reproduce and multiply.

The chief of the women was a very beautiful person. Napi tried to fool her and pretended that he was chief of the men's tribe, because he wanted to marry her. When the chief of the women came out to choose her husband she was wearing old clothes and her hair was uncombed. She chose Napi but he didn't want her because he thought she was ugly. Then the chief of the women saw through Napi's trick. She told the other women not to choose him, even though he was the most handsome of the men, and as a punishment she turned him into a pine tree which can still be seen on the bank of a river just outside Calgary [This was the

end of Napi's adventures, and after this a second cycle of myths begins in which he is no longer present].

THE SEVEN STARS (Siksika)

After Napi had been turned into a pine tree by the chief of the women there was no one on earth who was able to control things and all kinds of evils began to happen. There were many monsters and other evil things. Their prey all the time was man: man was the food of the monsters.

Something had to be done to stop the monsters from destroying everything. The seven brothers came down from the sky and began to fight them, and when the monsters were finally destroyed the seven brothers went back to their home in the sky. They went to the sky so that the people would always be reminded of them even though they no longer lived on the earth. They are there, the people can see them, but they won't come back to the earth again. Even so, the people will be reminded of them because they can always see them there. The brothers are the seven stars of the Pleiades (Big Dipper).

NATOS TURNS PEOPLE BLACK (Northern Piegan)

After the Star People went away the people had everything good. They had plenty of food, life was easy, and they started to become lazy. They woke up late in the day. The animals were tame. After a while they began to think they could do anything they liked. Then an Indian stole another's wife, and they began to argue: the man whose wife had been stolen was jealous because she wanted to stay with her new husband. Thus the people began to argue among themselves. Then they forgot about the ceremonies the Star People had taught them. They were too busy arguing among themselves to remember. One by one they forgot to offer prayers to Natos. Natos was angry. He decided the people had to be taught a lesson so he stopped in the middle [of the sky]. It became hotter and hotter. The water dried up and they were dying from thirst. The dogs dug holes in the banks [of rivers] which helped the people for a little while, but Natos soon dried up these springs as well. It became hotter and hotter and drier and drier. The people hid in holes and caves, but those that couldn't find shelter were burned by Natos and turned black. There was no night. Then the people started to pray again.

A MODERN TRICKSTER CYCLE (Pan-Indian)

[This cycle refers to Napi as Coyote: a modern designation for the Plains Trickster. Many of the sequences are, however, Blackfoot in origin although a number of intrusive elements are also present which derive from different tribes]

There was a time, they say, when the world was covered with water. Coyote floated on the water's surface. He was bored. So very, very bored. There was nothing for him to do. No one he could talk with. No one he could play tricks on. He yawned and banged his tail against the water's surface, making little waves and ripples. Then he yawned again.

He thought he might as well do something, so he decided to create the world. He sent Otter to fetch mud from the water's bottom; but Otter drowned. Then he sent Beaver; and Beaver drowned. And then he sent Musk-Rat; but Musk-Rat drowned. Now the Red-Eyed Duck tried. Coyote held his breath while Duck was underwater; but he gave up, gasping for air, and still there was no sign of Duck.

He wondered what else he might do, since he was unable to create land without mud. He yawned and looked around. All he could see was water. With a sudden splash Duck, exhausted, appeared at his side clutching a little mud in his foot. Coyote rolled the mud into a ball and dropped it into the water telling it to grow and become land. The mud grew rapidly and soon Coyote could see only land where once there had been only water.

"This is fine," he thought, and set off to explore the new country.

By and by he met Old Woman. They were the only people in the world. Old Woman said, "Now, let us come to an agreement; let us decide how the people shall live." "Well," said Coyote, "I am to have the first say in everything." To this Old Woman agreed, as long as she always had the second say. Then Coyote began to make people and animals; but in everything he did Old Woman always made changes.

"Well," said Coyote, "let the people have eyes and mouths in their faces; but they shall be straight up and down." "No," said Old Woman. "We will not have them that way. We will have the eyes and mouths in their faces, as you say, but they all be set cross-wise." "Well," said Coyote, "the people shall have ten fingers on each hand." "Oh, no," said Old Woman, "that is far too many. They will get in the way. There shall be four fingers and one thumb on each hand." Coyote wanted everything easy; but Old Woman always over-ruled him. So they went on until they had provided for everything in the lives of the people that were to be.

When they had finished creating the world Coyote continued his wandering; he wanted to explore this new world and see what it was like. After a time he was bored with always travelling around by himself. Besides, he felt that Old Woman had made some things far too difficult. Why, before he could enjoy a meal he had to make his weapons, he had to hunt, he had to prepare his food, and then he still had to cook it. All of this before he could think about eating! So he decided to collect everything that he used for food and to hoard it so he would no longer have the trouble of finding his meals. It took several days to prepare all the weapons and traps and bags he would need, and then several more to gather all the food together, and he was quite exhausted when he finished; but he did have a huge pile of food. Coyote was very fond of buffalo tongues, and these he hung in little bags high up in a tree where they would be out of reach of any animals.

"Well, this is fine," he thought when he finally had everything ready. He sat on the ground surrounded by a great pile of bones and entrails. He made a soup from these so that nothing at all was left.

Just then Prairie Wolf, the True Coyote, came along. When he saw the big pile of food he thought he had to have some of it. So he pretended to be lame and came up to Coyote. Well, True Coyote was wearing a necklace, and when Coyote saw this he thought, "I have to have that necklace as my own." "I like your necklace," he said, "I

would like to have it for myself." "It is a magic necklace," said True Coyote, "I am the only person who can wear it." "Well, then I will race you for it."

True Coyote couldn't refuse this request; even so, he protested that he was lame. Coyote persuaded him by agreeing that True Coyote could go as far ahead as he wanted, and when he was ready he should start to run. True Coyote walked far ahead, and then Coyote began to run. True Coyote was limping along and Coyote soon passed him. Now he ran as fast as he could and came out far ahead of Coyote.

When Coyote was worn out, True Coyote called all the animals and between them they ate up all of the stored food. The Mice ran up the branches and ate the buffalo tongues. All they left were the skins. Coyote was very angry at the trick True Coyote had played, and decided to teach him a lesson. He wandered off in search of True Coyote but soon got bored with following his tracks and decided to rest.

It was a very hot day, and Coyote was sweltering beneath his buffalo robe. So he took his robe off and threw it over a large rock that was nearby, saying, "Here, brother; I give you this robe." Then he went on. Soon after he saw black thunderclouds in the distance coming toward him, and decided that he might need his buffalo robe after all. So he went back for it. "I need this robe more than you," he said to Rock. "No," replied Rock, "you gave it to me as a present. I shall keep it. You cannot have it. Rocks never give back presents. If you give anything to a Rock, you cannot take it back." Coyote was angry, and shouted, "Silly Rock. You have been there for years and years with nothing over you; but now you refuse to let me have my robe." He snatched the robe back, telling Rock, "I need this for myself."

So Coyote went on again; but soon he heard a loud noise rushing along. Rock was chasing him. Coyote ran as fast as he could; downhill the Rock almost caught up, but uphill it went slower and Coyote gained a little distance. They chased back and forth over the hills, across streams and rivers, through tangles of thorns and bushes. Coyote was getting tired; yet still Rock rushed on, getting closer and closer.

Coyote saw a big buffalo bull and rushed over to where he stood. "That Rock called you bad names," he said, "and I told him he was a liar and now he wants to kill me." "What did he say?" asked Buffalo. "He said that you were scabby and short-sighted, and that you had bad breath." Buffalo was furious and pawed the ground angrily, snorting as he did so. Then he lowered his horns and charged straight at Rock. Rock rolled right over Buffalo and came on after Coyote.

Coyote ran as fast as he could, and then he saw Grizzly Bear. "Brother Grizzly," yelled Coyote, "that Rock called you bad names and I told him he was a liar. Now he wants to kill me." "What did he say?" asked Grizzly. "He said you were stupid; that you ate your own dung. And that you stink." Grizzly stood up on his back legs with a mighty roar. He was very mean, and he was going to teach Rock a lesson. Rock raced along. Grizzly growled and stood in his path. Rock rolled over Grizzly and came on after Coyote.

Coyote couldn't run much further, but then he saw the Night-Hawks. "Brother Night-Hawks, Rock called you bad names and I said he was a liar. Now he wants to kill me." "What did he say?" they asked. "He said you were bad mothers; that you didn't care for your children."

The Night-Hawks flew high up in the air and then swooped down towards Rock. As they came close to Rock they all shouted "Bo!", and Rock burst into thousands of pieces, scattering small stones all over the earth. "Rocks aren't powerful. As soon as you say 'Bo!' they burst," the Night-Hawks told Coyote. "I know that," said Coyote. "Rock and I were just having fun. Now you've spoiled our game." With that he grabbed the Night-Hawks and twisted their beaks to one side, which is why Night-Hawks today look as if they are smiling.

Some time later, as Coyote was travelling along, he heard a lot of shouting and yelling from behind a hill. At first he thought there must be a great battle going on; the noise was so loud. He crawled on his belly to the top of the hill and cautiously peeked over the top. What he saw wasn't a battle; it was the Indians gathering together for a big dance. Now, Coyote loved dances and celebrations, especially when there were feasts to be attended; and he also wanted to make sure that all the young women of the tribe would notice him and that the warriors would be envious.

He thought very hard about what he should wear to the dance; then caught a jack-rabbit which he turned into a fine white horse. He plaited its mane and tail and painted red hand marks on the horse's flanks. It looked very fine. "What do you want me to do?" asked the horse. "Prance up and down, paw the ground and neigh," said Coyote. Next he gathered bark and leaves. He used the largest leaves to make himself a mountain lion saddle blanket, which he trimmed with fancy trappings made from bark. He made red and green flannel out of leaves, and also a fancy bridle and breast ornament. He used the rest of the bark to make a costume for himself, then he plaited his own hair and tied bells in it. When he looked at his reflection in the lake he felt very proud of his appearance. He really did look very handsome.

Coyote was so fully decorated that he could hardly move, so he rode his horse slowly into the Indian village. People rushed up to admire him, saying "I have to make a pair of leggings like those," or, "Isn't he fine-looking; I wonder what tribe he's from?" Coyote pretended not to hear them; but really he was very flattered. He paraded up and down so that the people could see him. Every so often he would pull tightly on the reins and his horse would paw the ground and neigh loudly. He was enjoying himself so much that he thought he should try to visit the Indians more often. Everybody admired this handsome stranger, especially the young girls, and Coyote felt very proud of himself.

As he rode through the village he passed a group of men playing a gambling game. They all shouted when someone gained a point and Coyote's horse reared suddenly into the air, tipping him off into the mud. His horse turned back into a jack-rabbit and ran off into the trees, leaving Coyote sitting there in the mud surrounded by a great pile of bark and leaves. "Oh! It's just Coyote playing tricks," yelled the people. Coyote couldn't get away from the village quickly enough: he ran and ran, while the people laughed at him.

He felt very angry at the Indians and blamed them for making his horse shie, so he thought he would find a way of getting his own back. He stamped along angrily, thinking of tricks he could play on the Indians; but this was hard work, and he soon became tired and bored. He felt very sleepy, so he laid down on the bank of a river to rest.

Across from where Coyote lay he could see a woman asleep right on the edge of the opposite bank. This was Beaver. Coyote thought about the young women in the Indian's camp, and decided that if he couldn't have his way with them that he would at least try to seduce Beaver. But the river was flowing very swiftly, and although Coyote was a good swimmer he was also a coward. "How can I get to that woman?" he asked himself. He dipped his foot in the water. Not only was the current swift, the water was cold.

Just then, Fish swam by. "Younger Brother," called Coyote, "your skin is so pretty and shiny and you look very much at home in the water." Fish swam over to Coyote. Few people ever bothered to tell him how pretty he was, and he liked to hear more of these compliments. "You're such a good swimmer," said Coyote, while Fish darted back and forth showing off. "I want to send my lariat over to Beaver on the other bank," said Coyote. He said lariat, but what he really meant was that he wanted Fish to carry his penis across the river. "The current is so strong. You are such a good swimmer, would you take it across for me?" Fish was a little worried about agreeing to this request: he was afraid he would be unable to carry it; but he didn't like to say so after Coyote had paid him so many compliments. So he agreed to try. "When you reach Beaver pinch the end gently and then I'll push forward," said Coyote.

Fish really struggled trying to carry this heavy weight, and almost got swept away in the middle of the river. He was carried quite a long way down the river before he managed to get past the middle and start going on toward Beaver. "I thought you were a good swimmer," scolded Coyote, "even I could do better than that. You're just a pretender." Fish was angry when he heard these scolding tones, so instead of taking Coyote's penis to Beaver he placed it beside a thorn bush. Then he pinched the end gently. Coyote was so pleased when he felt the pinch. "Now I'll have a good time," he said, and pushed as hard as he could right into the middle of that thorn bush. Fish swam rapidly away, calling back, "Don't make fun of people who are only trying to help you."

Now Coyote was going on again. Before long he heard that the people were having a dance and that the chief's daughter would decide whom she would marry. He went to the village and listened carefully to what the people were saying. They said that next day the chief's daughter would stop the dance and ask all the young men to remove their breechclouts, and that she would marry the man with the smallest penis. The chief's daughter was very beautiful and Coyote schemed to marry her. Certainly he wouldn't be chosen in this contest since his own penis was so long that he carried it on his back coiled up in a large bag; yet he decided there must be a way she could be tricked into marrying him.

He sat on a hill outside the village and thought about this for a long time. He was deep in thought when Mouse scurried by. "Mouse. Brother Mouse," said Coyote, "Where are you going? Stop and talk with me for just a little while." Mouse tried to hurry past; he didn't trust Coyote. But Coyote held him back. "You have such a small penis, Mouse, and mine is so large. Let's trade for a little while." "Oh, no," squeaked Mouse. "I'm so tiny. I could never carry that huge thing around with me." Coyote picked Mouse up and shook him ever so

hard. "In that case I'll have to kill you," he said. With these threats Coyote persuaded the terrified and reluctant Mouse to swap penises, and at the dance the next day the chief's daughter was delighted when Coyote removed his breechclout. "Oh!" she exclaimed, pointing at Coyote. "It's delightful. It's so tiny you can hardly see it. You have to get ever so close to be able to see it at all. That's the man I'll marry." "Ho!", everyone agreed that Coyote had won the contest.

"Come! Look at this! This person's penis is enormous!" someone shouted from the edge of the village. They all turned around. Mouse was dragging along Coyote's penis, covered in dust. "How is this? Your penis is enormous and your body is so small; it is so much bigger than yourself." They teased Mouse and poked him with sticks. He tried to run away but couldn't move very fast dragging that great thing along with him. "This is not mine," he panted. "Whose is it?" "It is Coyote's. He took mine off with him; this is his. I am trying to walk with it. It's no use; I can't drag it any further."

Then the people turned against Coyote; but he killed Mouse and ran as fast as he could and soon left the people far behind. Some girls in a field tried to stop him; but he promised them presents and they let him go. Then some men tried to stop him; but he told them he was running a race for arrows and they let him go. Coyote ran and ran, until the village was far behind.

He stopped at the edge of a gully to rest and before long noticed a beautiful woman on the other side. He had really been looking forward to marrying the chief's daughter, so now he thought, "Maybe I'll marry this one instead." He called out and the woman looked in his direction. "If you come here I'll show you something important." She came across. She didn't go down into the gully and walk over; she simply spun round and came over to Coyote's side. Coyote liked to show off, so he too spun round as fast as he could.

"I'll marry you," he said. "Yes," she said; but she only said this because she was Whirlwind Woman and no one had been able to marry her before. Perhaps Coyote could; after all he was able to spin quite fast.

Whirlwind Woman's tipi was exceptionally fine, and Coyote looked around in wonder and amazement. It was already beginning to get dark and the sun was just setting; but instead of getting ready for sleep, Whirlwind Woman said, "I'll move camp." She caused the tipi to come down, laid the poles side by side and then rolled up all her belongings and placed them on top. Then she said, "Come now." She made Coyote sit on top; they sat there together. They went rattling and spinning through the trees and thickets, and in the morning she pitched her tipi and gave Coyote some food. "We'll stay here one day," she said. She turned the day into night. "Now it's time to move." As she had done before, so she did again. She spread out the tipi cover, put her belongings inside, and made Coyote sit on top. Then off they went, spinning through the thickets. Coyote was having a hard time. As soon as they stopped Whirlwind Woman turned day into night and off they went again. His eyes were red from lack of sleep. "What can I do to endure this?" he thought. He was looking for a way to escape.

"I'm going to hunt," he said, and went out and killed a black-tailed deer. She cooked the meat and liked it very much; but as soon

as they had eaten she said, "We'll move camp." She arranged her things as before. They spun very fast along a mountain slope. Through the pines. Faster and faster and faster. Coyote was giddy, but still they spun. When at last they stopped Coyote tried to think of a way to escape. "I'll go hunting," he said. But this time he ran away.

Now, Whirlwind Woman was a ghost and ghosts always find what they are looking for. She came after him. Coyote ran until he reached the Gophers' village. "My dear Younger Brothers, look after me. I shall not be able to live much longer." "What shall we do for you?" "You will do something. She is looking for me, she may catch up soon."

Then Whirlwind Woman came to the village. She didn't recognise Coyote because he had turned into a Gopher. "I have been everywhere else, this is the only place I haven't been. He must be here," said Whirlwind Woman. One of the Gophers was an old man. "I'll tell you something," he said to Whirlwind Woman. "You are crazy and bad. Do you know what manner of person your husband is? He is the one who made the animals on this earth; whatever he saw he fooled; he roams about. Do not look for him when you go home, that's what I want you to do." "I'll do it," she said. "I did not know when I married him that he was the one who fools whatever he sees and roams about continually. I divorce him." Gopher told Coyote, "She is not thinking about you anymore; don't do it again, don't think of her." Coyote answered, "I thought I was the one who did whatever he liked; but perhaps I met my match in Whirlwind Woman."

Coyote travelled and for a little while was chastened by his experience with Whirlwind Woman. He even helped some Indians win a gambling game and taught them how to tie knots in their hair. The people were grateful and invited him to a feast; but when he saw the mounds of food he thought, "There must be a way I can get all this for myself."

On the night of the feast Coyote defecated in front of the tipi and told his excrement to wait for a little while and then to shout out "Crowds of warriors!" as loudly as it could. Everyone was waiting for the feast to begin, when suddenly they heard shouting outside the tipi. "Crowds of warriors! Crowds of warriors!" Immediately all the men grabbed their weapons and rushed out of the tipi to meet the enemy they thought was attacking the camp, leaving Coyote to eat as much as he could. He really stuffed himself. Then he crept out of the tipi and waited on the top of a hill so that he could laugh at the people when they realised their mistake. Coyote thought this was a big joke, and felt very pleased with himself.

He travelled around. And then he saw a young man walking along. He had an arrow in one hand and a target in the other, and every time he threw the arrow he would go "Pyu!" He had five arrows. "Pyu! Pyu! Pyu! Pyu! Pyu!" Coyote thought this was marvellous. "That thing is certainly powerful. I want it for my own. Let me have it." "Oh, no," said Farting Boy. "It's mine. I want to keep it." Coyote pleaded until Farting Boy said, "Alright," and gave Coyote the target and arrows. "Come on, throw it." So Coyote threw it. "Pyu!" Then he shot all five arrows. "Pyu! Pyu! Pyu! Pyu! Pyu!" Then Farting Boy said, "I guess I'd better be going." He ran off as fast as he could. He was tired from farting.

Coyote walked on. He shot his arrows. "Pyu! Pyu! Pyu! Pyu! Pyu!" He did this several times. By now Coyote was starting to feel tired of this game. Each time he moved "Pyu!" He was tired of farting. He chased after Farting Boy. "Come here, I want to give you this thing back." He couldn't find Farting Boy, but saw Pine Nut and Huckleberry and asked them how he could get rid of this thing. "Figure it out for yourself," they said, "you'll only end up saying 'that's the one thing I forgot.'"

"Pyu!" went Coyote, and the wind lifted him off the ground. He was thrown through the air, and he had to grab hold of a pine tree to stop himself being blown away. He grabbed a pinon tree. He grabbed a willow tree. "How can I stop this thing?" he asked Willow. "You must throw away the target and arrows," answered Willow. "That is the one thing I certainly forgot," said Coyote.

Then Coyote travelled on until he met a White Man. "I'll fool him," he thought. The White Man was looking for Coyote. "Have you seen Coyote?" he asked. "He's on the other side of the hill." "Can you get him to come here for me?" "Yes. If you lend me your horse I'll ride across the hill and tell him to come over." So the White Man lent Coyote his horse and he rode away over the hill. Soon Coyote came back without the horse. "Where's Coyote?" asked the White Man. "Your horse refused to go further because he couldn't see the shadow of your gun. If you lend me your gun then I can get to where Coyote lives." "Alright," said the White Man, lending Coyote his gun. Soon Coyote came back with neither horse nor gun. "Where's Coyote?" asked the White Man. "Your horse refused to go further because he couldn't see the shadow of the White Man's hat," said Coyote. So the White Man lent him his hat. After a little while Coyote came back with neither horse, nor gun, nor hat. "What is it now? Where's Coyote?" demanded the White Man. "Your horse refused to go further because he couldn't see the shadow of the White Man's coat." So the White Man gave him his coat. Soon the White Man was naked and had nothing more to lend. "I'm sure I'll reach Coyote now," said Coyote, and disappeared over the hill. After a little while Coyote rode back on the White Man's horse, carrying his gun, and wearing his clothes. "I'm Coyote," he called out, and rode off quickly before the White Man could catch him.

With his new horse and fine new clothes Coyote travelled a long, long way; finally reaching a country that he didn't know. It was somewhere he had never been before; but it was warm and full of tall grasses, with gently rolling hills and lots of trees. "This is a fine country," thought Coyote, and set off to explore it. He soon found out that all the men in this country lived in one camp, and all the women lived in another camp. He also found out that the chief of the women was very beautiful, and so he decided to marry her. Coyote went to the men's camp. It was very poor. All the tipis were untidy because the men didn't know how to look after themselves. Coyote sent a message to the women's camp to ask if they could visit so that the women might choose husbands, and the women sent a message back to say that they could.

Now the men began to get ready. Coyote dressed in his finest clothes so that he would make a good impression, and then they went over to the women's camp. All the men stood in a line and then the women came out to choose. Now the chief of the women had on very old

and dirty clothes and none of the men knew who she was. She finally picked out Coyote because of his fine appearance. But Coyote saw many other women who were dressed in beautiful costumes, and when the chief of the women took his hand he rudely pushed her away. He thought she was ugly and didn't want to marry her. The chief of the women went back to her tipi and told the other women, "Don't pick the tall one in the fine clothes." While the other women were choosing husbands she put on her best costume, so that when she came out she looked very beautiful. As soon as Coyote saw her he thought, "Oh! There surely is the chief of the women. I want to be her husband." She came down to the line once more to pick out a husband, and Coyote kept stepping in front of her so that he would be noticed. Everywhere she went, Coyote kept stepping out of the line; but she ignored him and finally chose another. Before long all the men had been chosen except Coyote.

He was very angry; but the chief of the women said, "You think you can fool everyone and do whatever you like. After this you are to be a tree and stand just where you are now." She turned him into a pine tree.

So that was the end of Coyote.

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