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Poet Robert Bly: Shaman of the dark side

Bowman, Lynne Elise Martin, Ph.D.

The University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 1989

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POET ROBERT BLY: SHAMAN OF THE DARK SIDE

by

Lynne Elise Martin Bowman

A Dissertation Submitted to
the Faculty of the Graduate School at
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

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Approved by



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APPROVAL PAGE

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While Robert Bly suggests that the poet's role is rooted in the shaman's, critics have not yet looked at his poetry in light of the shaman's role. Often seen as divided between the private poems and the public, political poems, Bly's work displays not division, but rather the holism of the twofold shamanic vision where mystical journey into dark realms is publically performed in order to heal the tribe.

In his shamanic vision of the dark side, Bly displays a kinship with D. H. Lawrence. In Lawrence's BIRDS, BEASTS AND FLOWERS poems and in many of Bly's poems, deep and detailed images of animals and plants portray attunement with nature and the dark side.

Embodying the apparent differences of Bly's poetry, SLEEPERS JOINING HANDS uses the rhetoric of the shaman's performance to persuade the American tribe that the dark energy and horror of the Vietnam War was an effect of an underlying spiritual imbalance, an over-emphasis on the rational.

Bly often depicts the journey in the image of the speaker "going out" into nature to find the spiritual. The journey movement structures the poems. Leaping and deep images depict the energy of shamanic ecstasy and the connections of nature, body, and tribal past.

The structure of *LOVING A WOMAN IN TWO WORLDS* (1986) embodies the lover's journey toward his beloved "ayami" or shamanic tutelary spirit who enables him, through dark, instinctual desire, to find ecstasy and balanced union. In the union of the "two worlds" of flesh and spirit, man and woman, the lover finds healing.

While some of Bly's poems may fail to journey in their leaping and deep images, the shamanic vision provides Bly with a way to depict the healing he feels his culture needs. In the rhetorical power of journey imagery, persuading by its attunement with nature, spirit, and tribe, Bly engages his readers in the performance of his healing vision of unity.

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INTRODUCTION

Recently, the poet Robert Bly has come of age, so to speak: he has received the hallmarks of acceptance in the academic world. In 1986 alone, Columbia University Press published an introduction to his work by Howard Nelson; Twayne Publishers added a discussion of his work by Richard Sugg to their author's series, and Harper and Row published his SELECTED POEMS. At age sixty, Robert Bly certainly has not longed to receive this acceptance. While holding degrees from Harvard and the Iowa Writer's Workshop, Bly, like poet Gary Snyder of the Beat Generation, chose not to stay in the academic world, in part because of what that world represented to him--western, rational, materialistic, male-centered values. For Bly, the inner, meditative self which might be in touch with other values and worlds or states of being could not be explored in an academic environment. Finishing his degree at Harvard, Bly went to New York City to live, supporting himself with various part-time jobs. There, isolated and alone, he discovered his purpose as a poet (Froiland 35). He had a vision of what he calls the "inward journey" (Sugg 3). From New York, he went on to Iowa to get his master's degree in writing. Upon graduating, he spent a year in Norway on a Fulbright Grant. In Norway he further solidified his purpose. During this return to familial roots (Baker 47-48), Bly read for the

first time the poetry of Georg Trakl, Juan Ramon Jimenez, Pablo Neruda, and other non-English modern poets. In these poets and in ancient myths, Bly found new methods to express what he saw as missing from most American poetry. He found ways to voice the dark, hidden side of things not lit by Apollonian consciousness. For Bly, the dark side is not essentially negative, although it may seem to be. In his Vietnam War poems, it is horrific and deadly, but even in those poems, Bly shows that it is ultimately a necessary, balancing force. He depicts the dark or instinctual realms in his poetry as a part of a whole. Exploring those realms enables him to investigate the whole: light and dark, masculine and feminine.

In this study of Bly, my purpose is to look at his expression and his vision of this terrain. I suggest that in both expression and vision he is like a shaman on a journey. His New York experience most clearly suggests that his poetic vision is shaman-like. Another manifestation of his approach is that he stands outside the academy and outside of the new critical and neo-classical traditions. Unlike most poets in America today, he makes his living giving readings and lectures, not by teaching. As an "outsider," Bly is similar to the shaman who stands outside of the normative role of the tribal hunter.

While Bly himself has suggested that the poet's role is rooted in the shaman's (Froiland 35), a review of the

discussion on Bly reveals that no critic has yet examined the shamanic aspects of his poetry. Neither of the recent books by Sugg and Nelson look at his work this way. Many critics look at the Jungian aspects, some the Romantic, others the surrealist, and still others the mythological aspects of his work; but none thus far has viewed his poems with the shaman's role in mind. George B. Hutchinson has viewed Whitman in this way; while another, Scott Eastham, has looked at Pound as a shaman: both studies reveal aspects of the poets' works--religious, mystical, healing, cultural, and artistic--that might have remained unclear without investigating them as shamanic. Although Hutchinson intended to prove that Whitman was indeed a shaman, I do not intend to prove that Bly is, in reality, a contemporary shaman, but rather that his poetic vision may be better understood in shamanic terms. Bly himself suggests that some real shamanic tasks have devolved onto poets. He says, "Poets give words to the parts of us that cannot speak." Poets journey, like shamans, to other worlds, but perhaps not to quite the same worlds. Poets, according to Bly, go to the dream world, "the inner world or lower world," (Bly, Letter), while shamans go not only there, but also to celestial and demonic realms "where extremely alive and vigorous . . . beings . . . live" (Bly, Letter). I hope to prove that there are clear similarities between poet and shaman, despite the real differences in the depth and the dangers of their journeys.

Therefore, I will speak of Bly as shaman-like, realizing that he is not a shaman. I want to propose that his approach to poetry and his poems are shamanic. Indeed, I will argue that his approach to poetry is rooted in the shaman's function with certain tasks devolved to the poet in contemporary, technological societies. Today the poet voices his concern for the sickness in his "tribe." The poet renews the language of the tribe through mythic images. He vivifies the image to reveal the powerful force of spirit in nature. Through the image, he hopes to heal, not as the doctor-shaman, but as the spirit-healer.

I propose that when we look at Bly's poetry, shamanism is a particularly apt tool. As I will discuss, the shaman's performance and his journey (defined in Chapter One) contribute an unusual binary combination to the shaman which distinguishes him from the priest who is traditional and communal in function and from the mystic who is ecstatic and individual in function. While many see Bly's work as split between the quiet, meditative poems and the wild, political poems, I suggest that the work can be seen as a whole by assessing it as shamanic. First, the shaman's twofold path involves him as a mystic figure who in a trance state, in ecstasy, ascends or descends to the spirit world, and there communes with divine beings. There he learns great truths. But this mystical knowledge is not only for his personal enlightenment. He returns to bring healing knowledge to his

tribe, providing that knowledge in a shamanic performance. And thus the second aspect of shamanism, the communal, reveals the shaman as akin to Plato's ideal rhetorician: when he speaks, he speaks truth, and that truth persuades, because the tribe knows it will heal. My thesis is that Bly's poetry has both this communal, rhetorical aspect and the private mystical aspect: both seemingly separate, unless one looks at his poetry as shamanic.

To define this thesis, the study is divided into five chapters and a conclusion. Chapter One defines and examines the twofold aspects of shamanism--public performance and mystic journey. The discussion outlines the shaman's story: his calling, his role, the trance and journey, the performance and healing. Out of the performance and journey and their ultimate healing purpose, a unique combination of distinctive shamanic attributes arises. Looking at these attributes in Bly's work in this first chapter and throughout this study, I hope to show that his work is shamanic.

Chapter Two is a discussion of one aspect of Bly's poetic lineage which provides a context for his shamanic approach: his kinship with D. H. Lawrence. When a shaman is called and fulfills his vocation, he may be empowered or helped by shamanic forefathers. Henighan suggests a connection between Lawrence and shamanism (610). Also, in one interview, Bly admits a respect for Lawrence and a specific prose influence: Lawrence's *FANTASIA OF THE*

UNCONSCIOUS. While a case for direct influence on his poetry cannot be made, I think that a good one can be made that Bly has fallen heir to many of Lawrence's ideas, whether by conscious or unconscious nurture or by similarity of nature. Both poets are nourished by the Romantic tradition which Henighan sees as linked to shamanism (607-09). Both poets pay homage to Blake and to Whitman who also lay a poetic groundwork for Bly's shamanic approach (Hutchinson). In this second chapter, I intend to show the kinship between Bly's and Lawrence's works by using Lawrence's book of poetry, BIRDS, BEASTS AND FLOWERS (1923), as a point of comparison, rather than one of his novels, although shamanic similarities can be found there as well (Bynum).

Chapter Three is a discussion of Bly's rhetorical power as a shamanic poet and mythmaker in SLEEPERS JOINING HANDS (SLEEPERS) (1973). A rhetorical analysis of some of the poems in this book is particularly appropriate because these poems are part of the public debate on the Vietnam War. Bly's readings during that time were extremely popular (Sugg 71). He has a dramatic flair in reading that reinforces what the poems "perform" on the page. Performance and language skills are important aspects of shamanism. They enable the shaman to enter the trance state, to communicate what is happening during the trance state, and to relay knowledge after the journey is over. Similarly, Bly's public rhetoric serves his poetic function quite well. Bly depicts healing

and healing images. The shaman heals himself, tribe, and tribesmen through the holistic power of myth (numinous knowledge). Bly's solution to the division caused by the War and which caused the War (according to Bly) is to unify our divided consciousness through mythic imagery--akin to the knowledge the shaman brings back from his journey. To unify, Bly must bring back myths from the dark side. In SLEEPERS rhetoric and poetry are woven together to make a public, yet poetic statement.

Chapter Four investigates one of Bly's important images: the image of the speaker going out. Simply, the speaker or Bly walks out to the barn; he drives out across the countryside, or he looks out of his writing hut as his spirit flies out. These and similar images are used repeatedly. This idea of "going out" becomes a technique for Bly to get into his poems. In turn, the technique becomes part of his poems' substance and meaning. While "going out" may simply be a habit of diction, I believe it is a key to Bly's shamanic vision. Here is the shaman's journey and its power. The shaman and the poet must go out of the self and out of a particular world view in order to seek and to bring back divine truths. And poet or shaman is empowered by that journey. Paradoxically, the journey begins, not with a real movement out, but with Bly's "inward journey." However, in a poem, this mystical travel may be represented by a physical journey. The technical benefit for Bly is that such journeys

provide a structuring device for his poems. Also, the idea of "going out" involves the idea of association. Here I intend to discuss Bly's concern for the associative or deep image and poetry which "leaps," a concern addressed in his book LEAPING POETRY (1972, 1974) and elsewhere.

Chapter Five takes a close look at Bly's most recent book, LOVING A WOMAN IN TWO WORLDS. Published in 1985 by The Dial Press, it is not covered by either Nelson or Sugg because it is so recent. Here I hope not only to provide a reader's guide to this new work, but also to show how this book of love poems reveals Bly's shamanic vision. Because these love poems reflect the very personal and private Bly, they are more in touch with the mystical aspect of shamanism. The poems speak of the dark side which one can discover through love, and they speak of the idea of holism: the balancing unification of man and woman, human and natural, physical and spiritual, dark and light. This idea of integration is one which shaman Agnes Whistling Elk has revealed to Lynn V. Andrews as crucial to the formation of the shaman (MEDICINE 57; Letter), an idea which is corroborated by anthropologist Douglas Sharon in his study of a Peruvian shaman (139-41). If nothing else, Bly's shamanic vision is one which seeks, by associative techniques, to unify, to balance. In LOVING A WOMAN, this vision unfolds in the integrating power of love.

Finally, the conclusion assesses how the shamanic vision

serves Bly as a poet. How do the shamanic elements function in the poems? Are the shamanic journey and performance central to the poetry, or are they only superficial aspects? What is the healing message of his poetic journey? How is that message conveyed in the poems? When his power to integrate or attune fails, do the poems fail? I will be examining these questions here and throughout to define Bly's success as a shamanic poet.

CHAPTER I

THE SHAMAN AND THE POET

"One of the greatest shocks to poetry in the last one hundred years has been the recognition that the old poet was connected with the shaman, not with being the spokesman for the moral order."--Robert Bly

"In modern contemporary poetry, examples could be found to label some modern poets as a continuation or extension of shamanic traditions--employing songs as a psycho-social healing method even today."--E. Zola, THE WRITER AND THE SHAMAN (in Hoppal 92)

To demonstrate how Robert Bly's work grows out of a shamanistic vision, I will first examine the typical shaman's story. I divide the story into five sections: a definition of the shaman's role, his calling to the role and training in it, his initiation, his journey, and his performance. In each section, I will highlight the attributes which may be used to define a poet's work as shamanic. There are essentially eleven of these attributes or touchstones: 1) healing work, 2) ecstasy (part of journeying), 3) journeying (including flight), 4) attunement with nature and assistance from nature-spirits, 5) attunement with the tribe and its heritage and help from ancestor-spirits, 6) discovery, creation, and use of myth and mythic energies, 7) performance abilities (including his use of masks and costumes), 8) use of sound with instruments (especially the drum) and secret languages (both performance abilities of particular

applicability to the shamanic poet), 9) being both called to and trained in the profession, 10) the initiation, and most importantly, 11) the vision of all worlds as one. All these elements are important in assessing the shamanic, so they must first be understood within the shaman's story. A more detailed discussion of the shamanic poet and of Bly will come afterwards. For the shaman, all the elements work together to help him heal. All work together to reinforce his unifying perspective. And, in turn, that perspective assists him in entering ecstasy, in journeying, attuning, performing, being called, trained, initiated, and in uncovering unity among worlds.

The Role of the Shaman

First a brief definition of the shaman's role is necessary. Within the tribe, the shaman functions as a healer in various ways. He may heal an individual of a physical sickness or of an emotional or psychological problem. He may heal relationships: marital, sibling, parental. He may help a couple to have a child or provide words from the dead for grief-stricken relatives. He may be called to assist the tribe as a whole: to find game, to fight enemies, to fight plague. And perhaps most importantly, he may assist the tribe in times of change to find a new way to survive (Hutchinson xxii). In order to heal his tribe, individually

or collectively, the shaman journeys to the spiritual realm to find healing answers, and returns to perform his journey and its discoveries. He is able to journey by going into an ecstatic trance.

In the past, anthropologists and theologians have considered the shaman's role to be primitive and tribal, and in its pristine form, archaic. However, today, there has been a change in that view due to new studies and findings. Much of this increased study and interest has been due to the extensive work (in religious studies) of Mircea Eliade. Despite his view of shamanism as archaic in his classic work, SHAMANISM: ARCHAIC TECHNIQUES OF ECSTASY, he does show the complexity of the shaman's role as a technician of ecstasy. Today's religious studies, anthropological field studies of shamans, and medical studies of mind-body healing (Achterberg 103-24; Borysenko), all support Eliade in his respect for the shaman (and the shaman's techniques) as more than a mere imposter. Studies like Stephen Larsen's THE SHAMAN'S DOORWAY: OPENING THE MYTHIC IMAGINATION TO CONTEMPORARY CONSCIOUSNESS and Douglas Sharon's anthropological study of a contemporary Peruvian shaman argue that the shaman's role is neither solely archaic nor merely technical, but that divine contact, truth, and contemporary existence and relevance should also be emphasized. Indeed, field studies such as Sharon's, John A. Grim's THE SHAMAN: PATTERNS OF SIBERIAN AND OJIBWAY HEALING, and Carlos Casteneda's popular THE TEACHINGS

OF DON JUAN: A YAQUI WAY OF KNOWLEDGE reveal that the shaman's role exists today in technological as well as in primitive societies. It is not only archaic, but also contemporary and viable (Grim 16, Harner 3-16). All scholars seem to agree that the shaman, whether archaic or contemporary, finds the unity between the mundane and the divine through ecstasy.

Michael Harner's definition provides a current and thorough assessment of the shaman's role:

. . . he or she is someone who enters an altered state of consciousness (which I have called the shamanic state of consciousness, or SSC), usually induced by monotonous drumming or other percussion sound, in order to make journeys for a variety of purposes in what are technically called the Lower and Upper Worlds. These other worlds accessible to the shaman in the SSC are regarded as an alternate reality, and the shaman's purpose in journeying to it in the SSC is to interact consciously with certain guardian powers or spirits there, which are usually perceived as power animals. The shaman solicits the friendship and aid of such power animals in order to help other people in various ways, and he or she may also have spiritual teachers in this hidden reality who give advice, instruction, and other forms of assistance (Harner 3).

John A. Grim defines the role more simply: "The shaman is the person, male or female, who experiences, absorbs, and communicates a special mode of sustaining healing power" (3).

Thus the shaman's experience of alternate or geopsychic (Houston xiii) realities is not his ultimate goal as it is for the mystic, but rather his goal is to use the knowledge gained from his journey in those realities in order to help or to heal. How he learns to use this healing knowledge is a process which is part of his calling, of his initiation, and of his training.

The Calling

The shaman is usually called to his role through some type of spontaneous election by divine forces perceived as gods or spirits (Eliade, SHAMANISM 13). This election may be recognized by the future shaman's strange behavior, by his unusual dreams or visions, by his moodiness or depression, or by his seeking solitude, isolating himself, or by any number of other atypical behaviors commonly termed "shaman's disease" (Eliade, SHAMANISM 33). Some scholars suggest that shamans are merely sufferers of some type of psychopathology; however, Eliade holds that the true shaman is not a shaman simply by suffering the "disease," but by subsequently being able to heal himself (SHAMANISM 15). The election is verified by the shaman's return to wholeness. This wholeness comes when, in the solitude the elected has sought, some vision arrives which heals his disease. Later he will heal others by repeating, in variant ways, the process he went through to heal himself (Nachtigall 316).

While the initial election may be involuntary, one is not a shaman simply by the calling, but also by the training in the profession (Eliade SHAMANISM 13). A shaman is trained essentially by two methods: the ecstatic, including dreams and trances; and the traditional, including techniques, names

and functions of spirits, myths, clan genealogies, and secret languages of other realms. This idea that the shaman is a professional, trained and called, is important, for it implies sanction and esteem both by the shamanic community (fellow shamans) and by the spirit world. While Eliade certainly implies that the shaman is a professional who practices learned "techniques of ecstasy," A. Bharati has a detailed discussion of this concept of the shaman as a professional. Just as other professionals are recruited by both fellow professionals (including family) and inner guidance or personal choice, so is the shaman (86). Then, too, the shaman is one of a body of persons engaged in a calling, a vocation (73).

Like any professional, the shaman has control of his own time. He is self-directed. Yet while he is independent, he practices under the protection of some norms established (formally and/or informally) within the profession. Such professional norms prevent a simple lay evaluation of his success (76). Some esoteric knowledge is necessary to evaluate him. Thus the client's (individual's or tribe's) goals in healing may not, at least on the surface, be the same goals as those the shaman works to fulfill, for his goals are established by contact with other realms of knowledge (76). In regards to the poet, Shelley might see an affinity between this definition of the professional shaman and his own definition of the poet in A DEFENSE OF POETRY.

For Shelley, poets participate in the eternal, have the best minds, are knights among the ordinary members of the tribe. Certainly the goals of poetry are not to be judged by ordinary minds, yet poetry and the poet exist to inspire others, to bring prophecy (Shelley in Perkins 1072-1087), which can also heal. The shaman also functions in this way. Both "professionals" bring back healing messages from the divine.

This understanding of the shaman as a professional, called by the sacred and trained by elder shamans, does indeed reveal a number of parallels between the shaman's role and the poet's. The professional shaman is the trained technician of a culture's guiding myths. Through his ecstatic vision, the shaman guards, transmits, and cultivates changes in his culture's mythology (Campbell in Feinstein 267-68). Myth is the interface between the sacred and the mundane, between the formless (yet to be formed) and the formed (Campbell, MASKS 55). Thus myth renders forms through which the "formless Form of forms," or divine, can be known. This function of myth is like the function of poetry, according to Gerhart Hauptmann, for poetry is the "art of causing the Word to resound behind words," enabling them to shimmer with divine meaning (in Campbell, MASKS 55).

The shaman and the poet both work with myth. The poet uses myth in his art and may rework myths or develop new ones to represent his imaginative impulses. The shaman journeys

to the realm of myth where he discovers new myths. The shaman is called by the divine, trained in the mundane, and taught to travel between the two realms so that he can guard, transmit and/or make changes in the myths of his tribe--the myths which are the interface between the two realms. The poet, likewise, must "travel" between realms--at least he must travel from the realm of ordinary thought to the realm of his imagination. The journeys have similarities, but are not equivalent. The poet travels to his own imagination, but the shaman travels to what the tradition considers a literal, geo-psychic place (Houston xiii) or "non-ordinary reality" (Castaneda 185).

But the similarities are still significant, for both poet and shaman make the journey to and from a place of primary meaning. And both are not only called to do so, but also trained. Any good poet must study the forms and techniques of his "trade." He reads and listens to other poets' work, just as the novice shaman studies with the elder shaman/s. Of course, both may train formally or informally. For shaman and poet, the training insures that the journey to other realms can be made successfully, even safely (madness being not uncommon in each "profession"). Success means that the new forms or the new words, that the new knowledge can be presented with skill, and perhaps can influence the community. Both shaman and poet seek to translate their journeys to other realms into terms meaningful for the tribe or audience.

The Initiation

Part of the process of becoming a shaman is the threshold initiation. This may first be part of the shaman's spontaneous election by the divine, part of his instruction by a teacher-shaman (Campbell, MASKS 265), and/or come later in a public initiation (Eliade, SHAMANISM 205). The initiation is a transformation and involves one of the basic transforming symbols, that of death and rebirth. In many cultures the shaman is symbolically dismembered so that he may be reborn with a new spiritual body (Larsen 62-63). In spontaneous election, the future shaman may experience this transformation as terrible visions of dismemberment (Campbell, MASKS 265). The shaman's body may be "cut up" and parts fed to demons and ancestors who may cause diseases so that he may later heal those diseases (Eliade 203).

In the Inuit Eskimo culture, an animal spirit may wound and devour the shaman so that new flesh may grow--thus the term "wounded healer" for the shaman (Halifax 215-216)--or the shaman's brain may be removed so that a new, more clever brain may take its place. Or the shaman is reduced to a skeleton to which the soul is attached and then he is remade (Eliade 203). This is the central image of the initiation act, rite, and vision: the sacrifice of the man that he may be transformed into the shaman. It is easy to see in this shamanic image the origins of the Christ figure: the wounded

healer, the physical body sacrificed to be reborn in the spiritual.

After the shaman is transformed, he experiences magical flight, or some type of revelatory journey up and/or down the axis mundi to the other cosmic regions (Eliade, SHAMANISM 141). From the journey, he gains sacred power and may "bring back" a power object and may have established relations with helping spirits, often animals or parts of the natural world (Eliade, SHAMANISM 99-107). This experience and gain of power can be seen in, and has been documented as, a real increase in the shaman's physical and mental energies and abilities (Campbell, MASKS 253). In his magical journey, which takes place in a trance state ("Shamanic State of Consciousness-- SSC" (Harner 3)), the shaman breaks through the plane/s between the cosmic zones. Those zones are joined by the "axis mundi" which is imaged as the World Tree, Mountain, Ladder, Tent-pole, Pillar of the Sky, Staircase, Rope, Bridge, Hill or Mountain (Eliade, SHAMANISM 259-287 and Houston ix). The vertical direction of his journey represents an altered state of consciousness--SSC, a movement into a new dimension, a geo-psychic realm (Houston xiii).

The initiatory flight or other type of journey is an act of transcendence (Larsen 66) which begins energizing the shaman with the power of divine truth and healing. Through that power he first may heal himself through sacrifice, wounding, and rebirth, and later, time after time, heal his tribesmen,

individually and collectively. The shamanic poet may use initiatory imagery and the "leaping" perceptions of "flight" in poems. For instance, Bly uses "leaping," associative imagery in his poetry (LEAPING 28, 86).

The Journey

From his initiation on, the journey to spiritual or mythic realms is crucial to the shaman's role and function. In these realms the shaman is imbued with sacred power and gains healing knowledge. On the journey he encounters his spiritual allies, often animals, and faces the dangers of chaos, the formless realm of myth. These are vast realms of non-ordinary consciousness (Swan 156). Jean Houston suggests that the shaman encounters what the Sufis call "mundus imaginalis" as a real universe. It is a geopsychic realm "experienced only by those who exercise psychospiritual senses" (xiii). The shaman's training provides extensive exercise in those senses, so the master shaman has great expertise in travelling those realms and returning, not mad, not crazy, but more vital because he is connected, not merely to himself and to his tribe, but to the universe (Campbell in Larsen 80). He is able to see behind forms and opposites to the "secret ties that unite opposites (Larsen 158). As indicated earlier, once the shaman has completed his initiation, especially his first journey, he is usually healthier, more

energetic, and more intelligent than his fellow tribesmen (Campbell, MASKS 253). This surfeit of energy is continually documented in field anthropology studies such as Douglas Sharon's study of Eduardo or Carlos Castaneda's study of Don Juan. Thus the journey to other realms, while it may be dangerous and chaotic, is also energizing and empowering (Eliade, SHAMANISM 29-30). For the shamanic poet, the journey of the creative process may be energizing, and the creative product, the poem, may be full of energy either in the imagery or in the form.

Unlike the priest's enactment of a traditional ritual, the shaman's journey, while having traditional forms and trappings, is always unique. Each journey is made for a specific healing purpose, as the primary, catalytic initiation journey is made for self-healing. Any journey may be re-enacted in the performance, and this re-enactment will be discussed later. While no other person can see the shaman on his journey into these realms, the community often does witness the preparations for the journey and later usually witnesses the performance of the travelling. During the actual journey, after he has left this realm for divine realms by way of the World Tree, the tent-pole, or the pillar of the house or sky, the shaman may appear as if he is dead, lying in the deep trance state of SSC.

As Harner indicates in his definition, the shaman prepares for his journey by using several tools and

techniques (3). Indeed, part of the performance itself can be the preparations for the journey. First, the shaman wears a costume made with symbols of spiritual power. Bones may represent the tribe's game or the dis-memberment of initiation. Feathers may represent the spiritual power of some favored bird (e.g., the eagle) and/or the power of shamanic flight. The costume may include images from the initiatory journey and from other journeys. Such images represent the shaman's powers in the sacred realm and assist him on new journeys. Second, the shaman may wear a mask of some animal or other spirit which, like the costume, depicts his special powers and helps him on his journey. Third, he may dance to induce or enhance the trance process. Fourth, he chants and plays rhythmic instruments also to induce or enhance the trance process. The instrument most widely used is the drum, but rattles are also common. The rhythmic sounds of the shaman have been shown actually to induce trance states or SSC (Harner 3).

These preparations are important shamanic tools and prove important for the shamanic poet, either metaphorically or literally. Although the poet may not be making a display of power, as the shaman is, the imagery of animal and other spirits, including ancestors, can become so prevalent as to be called typical of shamanic poems. The embodiment of mythic creatures in poetic imagery is akin to the shaman's use of the costume and the mask. In addition, and just as

importantly, the poet uses sound to enhance his words and his depiction of his imaginative journey in the poem. Through these particular techniques of imagery, connected with animal, divine, or ancestral totems, and through techniques of sound, the poet may display some insights related to the techniques and to a shamanic worldview.

A real tree (alive or cut and brought into the structure), tent pole, ladder, house pillar, or other real item may be climbed by the shaman before and/or after his journey to prepare him for it or to reenact it. The real trees, ladders, and other things are the mundane symbols for the sacred images of the axis mundi--the World Tree, Ladder, Pole. This axis connects the worlds of spirit with the ordinary, physical world. Along it, the shaman travels, breaking through the planes to sacred realms (Eliade 259-287). The vertical images reveal that sacred space and time are connected to mundane space and time (Houston ix). All are openings between worlds, places where prayers may be sent up, or where, for the shaman, the journey begins (Houston ix). In any case, by his journey, the shaman transforms the mythological symbol of the axis into a concrete mystical experience (Eliade 32). One might say that the shaman uses "symbolic mimesis" by climbing the tree or tent pole to represent his spiritual journey for his tribe (Lewis, RELIGION IN CONTEXT 87).

While he is in his ecstatic trance, he journeys to other

realms which he first encountered when he was called and when he was initiated. In trance, while travelling, he communicates with representatives of these other worlds, often animal spirits or spirits of the dead who may accompany and help him (Eliade 85-93). These spirits assist him on an ongoing basis from his initiation throughout the practice of his art. These are what he depicts on his costume and in his masks, taking on their power to protect and help him. The power animals are familiar native creatures, part of the tribe's environment such as the eagle, the wolf (Eliade 145-157), the bear, or even the salmon (for northwest American Indians). Even in the shaman's representations of the spiritual world, that world's unity with the natural world is clear. The shamanic poet's imagery reflects a similar unity.

In addition to his apparel, the shaman speaks secret languages, unknown to the tribe, to indicate that there are helping spirits present. The shaman's dance also may be used to indicate the spirits' presence or to represent encounters and adventures in other realms. Along with the drumming, these languages and the dance in part enable the journey and depict it. Thus sound and rhythm are very important to the shaman, for they are crucial to the healing journey. So too are sound and rhythm important for the shamanic poet. Of course, they are important to any poet, but for the shamanic poet they serve to emphasize the journey imagery. They sometimes enhance a sense of a present, dramatic moment,

making the poem seem a reenactment or documentation of a real journey.

Apparel, sound, and rhythmic devices may also represent ancestor spirits. In the shaman's representations of ancestors, he invokes familial and tribal history. Thus, in addition to that of nature and spirit, he depicts and reveals two more aspects of unity: tribe and spirit, present and past. The shamanic poet depicts these unities as well.

On the journey, the shaman's spirits assist him in encounters with divine beings or with demons, each of which he must deal with appropriately in communication and action so that he survives to bring back some healing knowledge to his tribe from those chaotic realms. It is important to note that the energies in these geopsychic realms are formed by the visioning power of the shaman: he is trained to make sense of what he sees there, thus bringing forms out of the formless energy, messages for his people.

The shaman journeys to these divine realms to find a specific solution to an individual or tribal problem. The knowledge he comes back with is unpredictable, often new and not based in the fixed perceptions, well-established myths, or social habits of his tribe. Improvisation is a necessary part of his work in relaying these non-ordinary perceptions and varied journeys. He may go to seek out healing for a sick individual or to find where a herd of buffalo are to be found to feed his tribe, or to find out why there is drought,

or to accompany a dead person's soul from this middle earth to its place in the sacred realms. In each varied case, the shaman seeks to find the underlying spiritual cause of the individual or tribal problem. Solutions are not as simple as offering a vaccine or "potion," unless taking such "medicine" will enable the individual (or tribe) to address the underlying spiritual cause (Feinstein 273). The shaman heals by a mythological and holistic approach, and thus his journey to the regions where myths arise is necessary.

Through the journey in his poems, a shamanic poet depicts the holistic relationship of body and spirit (and similar apparent dualities). He may depict healing in the poem, and indeed, he may hope to heal his audience by showing unity. However, whether or not the poet actually heals is not the determining factor in defining him as shamanic, as the principle is for the shaman.

When working for the tribe as a whole, the shaman often journeys in search of game. Through such journeys, the shaman nourishes the tribe not only by finding where to send the hunters, but also by providing rich stories of his adventures and a vision of renewal. The tribe is nourished physically, culturally, and spiritually.

One example of a game-seeking journey is that of an Eskimo shaman who travels "undersea" to encounter the Mother of Sea Beasts. Hoping she will not devour him, he asks her where the fish and sea lions will be (Rasmussen in Eliade

289). His journey to find food not only "heals" the tribe of starvation, but also heals the "wound" created when man must kill to eat (Campbell, POWER, Part I). While killing game is a necessity in a hunting culture, it also means depletion of the food source. The shaman's supplication, encounter, and communication with the spirit of the game provides the tribe with a method of renewal. It is the shaman who enables this renewal by his contact with that natural and spiritual source, and the tribe is reassured, spiritually and physically, of its life source. This renewal principle can be applied to agriculturally based communities too: where plants are the basic food source, the spirit of the plant is encountered; e.g., maize. The shaman's communication reveals the spiritual relationship between hunter and hunted, or grown and harvested (Campbell, POWER, Part I). Thus the shaman's journey is a participation in and a reverence for all life: the life of the tribe, the life of animals and plants, the life of the body and of the spirit. In the shamanic worldview, all are connected.

Another example of a typical shamanic journey is the journey taken to seek a cure for a sick person. The illness may be the result of a violation of some taboo, a violation as yet undiscovered. Violating taboos is understood to create a disorder in the sacred realms resulting in earthly difficulties, so the shaman must travel to the sacred to find out what will establish balance again or a new order (Eliade

289). Balance is especially important for the shaman because, when all is one, if a part is diseased, the whole will be disturbed and out of balance. Thus the shaman tries to heal not only for the sake of the individual or of the tribe, but also for the sake of the whole.

Illness also may result from the person's soul being stolen. In such cases, the shaman journeys to retrieve the soul (Eliade 289-290). In a sense, the shaman must find out what is missing in this world and retrieve it from the spiritual world. He brings the soul and/or the cure back from the sacred realm of myth. With all the "parts" in the right "place," balance is restored, and healing achieved. On each journey, the shaman also gains further knowledge of the sacred, with continued healing or renewal for himself and his fellows. It is important to emphasize the sense of "communitas" associated with the shaman's entry into the mythic realms of his journey (Hutchinson xxiv); this entry is often indicated first by the shaman chanting or crying out from his trance, and then through a response by the tribe in chorus (Eliade 294). Tribe, spirit, and nature: the connectedness of all life is important in the shamanic way. The imagery of tribe, spirit, nature, and their interconnections are essential to shamanic poetry.

The Performance

Before and after the shaman's journey, performance is crucial to the communal healing function of the shaman. The shaman must authenticate his journey experience and his healing knowledge by a presentation known as shamanic performance. The shaman's performance is like any poet's presentation of his poems in written or oral form. For the shamanic poet, the presentation of the poems involves specifically shamanic imagery and often appears to document a journey.

First, the performance, or "seance" as Eliade calls it, leads up to the trance when the shaman lies death-like on his own inner journey. In this initial segment, the shaman prepares for the trance. Often he plays an instrument and chants in rhythms documented as capable of inducing altered states of consciousness (Neher 151-160). As discussed in "The Journey," the shaman costumes himself in natural and ancestral symbols of mythic power and speaks with his helpers in secret languages (Eliade 99). He may imitate beasts as part of the preparations and upon his return (Eliade 96-99).

Commonly, he may imitate a bird's song. Eliade says that in tribal languages the words "magic" and "song," "especially song like that of birds--are frequently expressed by the same term" (98). The kinship of the two words seems indicative of the power or "magic" which words in certain

rhythmic and phonetic structures can possess. Such bird imitations certainly have relevance to the lyric (Eliade 510) and its singing qualities, and thus a poem may be said to appear particularly shamanic when it especially employs sound devices of oral tradition and of the shamanic tradition--sounds which, with imagery, conjure up the spiritual power of nature.

Next, the performance includes the trance itself witnessed by the entire tribe or just by an individual's family. Those who witness the shaman's trance may also be in a semi-trance themselves due to the prefatory performance; however, their state does not enable them to journey through the World Tree to the sacred realms as the shaman does (Bogoras 418). Their semi-trance enhances their reception of healing in the finale of the shaman's performance.

The finale of the performance occurs when the shaman returns and enacts what he has learned. Thus the seance or performance duplicates the shaman's initiatory death and resurrection, for each ecstatic trance and awakening is a ritual death and rebirth (Eliade 95). When the shaman returns, resurrected, from the divine (light and dark) realms, he will depict his adventures with the same devices he used in the preparation: dance, animal or other spirit voices, songs, and chants.

In the performance, the costume continues to be of significance. The costume's symbolism does not merely depict

animals or birds; it reveals a "sacred presence," according to Eliade. The costume symbolizes the celestial and/or dark realms and "metaphysic itineraries," and is a "religious microcosm consecrated with spiritual forces" (145). Upon the shaman's return from the realms the costume embodies, that costume, the dance, the sacred language, and the songs all now give power to the healing images which he brings back, just as these devices earlier imbued his trance with the power to reach other realms.

The performance, in one respect, shows the tribe the shaman's ability to contact the realm of myth and the imagination. As suggested, the contact often is made through a close knowledge of nature, as well as of the tribe and of the tribe's history. Nature imbues the shaman with power, and to gain power he studies not only the spirit world, but also the natural. He may go off alone into the forest to make spiritual contact with nature in the form of a vision (Eliade 99-101), or he may stay in his tent and go into trance. In each case, the performance depicts the resulting vision, just as a poem may.

The shaman's vocation is based upon a special ability to return with visions from his quests. But the power of journeying is also given to mystics. How is the shaman different from the mystic? The performance or seance reveals the distinctive difference, for the shaman's performance does not end with the mystical trance (the journey), but with the

shaman's return and performance. Unlike the mystic, the shaman does not journey for his personal knowledge alone, although he does acquire it, but for his tribe's or tribesman's healing (Larsen 9-10). In his performance (depiction) of his journey, in the messages and methods he brings back, the shaman evokes and becomes the channel of the forces and figures of myth. In the performance, the troubled tribe or tribesman is symbolically taken to that realm, to its "eternal present where rebirth brings healing" (Eliade in Giordano 111). The goal is healing, not vision alone.

The shaman, then, bridges the gap on the one hand between mystic and priest, and on the other the difference between priest and doctor. For while he is not a mystic due to the communal healing aspect of his role, neither is he a priest. He is not a member of a recognized religious organization as is the priest. The priest has rank and is the "tenant of office," not one who has power in himself alone. The shaman does have that power, gained from a very personal encounter and from ongoing encounters with the sacred (Campbell, MASKS 231). The priest's ritual is by rote; the shaman's by ever new encounters with the divine.

As Eliade's "technician of the sacred," he is a not only a myth-finder, but a mythmaker (Campbell, POWER, Part I). He goes to the source of myth, that realm of the "a priori" where meanings and forces abound (Wallace Stevens in Cook 260). He finds symbols and words and gives shape to these

unformed energies. In the performance, just as myth itself does, the shaman reveals the connection of the sacred and mundane worlds. The shaman heals by his revelation of unity. He heals by being a conscious conduit (technician, professional) for messages from the sacred, and his performance enacts these messages in a physical way. Through the costumes, masks, dances, tricks, hypnotic rhythms, and songs of performance, he initiates, for a time, those he heals into another way of seeing and being (Schmidt 71-72). The shamanic poet hopes his poems will initiate his readers or listeners into another way of seeing, if not being.

The Shaman and the Poet

Thus in the totality of the mystical journey and the creative, healing, and even rhetorical performance, there are numerous connections between the shaman and the poet who may be described as shamanic. Both shaman and poet, through performance or poem, make a bridge between the mystic realms of myth or imagination (the sacred) and the mundane realm which is renewed and energized by those realms. While the shaman's journey may be more total, involving an altered state of consciousness (SSC) and an altered physical state as well (the trance), the poet by imagining and creating a poem also touches down in unconscious or in Bly's terms the "inner or lower world." The shaman also journeys to this world, but

apparently goes farther into more dangerous terrain.

According to Bly, the shaman's journey is more dangerous than the poet's because the shaman travels with his astral body, not only with his imagination (Bly, letter). The shaman may not return from his death-like trance. His travelling spirit may be overcome by the chaotic realms of divine energies and meaning, whereas the poet in accessing his imaginative, inner world usually does not fear that he will not return.

Yet further parallels might be drawn and a suggestion made that the poet may go too far up or down on his own imaginative axis mundi. Unprepared, he may find madness as the novice shaman often does in his initiatory crisis. One can see Sylvia Plath, John Berryman, Theodore Roethke, and perhaps Samuel Taylor Coleridge as poets whose difficulties were due in part to their creative contact with the mythic realm where powerful a priori forces can overcome those not trained as a shaman. This is not to say that these poets' mental difficulties were necessarily a result of their creative endeavors, nor to suggest that they are necessarily shamanic, but rather to indicate that some poets' creative capabilities and temperaments may make them more sensitive to the chaotic and mythic aspects of imagination.

This kinship between shaman and poet is perhaps deeper than one might at first suspect. In fact, Robert Bly himself claims, based on his readings of Knud Rasmussen's accounts of encounters with Inuit Eskimo shamans (which Eliade also

discusses), that the shaman's role ultimately includes the poet's, as well as the mystic's, the priest's, the doctor's, and the psychiatrist's. According to Bly, only with the advent of civilization did these professions become separate, splintered from the shaman (Froiland 35). Eliade suggests that the pre-ecstatic euphoria, all part of the performance preparing shaman and audience for his trance, is the "one universal source of lyric poetry" (510). Indeed, a new etymology for the word "shaman" has been suggested by V. V. Ivanov, from the Sanskrit word "saman" which means "song" (in Hoppal 92). The invocation of spirits in the performance of the shaman is much like invoking the muse for the poet. The shaman's drumming which induces an altered state is like the rhythmic meter or rhythmic lines of poetry (formed or free). The shaman's use of secret languages, imitation of totem beasts and of bird songs, all are also poetic devices. In both sound and imagery, the shamanic performance and the poetic performance display these similarities. To be legitimately described as shamanic, I propose that the poem must use performance-like devices (rhythms, mythic language, animal imagery, et al) to represent healing and to show the unity of nature, man, and spirit. The poem itself may not heal, but it typically provides images of healing. The shamanic poet may work towards healing, but his success does not depend on it.

Indeed, according to Eliade, all the aspects of the shaman's performance

provide impetus for linguistic creation and the rhythms of lyric poetry. Poetic creation still remains an act of perfect spiritual freedom. Poetry remakes and prolongs language; every poetic language begins by being a secret language; i.e., the creation of a personal universe. The purest poetic act seems to be to re-create language from an inner experience that, like the ecstatic . . . inspiration of "primitives" reveals the essence of things. (501)

Such a pure poetic act, which reveals the essence or unity of things, can be termed "shamanic." While not all poets are shamanic, if the poet depicts the spiritual energies as informing the natural world, he may legitimately be called shamanic. The representation of unity, of healing, of mythic realms, and the importance of nature and of tribe are essential elements in determining if a poet's work is shamanic. However, the depth and type of the poet's participation in mythic realms are quite different from the shaman's. The poet participates in his imagination, not in an altered, ecstatic state. After all, the shaman's role was and is more broadbased than the poet's; for example, physical healing is not the poet's jurisdiction. In order to heal physically and spiritually, the shaman requires more from the forces of myth than the poet requires. But both do depict the mythic realm, either in performance or in poem. When the methods and images of the depiction are similar to the shaman's, then in this aspect the poet's work may be justly deemed shamanic.

Certainly both shaman and poet depict sacred messages. In his study of Whitman as a shaman, George Hutchinson indicates that by assessing the poet's messages, we can see to what extent the poet is aligned with the shamanic vision and even the shamanic function. Hutchinson cites Victor Turner who posits that "culture requires an absence of structure to survive"; that is, the everyday world (culture) requires an antistructure, free from forms and norms, to nourish it, and thus allow it to grow, change, and ultimately survive (Hutchinson xxii). Hutchinson also suggests that Turner's approach be applied to visionary situations, to myth, and also to the symbols of Romantic literature. He places Whitman in the Romantic visionary tradition or lineage in order to show that the visionary poet, like the shaman, brings back messages from the "liminal" world to provide renewal for the mundane and enable it to survive and change (Hutchinson i-xxiii).

Robert Bly and the Shamanic

I suggest that Robert Bly, too, holds the shamanic vision. In ancient times, this vision or viewpoint was solely the shaman's. However, as cultures developed and grew more complex, the shaman's functions not only were continued by the shaman, but also were splintered and inherited by poets, priests, artists, dancers, doctors, psychiatrists, and other professionals. The poet who is shamanic today inherits

certain aspects of the shaman's role. Such work will depict several of the following elements: healing; ecstasy; journeying; attunement with nature, tribe, and ancestors; the mythic; initiatory experiences; and unity. He will also demonstrate some combination of shaman-like performance techniques, including special uses of sound and rhetoric. He may also depict his own shaman-like calling, in addition to revealing his training (if only by writing good poems).

The shamanic poet may also hope to heal spiritually, psychologically, or socially. He may even succeed in healing, as E. Zola suggests in *THE WRITER AND THE SHAMAN* (in Hoppal 92). However, success in healing is not equivalent to success in poetry. A poet is not a shaman. Yet a shamanic poet may have a didactic purpose for his poetry. This purpose may be seen in poems where the poet expresses, implicitly or explicitly, his concern for his "tribe" and his hope for healing. He is a poet who provides culture with a shaman-like portrayal and exploration of sacred unity and balance.

Bly himself indicates that the poet's role is connected with the shaman's and therefore "not with being the spokesman for the moral order" (Froiland 35). Indeed, Eliade says that the shaman is separated from the community by the intensity of his ecstatic experiences and the knowledge he gains thereby. He also says that the shaman, while crucial to the life of the tribe, is nonetheless viewed by the tribe as

dispensable, an outsider, when there is no need for his particular talents (for healing through the ecstatic journey) (8). Certainly Eliade's portrait here places the shaman in a relation to the community not unlike the modern and contemporary poet's: both stand "outside."

Bly apparently sees this outsider position as an advantage, perhaps because from that perspective the poet or the shaman is better able to see his culture, to know it and thus is better able to heal and renew it. In his own life, Bly has removed himself from what is, for the already "outsider" poet, a semblance of being "inside"--the academic life. He makes his living by writing and giving readings, not by teaching. Campbell says that the shaman is indeed isolated from his society, set apart, even feared, by "honest hunters": those who contribute simply in a physical way to the tribe's livelihood (MASKS 249). Therefore, to perform his role, the shaman must be in his world, but not of it, so to speak. In order for him to bring healing and renewal from the divine realms, the shaman has shifted his own wellspring from the tribe to the universe--to the roots of self and of culture (Campbell 253). At the wellspring, the shaman can discover methods, symbols, ideas. He can find new myths which he hopes will heal.

This realignment by the shaman from tribe to universe and the process by which he garners new myths are akin to a particular type of poetic process in which "words rise from

the roots of consciousness to shape themselves in the poet's breath. The poem itself is the only possible form" (Giordano 110). This is a poetic process which includes divine inspiration, divine instinctuality or "Gott natur" (as Bly calls it), and organicism. Bly aligns himself with this sort of process in much of his criticism, notably in NEWS OF THE UNIVERSE: POEMS OF THE TWO-FOLD CONSCIOUSNESS (1979), an anthology of poems with commentaries. In his discussion of the Romantic poets, Bly implicitly reveals his affinity for shamanic qualities. To him, their writing was an attack on the Cartesian view which limits the world by elevating human reason above all: "I think; therefore I am." Bly sees the Romantic poets as "outsiders."

By this description of the Romantics, Bly reveals his own shamanic perspective. His perspective can be discerned especially in his discussion of the German Romantics, where he describes their language as "sensual, elusive, augmentative, argumentative, musical, suggestive, resonant" (3). This statement reveals that Bly sees the Romantics as having an approach to poetry which is like the shaman's approach to his work: both may use symbols, songs, arguments, and any methods which will suggest the spiritual presence behind the shape of ordinary things. To Bly, both may go against the established order to bring to light a healing truth.

While further investigation may argue how the Romantics themselves are shamanic (as Hutchinson suggests), here I

suggest simply that for Bly, the Romantic's approach to poetry is the "outsider's"--organic in form, spiritual in vision, and natural in image. Thus in his view, the Romantics lay poetic groundwork for his own shamanic approach. Whether they are shamanic or not, they "allow" Bly to be so.

In NEWS, Bly suggests that the Romantic vision works to reveal divine energy not only in man, but also in nature; not only in mind, but also in body (4, 31). He cites poems by Blake, Wordsworth, Novalis, Holderlin, and others to make his point. Also, in his own outsider's support of the anti-Cartesian view, he offers another aspect where he sees the Romantics as shamanic, by quoting Wordsworth's call for new images:

. . . the poetry of the period intervening between the publication of PARADISE LOST and the SEASONS does not contain a single new image of external nature; and scarcely presents a familiar one from which it can be inferred that the eye of the Poet had been steadily fixed upon his object, much less that his feeling has urged him to work upon it in the spirit of genuine imagination. To what a low state of knowledge of the most obvious and important phenomena [this poetry] had sunk, is evident from the style in which Dryden has executed a description of Night in one of his Tragedies, and Pope his translation of the celebrated moonlight scene in the ILIAD. (in Bly, NEWS 11)

Although Bly does not use the term "shamanic" here, the focus of his discussion displays an interest in shamanic ideas and attributes. He shows Wordsworth as a shaman-like poet working to heal poetry by revitalizing the image. To him Wordsworth's call is like a call for a new myth (or an

ancient myth made new), emphasizing nature and the poet's eye empowered by the "spirit of genuine imagination." Thus Bly aligns himself with the call where imagination is emphasized over intellect. In this alignment, Bly shows himself, not Wordsworth, to be shamanic. Like the shaman's ecstatic techniques, the poet's imagination, for Bly, is connected to what he calls divine energy, the realm of image and myth.

The shaman works to take his audience or tribe "out of themselves making his ecstasy contagious . . . initiat[ing] people into a changed state so they get a healthy change of perspective, seeing through his eyes " (Schmidt 71-72). As we have seen, the shaman presents this new perspective in his performance, using a rhetorically persuasive stance. The shamanic poet, too, works to take his audience out of themselves and to present a new perspective by using images of the journey and ecstatic vision. And, as I will discuss at length in Chapter Three, the shamanic poet also uses a rhetorically persuasive stance in his poems. Both shaman and shamanic poet give people a mode with which to encounter the numinous or sacred. In order to be able to do this, the poet, like the shaman, is gifted and set apart; he cannot adhere to the values of the norm. Both see outside cultural categories to provide these new perspectives.

Anthropologist Michael Taussig explains the nature of the normative vision in a culture:

. . . time, space, matter, cause, relation, human nature, and society itself are social products created .

. . . just like tools, language, et al. [But] cultures tend to present these categories as "givens" [Things] which are neither "made" nor "found" are taboos . . . and/or repressed memories (in Schmidt 63-66)

The shaman is in touch with taboo and the dark, repressed realms of psyche and culture; he is aware that all those social products are indeed just that--products created, "mental constructs which organize experience" (Schmidt 63-66). Like the journey the shaman takes into chaos, the realm of myth, the poet makes a journey in the creative process of writing a poem which connects to the roots of consciousness (Giordano 110). And certain shamanic poets, such as Bly, try to reveal not only the roots, but to unveil taboo and darkness. In poems like "The Teeth Mother Naked at Last," Bly hopes particularly to pierce America's worldview and to reveal the dark forces underlying it.

Anthropologist Mary Schmidt describes the processes of the poet and the shaman as similar (63-66). She states that the shaman learns to look not at the construct but at the numinous power undergirding it so that he may "not only read, but write society" by bringing new constructs (myths and images) out of the sacred, "undifferentiated," "chaotic" realm (63-66). In her metaphor, one certainly can see a kinship to the poet's process. Like the shaman, the poet seeks to "write" or formulate ideas for "a priori" forces, but for the poet, these forces are those of the imagination. The poet seeks images and names for his imaginative ideas and

experiences. Hutchinson, too, indicates this kinship in his discussion of Whitman as a shamanic poet (xx). In addition, Eliade suggests the parallel in his discussion of shamanism as the origin of lyric poetry, as well as the origin of narrative and dramatic forms (SHAMANISM 510). Hutchinson goes further by saying that great ecstatic poems often include a blend of all three forms (xx). And he suggests the poet is shaman-like because the poet acts as mediator between audience and spiritual realms (imagination, myth, divine energy) as well as between his own internal state and those realms (xx).

As I will discuss in the later chapters, for Bly, the mediation between spirit and self, spirit and audience is the process of writing, the poem itself, and/or the presentation of the poem. The mediation between the poet's own psyche and those realms which engender the poem might be seen as akin to the shaman's preparation for the journey as Eliade suggests, but further might be seen as akin to the shaman's journey. The poet journeys to the imagination to tap what Bly calls divine energy; he journeys to the roots of consciousness. Both statements are metaphorical ways to describe the creative process. Such metaphors themselves make a case for the kinship between Bly and the shaman.

Like the shaman, the shamanic poet may be involved with healing. While Bly's poems almost always present images which participate in a healing process, they sometimes have

the didactic purpose of healing as can be seen in the poems of SLEEPERS JOINING HANDS.

Unlike the shaman in his performance, whether or not the poet actually heals does not determine the success of the poem. In his portrayal of healing, the poet is somewhat like Shelley's "unacknowledged legislator." Like the shaman's healing performance, shamanic poetry may portray healing as individual or communal, and in the latter case, it may take on a "legislative" and especially rhetorical quality. The shamanic poet's art portrays healing in its images and exposition or suggestion of the numinous. He shows healing especially as that which is not figured in social constructs (ideas, modes, models). An example I will discuss in Chapter Three is "The Teeth Mother Naked at Last" (SLEEPERS 18-28). Bly's poem suggests and embodies the fierce power of the mythic "Teeth Mother," and by its depiction moves toward healing (SLEEPERS 29-50). Whether or not the poem heals, the motivation and potential are there.

In NEWS and elsewhere, Bly reveals his shamanic vision by his choices and discussion of not only nineteenth century Romantics, but also more recent poets. One example he provides is particularly important to this discussion because the poet is one of Bly's "mentors," as is D.H. Lawrence who is discussed in Chapter Two. This example is William Butler Yeats. For Bly, Yeats is a shamanic poet revolting against modern technology and rational thought. In 1980, the

publication year of NEWS, Bly says in an interview:

I met an old shaman once. His name was W.B. Yeats. I met him in his books. He stood for values completely different than those that I had understood before then, and one of those was that poetry was written in solitude. (Froiland 35)

Here Bly connects the benefits of the shamanic trance with the values of solitude. Like the shaman, the poet needs to fast from the diet of the everyday world, of the "moral order," of societal constructs. Bly's view that the poet must step outside the normative vision reveals a shamanic stance.

In NEWS, Bly presents an excerpt from Yeats's THE SHADOWY WATERS. To more fully understand Bly's perception of Yeats as shamanic, an examination of the poem's shamanic elements should be helpful:

How shall I name you, immortal, mild, proud shadows?
 I only know that all we know comes from you,
 And that you come from Eden on flying feet.
 Is Eden far away, or do you hide
 From human thought . . . ? Do our woods
 And winds and ponds cover more quiet woods,
 More shining winds, more star glimmering ponds?
 Is Eden out of time and out of space?
 And do you gather about us when pale light

 And winds blowing from flowers, and whirr of feathers
 And the green quiet have uplifted the heart?

I have made this poem for you, that men may read it

 As men in the old times, before the harps began
 Poured out wine for the high invisible ones. (77)

One might see this poem as shamanic for a number of reasons. First, as Bly suggests in NEWS, it goes against the "Old Position" which is what Bly calls the Cartesian or neo-

classical viewpoint, a way of looking at the world as quantifiable, merely physical, and spiritually dead. Yeats is a bit like the trickster shaman (Campbell, MASKS 267-74) pricking pins in the "Old Position's" worldview by his intriguing questions to the realm of sacred "shadows," a realm which does not exist for the Old Position.

Second, in this poem the sacred, numinous energies of the Edenic realms are recognized as Yeats asks, "How shall I name you?" Viewed from Bly's standpoint, this is the creative problem which the shamanic poet must solve, just as the shaman must. When the shaman returns from his journey to the timeless realms, he must solve the problem of how he will represent what he has experienced, how he will name it, sing it, dance it, act it out in his performance. When the poet makes his poem, his performance, how will he represent the energies which his imagination uncovers? Both shaman and shamanic poet encounter very similar problems of mimesis (Eastham 85).

A third way in which Bly's choice of this poem reveals a shamanic understanding is that the poem voices a spiritual depth. It depicts the fullness of things seen and unseen, an idea Bly examines and depicts especially in LOVING A WOMAN IN TWO WORLDS. By its questions, the poem suggests that the things we see in this world are merely the ambassadors from some larger kingdom of unifying and timeless energies. Or, rather, perhaps the things we see are, masks, and the

mystical kingdom is right where we stand.

Also the poem suggests that the sacred realm cannot be defined in ordinary space-time terminology. Yeats implies that the divine realm is eternal, and he also suggests how that eternality is interfused with the everyday: "pale light shining on water and fallen among leaves," "wind blowing." This wind, while among the flowers of this world, is also a wind of the spirit for it "uplifts the heart." This is the shaman's voice reconnecting the tribe with divine energies.

In a 1982 article entitled "Shamans, Tribes, and the Sorcerer's Apprentices: Notes on the Discovery of the Primitive in Modern Poetry," Tom Henighan states that the shaman's role

. . . can be the poet's way of realizing physical and environmental knowledge that western culture has often sacrificed (This role) can be a path to spiritual vision by the most direct means: being open to dreams, spells, visions, prophecies. (617)

In NEWS and elsewhere, Bly extols these means and also says that the rational, Cartesian tradition censors such means. He suggests that he himself uses such means and encourages others to do likewise (Workshop; NEWS). Certainly Bly is using the shaman's role as Henighan suggests the poet may use it. Whether Bly is using the role intentionally or not is debatable, but he is well versed in it, having read Eliade (Bly, Letter) and Knud Rasmussen (NEWS 251, 257; in Froiland 35) on shamans. In addition, Bly frequently speaks of shamans and poets, as I have already indicated. However,

even if he does not consciously intend to use the shaman's role, he displays a taste for shamanic elements in others' poetry and uses shamanic elements in his own poetry. His poems include healing, journeying, nature, and tribal imagery. They employ performance-like techniques and often depict or allude to an underlying spiritual unity.

In NEWS and other position papers as well as in poetry, Bly asserts the shamanic vision of unity versus the analytical or, what he calls, the Cartesian position. He calls for a renewed awareness of the unifying force of the divine in nature and in ourselves, including our own bodies, for example, in his THIS BODY IS MADE OF CAMPHOR AND GOPHERWOOD. In his view of the body, Bly seems akin to Whitman. Indeed Bly includes Whitman in NEWS. Like the Romantics, Whitman may provide Bly with some of the poetic heritage which encourages Bly in taking a position "outside the moral order" (Bly in Froiland 35). However, in his praise of the body and the forces of nature, Bly also displays a kinship with D. H. Lawrence. He includes Lawrence's "The Snake" in NEWS. Like Lawrence, Bly reveals ecstasy over the body of man and of the world.

Thus, while Bly's attack on establishment morality is one of several elements which make him shamanic, his attack has poetic precedence. That he includes such poets in his critical discussions implies their importance for his own poetic endeavors. For example, Bly's praise of Blake's

attack on Aristotle's ANALYTICS in THE MARRIAGE OF HEAVEN AND HELL ("A Memorable Fancy") indicates the importance of such attacks for his own poetic stance (NEWS 33). Certainly, he might view Blake's portrait of an energetic, even praiseworthy Devil in "Proverbs Of Hell" as anti-establishment. Bly's praise of this and other works indicates his inclination for ideas which he sees as anti-establishment. In his own work, this inclination can be seen in the anti-Vietnam and anti-capitalist poems of THE LIGHT AROUND THE BODY and SLEEPERS JOINING HANDS. In these examples, Bly attacks the status quo, the normative vision. When taken with other shaman-like elements in his work, Bly's "outsider's" stance in these and other poems can be seen as part of his use of the shamanic role.

Another way in which a poet may be shamanic is in using journeying images. In NEWS, Bly cites a poem by Goethe which uses such images--"The Holy Longing." Again, his use of Goethe reveals his own affinity with the shaman's role. Here is Goethe's poem:

Distance does not make you falter,
 now, arriving in magic, flying,
 and, finally, insane for the light,
 you are the butterfly and you are gone.

And so long as you haven't experienced
 this: to die and so to grow,
 you are only a troubled guest
 on the dark earth. (NEWS 70)

The images in Goethe's poem suggest a shaman's journey, where the shaman must die and be reborn. The speaker brings back a

healing message which is a warning, reminding us that we do not live by bread alone. But here the speaker brings the message that we all must die and be reborn, not just the shaman.

For Bly, such a message becomes part of shaman-like training and is taken to heart. For him, as a poet, to die and be reborn, to find spiritual bread, means to seek solitude (Bly in Froiland 35). And this use of solitude to seek the spirit is certainly like the shaman's: it is the vision quest. In fact, a 1980 interview provides solid evidence that Bly consciously has taken on the shaman's role in his approach to being a poet. He says that he followed the "old shaman" Yeats's advice, regarding the necessity of solitude--"I spent about three years in solitude (in New York City) as a result of that [reading Yeats]" (Froiland 35). Thus, for Bly, using the shamanic role was part of following a shaman-mentor's dictum.

By taking instruction such as this from a man whom he sees as a shamanic poet, Bly parallels the shamanic pattern of the professional who is not only called, but also trained. As a result of this "training," Bly received a more definitive "calling" than he had previously. During the three solitary years spent in New York City, Bly found his purpose as a poet. He had a vision of what he calls the "inward journey." This experience appears shamanic in type and in terminology. However, it is important to note that in

applying the shaman's pattern to Bly, I am not suggesting that he is in reality a shaman, but rather that he is a poet whose role may have devolved from the shaman's. He can be seen as shaman-like, displaying attributes originating in the shaman's role, a role now often splintered into several others.

In addition to his "training" from Yeats and his vision in New York, Bly uses elements of the shamanic performance, both in reading his poems and in their form and sounds. First, Bly often uses a dulcimer, bousouki, or other instrument at his readings (Bly, Reading; Nelson 50, 238 n31). In this, he is like the shaman who uses drums, rattles, or other instruments to prepare for the trance (Eliade, SHAMANISM 510). As stated in the discussion of the shaman and the poet, Eliade suggests these rhythmic and musical preparations are a "universal source of lyric poetry" as well as of narrative and dramatic modes (510). By using musical instruments and other techniques to be discussed, Bly was at the forefront of "the revival of the poetry reading" (Nelson 49). The reading is a way of tapping into the roots of poetry in sound, including what Nelson calls "incantation" (49). And these roots are shamanic as Bly (Froiland 35) and Eliade (510) suggest.

A second way in which Bly taps these roots is again through sound. In his readings the sound of his voice is basic, and Bly has gone further by memorizing many of his

poems so that the effect is more spontaneous and improvisational. He can respond to his audience in a direct way; in fact, his long poem "Teeth Mother Naked at Last," an anti-Vietnam War poem, was often modified at each public reading (Reading), and continues to be modified even now with updated references to Nicaragua and Central America (SELECTED POEMS audio). In his SELECTED POEMS, Bly says this of oral poetry:

Reciting political poems at Vietnam gatherings, I experienced for the first time in my life the power of spoken or oral poetry. A briefly lasting community springs to life in front of the voice, like a flower opening--it can be a a community either of excitement or of feeling. The community flowers when the poem is spoken in the ancient way--that is, with full sound, with conviction, and with the knowledge that the emotions are not private to the person speaking them.
(62)

Bly's description of the ancient way shows his affinity for the shamanic in his beliefs and his use of shamanic sound in his own poetry readings.

However even when he is not speaking his poems, Bly is working with sound, as of course any poet must, even one of a more neoclassical bent. But for the shamanic poet, sound has a particularly voiced quality.

In "The Teeth Mother" poem, for example, Bly incorporates lines which have the sound and rhythm appropriate for the public, political type of poem that it is. He says that he aimed at the "Smart-Blake- Whitman line" and suggests that this line has rhetorical power and energy derived from the King James Bible. He believes that the line

discuss the positive rhetorical aspects of his poetry in Chapter Three.

In addition to repetition and parallelism, Bly incorporates other methods of sound and rhythm into his poems. In his prose poems, such as those in his books MORNING GLORY and THIS BODY IS MADE OF CAMPHOR AND GOPHERWOOD, he says he likes "the mildly hypnotic rhythms of prose," and again a parallel can be drawn to the hypnotic rhythms which are used in the chants and instrumentation which prepare shaman and audience for the shaman's trance and journey. In fact, Bly cites Yeats on this subject, again paying homage to his shamanic poet-mentor:

Yeats had no doubt; the function of meter . . . is to put us into a trance, so that we can approach one of the far places of the mind; and the poet accordingly chooses the particular rhythm appropriate to the trance he wishes for the reader and for himself. . . . [A prose poet] puts you into a different sort of trance [from the metered poet]. . . . the urgent, alert rhythm of the prose poem prepares us to journey, to cross the border . . . to the other world (SELECTED POEMS 88)

Bly's approach to sound is shamanic. Here Bly reveals a parallel to the shaman's trance and journey which are both public, for the reader, and private, for the poet himself. It is noteworthy that Bly here, as elsewhere, uses the terminology of the shaman--"trance," "journey," "the other world."

Another shamanic sound technique which Bly incorporates in his poetry is the use of what might be termed "secret languages." Some of these are perhaps better termed

techniques which he has adapted from non-western and non-Anglo writers whom he often translates, such as Chinese poets, the Spanish surrealists, and the French. One such method is his use of the French object poem developed by Francis Ponge. Bly includes several of Ponge's poems in NEWS. In his own poems, Bly uses lots of detail as Ponge did to "cross the border" into the world of the "object"--mineral, vegetable, or animal. Such a poem is Bly's "The Starfish," of which the following is a brief excerpt:

It is low tide. Fog. I have climbed down the cliffs from Pierce Ranch to the tide pools. Now the ecstasy of the low tide, kneeling down, alone. In six inches of clear water I notice a purple starfish--with nineteen arms! It is a delicious purple, the color of old carbon paper, or an attic dress . . . at the webs between the arms sometimes a more intense sunset red glows through. The fingers are relaxed . . . some curled up at the tips . . . with delicate rods . . . apparently globes on top of each, as at the world's fairs, waving about (SELECTED POEMS 92)

Bly's examination of the starfish is so detailed and sensitive that the poem partakes in the starfish's world. The poem takes an ecstatic journey into another realm. In "the ecstasy of low tide," the speaker journeys into the world of the starfish, and through the starfish finds not only "otherness" but a sense of "beingness" and of spiritual presence which Bly might rather term "soulful presence" (FOR THE STOMACH audio). Bly's use of fragments and ellipses emphasize the sense of movement into a non-linear, non-rational world. The speaker's is discovering another

order of being, so Bly represents that discovery in the incomplete structures. The structures enhance both the joy and the hesitancy of finding a new world.

While Bly admits the direct influence of Ponge, the Romantics provide additional poetic context for Bly's close attention to the natural world and its spiritual presence. For instance, Keats sees the role of the poet as Adam the namer who awoke and found his imaginings, his dream was truth. Keats, too, writes about taking part in the existence of the sparrow (in Perkins 1208). Keats' view of the sparrow, in a sense, enables Bly to go even farther into non-human realms, into the starfish.

For Keats, it is the imagination which enables one to find truth, not "consequitive reasoning." And, Keats says, "What the imagination seizes as Beauty must be truth--whether or not it existed before" (1208). This idea of empathetic imagination, as well as Ponge's object poems, certainly enable Bly to take a step further in poetic investigation of the world. By another sort of empathetic imagination, the shamanic poet is able to "journey" into other existences and return with the beautiful (or sublime and terrible) image from the other. That image gives us some truth or knowledge which we may not have had before. In fact, the image may give form to what was before formless, a divine and unnamed energy which as Keats says may not have, in this world, "existed before." This is the creative power of the shaman

and the creative approach of the shamanic poet. Bly uses this approach throughout his poetry to be awake to "the sweet sensation of friendship with other worlds" (SELECTED POEMS 26).

Thus, other secret language techniques which he uses are in such poems as "The Starfish" where he tries to attune the voice of the poem to the consciousness or "voice" of various creatures of the natural world. He has written of caterpillars, hawks, horses, and trees. This too is like the shaman who speaks the secret languages of animals or other spirits to reveal his own spiritual contact with these worlds. As I will discuss in Chapter Two, in Bly's explorations of nature one can see the kinship of Bly with D.H. Lawrence, particularly in Lawrence's BIRDS, BEASTS AND FLOWERS. In this book of poetry, Lawrence, like Bly, tries to attune his poems to the consciousness of various creatures. Lawrence calls this "blood consciousness," which dives deep to meet the "other." Certainly any poet, but particularly the shamanic poet, seeks to employ the "esoteric power of language." Language contains a mythic power (Cook 251) to imbue poetry with depth and beautiful truth. Poems which tirelessly investigate the non-human journey to a mythic realm. In that realm animals "speak," and the poem may gain rhetorical power.

One other shaman-like aspect to Bly's poetry is his use of costumes and masks. Especially in his readings of the

late sixties and early seventies when he was making a stand for the oral and public tradition of poetry, urging poems to be read aloud, Bly used flowing robes (Bly, Workshop) and experimented with masks (Nelson 51; Bly, Workshop). The costumes and masks, coupled with the use of the dulcimer [now the bouzouki] and with his memorization of his poems created an ecstatic atmosphere around his poems, dramatically enhancing the lyrics.

While in his more recent public presentations, Bly rarely uses any masks or costume other than a bright-colored red or blue scarf and a snappy vest, he still plays an instrument and speaks or sings his poems mostly from memory. Free from holding a page or book, Bly can improvise a rough dance and sway his arms (Nelson 49) just as the shaman does, chanting in preparation for the journey and in performance of the journey.

Thus Bly, like the shaman, sets a dramatic scene (Eliade, SHAMANISM 510) in which both he and his audience may participate in the poem. This drama is in the poem's content and structure, as well as in Bly's presentation at a reading. Bly's very public anti-Vietnam poetry has this drama on the page as well as on the stage.

Not only the drama, but the lyricism in Bly's poetry portrays the ecstasy of encounters with mythic realms. For the shaman in performance, ecstasy is the source of both drama and lyric (Eliade, SHAMANISM 510). For Bly, ecstatic

encounters with the mythic are depicted in the very public and rhetorical poems such as "Teeth Mother," and they also are depicted in his quieter poems, such as "Starfish." In both types of Bly's poetry, ecstasy is depicted dramatically and lyrically. Eliade suggests that for the shaman, drama persuades the audience that all things are possible, setting the scene for healing to take place (510). Similarly, a poet like Bly may use drama to aid in mediating between audience and poem, external and internal realities (Hutchinson xx).

Hypnotic role theory helps to solidify the connection between the shamanic poet's and the shaman's use of drama. Hypnotic role theory maintains that in ecstasy the shaman is acting a part, a role in a drama (Hutchinson xxvi). He develops the landscape (setting) and spirits (characters) of the celestial and under-worlds and "controls the neuro-physiological mechanisms of his performance according to traditional models" of the ecstatic experience; i.e., every ecstatic trance may be mimetic, just as a poem is (Hutchinson xxvi). Yet, while the forms of poem and performance may be traditional as they are in jazz (Hutchinson xxi), the key to both is improvisation, the creative act (Sharon 22). The shaman's performance is not rigidly standardized and is often innovative. Depending on the tribal situation, the shaman may change his performance tactics. He fits his drama to the purpose. Likewise, the shamanic poem is not in any standard form, and it often

conveys the quality of being written as it is read. Its form will vary with the content.

Bly seems to hope that his poems will perform some healing function as well: to heal his own psyche, to heal his audience's psyche, individually and collectively, by voicing elements, often dark, made dangerous by long suppression, which need acknowledgement. For example, at the time of SLEEPERS in 1973, Bly believed that the American psyche needed to acknowledge or visualize elements of the psyche connected to the "Great Mother," specifically the darker aspects of "Her" which he called the "Teeth Mother" and the "Death Mother" (29-50). In SLEEPERS and throughout his work, Bly uses the shaman's mask to help, even to force, his audience "to reflect on our own existence in a wider, more sharply defined physical, cultural, and environmental context" (Henighan 617).

Conclusion

Thus shamanic techniques and attributes enhance Bly's poetry, offering renewal through some fresh, non-technological, oral approaches. The elements of Bly's poetry arise out of the traditional devices of the shaman. Even though Bly is not a shaman, he finds nourishment for his poetry in the shaman's role.

This is not to say that shamanism, itself, is a static

"art" (of healing) and that the poet, alone, maintains the creative edge. The true shaman improvises within his tradition, just as the poet or jazz musician does, and he does so today much as he did in the past. The contemporary Peruvian shaman or "curanderismo" Eduardo is only one example of the continued vitality and creativity of the profession (Sharon 3, 22). The existence today of North American Ojibway Indian shamans (Grim) also refutes the idea that shamanism is archaic and decadent as Eliade thought.

The viability of the shamanic vision continues in today's world. While Eliade's definition is seminal and remains intact for the most part, shamanism is more than an archaic technique. It is living and changing. The shaman Eduardo is clearly a citizen of the modern world. He lives in cosmopolitan areas, was educated in Catholic schools, and has a wide knowledge of literature, religion, history, mysticism, and the occult. In his shamanic performances, Eduardo constantly improvises. Like Carlos Castaneda's Don Juan, Eduardo is not a naive primitive, but someone who functions with exceptional grace and energy--typically shamanic traits according to Eliade (29)--in a number of worlds (tribal, modern, secular, and sacred) (Sharon). In each of these contemporary cases, the shaman works with the author/pupil to reveal the shaman's way. In a sense, poets like Bly, Gary Snyder, and Jerome Rothenberg are pupils of the shaman too--through their reading of the literature

available on shamanism and through their experimentation with shamanic techniques and ideas. The fact that shamanism, one of the roots of poetry, is still vital shows it to be not only an archaic, but a contemporary resource for poets today. As the shaman's role continues to evolve in the modern world, it is a renewable resource. For the critic, the shaman's role provides a way to look at some poets and their work.

Looking at Bly's poetry as shamanic is particularly appropriate because he employs so many elements of the shaman's role. Bly often depicts healing through images of contraries and balance. He uses images of light and of rational everyday consciousness alongside images of "the black side of intelligence" (LEAPING 6). In striving to balance the normative vision of the everyday mind, he uses images which seem contrary to that vision. His poems explore and emphasize the dark or lesser known side of things. His images often work by "the fantastic freedom of association . . . from ancient art," which he also calls, "the psychic ability to fly" (LEAPING 6). Here too his language is suggestive of shamanism. Through the associative image and and its "ability to fly," to "journey," a poem may depict other realms. Through the use of associative imagery, a poem may take on the structure of a shaman-like journey. The poem may embody healing in its form and content. Leaping imagery attempts to reveal the "inward world" of which Jacob Boehme speaks. In fact, Bly quotes Boehme in the epigraphs of THE

LIGHT AROUND THE BODY. The "inward world" is a dark, yet divine world of soul (SELECTED POEMS audio). Bly is a shamanic poet who brings back knowledge and energy from that dark, unseen realm, in order to provide images of personal and tribal balance and healing. Like the shaman's vision, Bly's poetic vision is holistic in both its private (the journey) and its public (the performance) dimensions.

To clarify my thesis, I suggest that to see Bly's poetry as shamanic will help to resolve the apparently disparate types of poems he writes--the very public and the very private poems. I assert that both types arise from a single vision which is shamanic. As a shamanic poet, Bly sees the world holistically. Working to heal, he uses both communal and personal images to portray holism.

To begin exploring this thesis in depth and in order to show how an earlier poet provides a context for Bly's shamanic work, I have chosen to look at Bly's kinship with D. H. Lawrence. For while Bly mentions Yeats as a shaman-mentor, Bly's poetry may have more affinities with Lawrence. Both he and Lawrence often take an organic approach to form. They both are particularly interested in nature: Lawrence with his painter's eye and Bly with his Minnesota farm upbringing. In addition, they write with a concern for the health of self and of tribe. And finally, in their attunement with nature, spirit, and the dark side, they write depicting unity among human, spiritual, and natural worlds.

CHAPTER II
INFLUENCES AND IMPROVISATIONS:
THE SHAMANIC POETRY OF
D. H. LAWRENCE AND ROBERT BLY

In a 1978 interview by Ekbert Faas, Robert Bly denies that D.H. Lawrence influenced his poetry, yet admits to reading most of Lawrence's poetry after publishing *SILENCE IN THE SNOWY FIELDS* in 1962, early in his career. Faas, however, sees a connection: "But there is all that imagery of going into the depths, into the dark and into the sea of death, etc., which seems exactly like Lawrence" (223). Faas's view of the connection between the two is certainly reminiscent of the shaman's journey. In the shaman's journey to the darker spiritual realms, we might well see some kinship, for while Bly says there is "no link" between Lawrence's poetry and his own, he does reveal that he still learns "much from Lawrence, not from his poetry, but from the motion that he made from the intellect and down into the body." In this statement, we see some direct ties to Lawrence's ideas, if not to his poetry per se. Later in the same interview, Bly states his respect for Lawrence, while admitting a specific prose influence:

The essay in the middle of *SLEEPERS JOINING HANDS* is full of mad generalizations for which I first saw the possibility in *FANTASIA OF THE UNCONSCIOUS*. Why not? A

book of unsupportable generalizations about things that interest us. I don't think my essay would exist without FANTASIA OF THE UNCONSCIOUS. (223)

Bly is improvising on an idea for which Lawrence provided the groundwork: poet and shaman both receive training of a sort, yet both improvise within the tradition as T.S. Eliot suggests of the poet and as we have seen in the discussion of shaman as a professional. Thus, while a case for the direct influence of Lawrence's poetry on Bly's cannot be made, I do say that Faas is on target to suggest a connection. Bly does admit to the heritage of Lawrence's ideas.

Indeed, a case can be made that Bly has inherited a good deal from Lawrence whether by conscious or unconscious nurture or by similarity of nature. The consciousness which Lawrence hoped would establish a new world order is very much alive in Bly. In the foreward to Howard Nelson's introduction to Bly, John Unterecker suggests similar qualities, especially in vocabulary, in Bly's and Lawrence's poems (in Nelson xvii). The voices of both are hopeful and visionary. Bly and Lawrence are shamanic in their approach to poetry. The similarity of their views of Blake, for example, reveals their own similar natures. They both admire Blake for shaman-like qualities: being an outsider and approaching the spiritual through nature and the physical (Bly, NEWS 32, LEAPING 2-5; Lawrence, LITERARY CRITICISM 63). In addition, despite some criticism of Whitman, both show some admiration for shaman-like qualities. Bly pays homage by using the Whit-

manesque line in his shamanic performance poems like "Teeth Mother." Bly uses the line for its oral quality and its rhetorical power. Lawrence admires Whitman for being an outsider and for depicting "the journey down the open road" where the spiritual is found in the earthly (LITERARY CRITICISM 401-402). He admires Whitman for revealing the unity of body and soul (401). Blake and Whitman, the poetic forefathers, provide inspiration for both Bly and Lawrence. They provide a context within the poetic tradition which nourishes Bly and Lawrence in their shamanic approach.

In addition to their similarity of nature, by nurture, both Bly and Lawrence are poets shaped by similar times-- Lawrence by World War I and the industrial age, Bly by Vietnam and the technological age--both times of distressing societal changes, perhaps calling for shaman-like voices to reveal new perspectives, to help shepherd their tribes through change. By nature and by the nurture of their times, each possesses a shamanic vision which engenders poetry in the language of myth, gives voice to spiritual realms, and expresses the dark side of "the other." In addition, shaman-like, they hope to heal themselves and their tribes.

Mutual Influences: Blake, the Romantics, and Whitman

As suggested, both poets pay homage to William Blake, one of their common ancestors. In LEAPING POETRY and NEWS OF THE

UNIVERSE: POEMS OF THE TWO-FOLD CONSCIOUSNESS, Bly discusses the importance of Blake to his own awareness of the "non-human or non-ego energies" of the tradition of associative poetry and night intelligence where the pagan gods are not dead. These pagan gods of myth are akin to shamanic divine spirits. Bly places Lawrence in this tradition, too, saying, "D.H. Lawrence we already know is a Blake disciple" (NEWS 83). Certainly, Lawrence would have agreed. Sandra M. Gilbert suggests Lawrence's kinship with Blake in the poems of BIRDS, BEASTS AND FLOWERS (1923), which she connects to THE MARRIAGE OF HEAVEN AND HELL. She also sees Lawrence as having a "Blakeian outsider's perspective" ("Hell" 257).

This outsider's perspective is, like Bly's, that of the mythmaker, the shaman who travels to other worlds to bring back new or revisioned healing truths. For Lawrence, like Bly, the myths of Orpheus, Pluto, Satan, and other dark deities rise up revisioned as they did for Blake (Gilbert, "Hell" 257). Blake enables the two poets' further questioning of Western Christian traditions. Bly says:

Blake thought the whole [Christian European] nonmenclature insane, the precise reverse of the truth. He wrote SONGS OF INNOCENCE AND EXPERIENCE about that . . . he reversed the poles . . . declared that to be afraid of leap into the unconscious is actually to be in a state of "experience" . . . The state of "experience" is characterized by blocked love-energy . . . (LEAPING 2)

In "Puritanism and the Arts," Lawrence agrees about this sort of block: "Modern morality has its roots in hatred, a deep, evil hate of the instinctive, intuitional, procreative body" (LITERARY CRITICISM 61).

By writing of encounters with and in the body and nature, both poets work to free themselves and others from this rejection of the body and the intuitional resulting from the West's dualism and rigid rationalism. Writing of such encounters portrays a type of shamanic healing, working to balance things and to relay messages from other realms of body and nature. Of course, Lawrence is well known for his novels which show the human body and soul as one, and as part of nature. However, in his poems, especially in BIRDS, BEASTS AND FLOWERS (hereafter BIRDS), Lawrence explores or depicts encounters with "the other" in nature, not just with the human body. Bly explores such encounters with body and nature much of his poetry. He has not published any novels.

In these shamanic journeys "into" body and nature, Bly and Lawrence perhaps owe a more direct debt to the English Romantics led by Wordsworth and to Walt Whitman than they owe to Blake. Blake opened the door to the body's and nature's energy, but he seems more important to Bly and Lawrence for his visionary spirit, his mythmaking, and his mining in dark terrain, than for his approach to real nature.

Nature itself was important to the Romantics, who sought

to engage it with the creative imagination. Coleridge hoped to "overcome the sharp division between the human mind and the external world--a separation of mind and nature that had been widely taken for granted since the time of Descartes" (Perkins 393). The Romantics' use of the creative imagination paves the way for the deeper, primary, and unifying shamanic approach to the poem. Keats lays groundwork for a Bly or Lawrence when he says, ". . . if a Sparrow come before my window, I take part in its existence and pick about the Gravel" (LETTERS 66).

The Romantic vision also has a moral, social aspect, especially in Wordsworth and Shelley. In this aspect, these earlier poets are concerned with the spiritual life of their tribe. They look to the countryside for Rousseau-like answers to the corruptions of city life where "getting and spending, we lay waste our powers." As an alternative to Wordsworth's world that "is too much with us; late and soon," Coleridge planned an ideal society in America. It is the Utopian solution which Shelley wrote of in "Pantisocracy" (in Perkins 398).

Lawrence echoes Keats in his "delicate sympathy for other existences," but goes deeper into those existences than Keats or any Romantic. Lawrence also speaks out courageously on moral and social concerns as the Romantics did (Lucie-Smith 233). Bly, too, in his criticism, calls for a new way of approaching poetry and life, a new way of seeing "the two-fold

consciousness." His own deep exploration of the natural world arises out of his concerns for his tribe. But for Bly and Lawrence this moral concern has shamanic overtones. For them unity of mind and nature comes, not through the "creative imagination" of the mind alone, but through the ecstasy of the body. The body itself is our first doorway to nature. Creative imagination may be involved, but that is only one part of their more holistic shamanic approach.

For the shaman, the world is not a unity: spirit and flesh, mind and body, man and nature, self and society are all of a single fabric. The shamanic vision seeks to transcend opposites, to maintain some equilibrium, and thus to reveal oneness in the cosmos. To achieve this the shaman and the shamanic poet, each in his own way, must confront the dark side (Sharon 139-141).

However, according to Bly, the English Romantics "had no way of visualizing the possibility that the consciousness of nature had a dark side" (NEWS 34). Blake is the exception to this view of the Romantics. He provides a way for Bly and Lawrence to explore the dark side. Blake embraces Hell and Satan, imagining them full of dark and interesting energy. At the same time, he imagines Heaven as light, but passive and uninteresting. In Blake's view, the great Contraries move the universe: male and female, innocence and experience, heaven and especially hell. In *THE MARRIAGE OF HEAVEN AND HELL*, he takes a stance outside cultural perspectives to "assault the

popular images of heaven and hell" (Johnson 81). His outsider's stance provides a poetic precedent for a shamanic viewpoint such as Bly's. Bly's own journeying imagery, discussed in Chapter Four, finds a poetic source in Blake's imagery in MARRIAGE where "the narrator has to pass out of this world in order to recognize the value of the misnamed 'infernal' energies on which all creative life is based" (82).

Not only do they have Blake, Bly and Lawrence have Freud and Jung to help them see the dark side. Indeed, merely living in a post-Freudian world gives them tools which Blake did not have. Also, the modern anthropological studies of primitive cultures have presented both Bly and Lawrence with the shaman's world and his language. For example, Lawrence read Frazer's THE GOLDEN BOUGH (Bynum), and Bly has read Eliade (Letter). Poetry, modern psychology, anthropology all help them dig into the roots of consciousness.

Bly is a bit presumptuous, perhaps, to say that the Romantics "had no way" of getting at the dark side. Wordsworth certainly got close in THE PRELUDE. In fact, Bly published a portion of THE PRELUDE in NEWS, following his statement, which shows us that Wordsworth was perhaps closer than Bly thinks:

. . . I struck and struck again,
 And growing still in stature the grim shape
 Towered up between me and the stars, . . .
 . . . but after I had seen
 That spectacle, for many days, my brain
 Worked with a dim and undetermined sense
 Of unknown modes of being; o'er my thoughts

There hung a darkness...
 . . . No familiar shapes

 But huge and mighty forms, that do not live
 Like living men, moved slowly through the mind (65-66)

But Bly underscores his argument by saying that the human consciousness was still paramount in Wordsworth and that nature was idealized (NEWS 34).

Lawrence speaks similarly of Wordsworth. He suggests that Wordsworth did reveal chaos and rend "the umbrella," yet the focus was still within the confines of the human mind (Murfin 164). In any case, the revelation of chaos, of rending a society's worldview, which Lawrence calls "the umbrella," provides Bly and Lawrence with some precedent for shamanic revelation (Feinstein 267-68). While the shaman heals individuals, he also works to "regenerate the social order" (Houston xiii), to cultivate changes in a society's mythology (Campbell, POWER, Part I). To cultivate changes, he must investigate terrain beyond human rational constructs. Bly's point is that his kind of poet cannot stay in the everyday mind to cultivate such change, that ultimately he must travel to the body, to the spirit, to darker realms. In these realms, the poet can find unity in the cosmos as the shaman does (Sharon 139-141). For Lawrence too, the poet must travel outside the everyday. Lawrence says that poets must "be the enemy of conventions," must make forays into chaos to renew civilization (LITERARY CRITICISM 90-92).

That way to get to the dark side, to the body and to

nature, was paved by Walt Whitman. Like the Romantics and Blake, he too provides Bly and Lawrence with some "training" or at least some poetic messages and techniques which enable their shamanic approach. Like Blake or the Romantics, for Bly and Lawrence, Whitman may be compared to the elder shaman who trains the novice. Lawrence pays homage to Whitman as

the first to break the mental allegiance. He was the first to smash the old moral conception that the soul of man is something "superior" and "above" the flesh . . . the first heroic seer to seize the soul by the scruff of the neck and plant her down among the potsherds
(LITERARY CRITICISM 401)

In Lawrence's view, Whitman seems a shamanic poet who writes poems of an ecstatic vision, a new American myth, which goes against societal norms and conventional "tribal" wisdom (Hutchinson xi et al). Lawrence's discussion reveals Whitman's impact on him. In his view, Whitman's poems become shamanic performances representing a new worldview where body, soul, and nature are rejoined.

Like Whitman, Lawrence and Bly are concerned with the division of consciousness and the problems of a culture which denies at least half of itself. When the body, the unconscious, Bly's mythic Teeth Mother, or the night realms are denied, the results can be disastrous. It can be posited that in Whitman's day such denial led to the Civil War--a savage split between industrial North and agrarian South, a physical and psychic split. Hutchinson suggests that, before and after the War, Whitman sought to mend the divided psyche which caused that war, writing and revising such poems as "Song of Myself," "Drum Taps," "Passage to India."

The Influence of War and the Shamanic Solution: Improvisations

Like Whitman's, Lawrence's and Bly's poetry has been shaped by war--by its cultural, psychological, physical and spiritual causes and effects. Poets such as Whitman enable Bly and Lawrence to speak out, trying to heal, to find a new path which may lead us away from the need for war. In a sense, their poems depict shamanic healing and express what Lawrence calls "blood consciousness" and Bly calls "the Teeth Mother energy." Each poet finds his own shamanic voice and improvises his own performance to fit the time and tribe.

Published in 1923, *BIRDS* reveals one new message which Lawrence "brought back." In these poems, Lawrence seeks to enter into nature and join the non-human world. The poems are like a message which a shaman brings back from his journey to other worlds. Lawrence's "permeation" where "the self becomes suffused by what is being looked at" (Lucie-Smith 225) in these poems is not unlike a shaman's performance, a rendition of the trance, the permeation by another state of being.

This emphasis on the encounters with these worlds of nature and body, "blood consciousness," is, no doubt, one of several responses Lawrence had to the catastrophe of World War I and to the subsequent demoralization he saw and felt (Gilbert, *ACTS* 122). Then, too, this emphasis was a response

to the new technology which made the damage of the War so horrific and took mankind so far from nature, including his own body consciousness. In this collection, Lawrence turns away from the machine and the human to take a shamanic journey into the worlds of figs, trees, turtles, fish, and fowls in search of healing answers (Gilbert, ACTS 122). By turning to nature as a primary source, Lawrence is shamanic. For the shaman, nature is the wellspring of life and the doorway to spirit.

I do not intend to show that all of Lawrence's work contains shamanic elements. Rather, I intend to discuss how a number of poems in BIRDS are shamanic and display similarities to Bly's poetry in their attention to nature. Although Lawrence's poems in his novel THE PLUMED SERPENT (1926) appear to be more clearly shamanic, I will not, for a number of reasons, be investigating them here.

In THE PLUMED SERPENT, Lawrence more consciously attempts to be shamanic. The poems seem forced and excessively self-conscious in their use of real Indian chants (Clark 106-13). With the odd overlay of Methodist hymn patterns onto the primitive chants (Gilbert, ACTS 233), the poems often fail. Rather than enacting his own journeys into mythic realms, Lawrence imitates Navajo, Aztec, and other Indian songs and prayers (Clark 106-13). The poems become the derivative rituals of the priest, not the improvised performances of the shaman.

The poems of BIRDS are not Lawrence's imitative attempts to be shamanic. They succeed in being truly shamanic by their deep exploration of the natural world and by their improvisational, spontaneous qualities. They are enactments of Lawrence's own "journeys," not reenactments of Indian ritual chants. This is not to say that Lawrence's poems of Quetzalcoatl and Huitzilopochtli never succeed as poems. But as poems, apart from THE PLUMED SERPENT, they seem not essentially shamanic, but more ritualized and priestly.

Also, to discuss them as poetic entities, comparable to Bly's poems, would not take into consideration that they are an integral part of a novel. As poems, they function as part of a narrative, unlike the poems of BIRDS. As part of THE PLUMED SERPENT, they help Lawrence to tell his tale. But they are also his way of "dismant[ling] the novel [form] from within" (Laird 160). Using poems with prose, he explores a new form for the novel. The poems portray the spiritual life of the characters and add dramatic effect to the work, "lifting it to the mystical plane" (Laird 166). In its deconstructing approach, the novel itself performs a shaman-like task, pricking pins in old forms. But that is a topic for another discussion and is not as relevant to Bly. In and of themselves, the poems seem only marginally shamanic.

Like Lawrence in BIRDS, Bly reacts to war, turns away from the machine and toward nature in his his attempts to heal. He sees Vietnam and America's emphasis on money and

technology as part of the Cartesian legacy. Both Bly and Lawrence write not only about the private journey and investigation, but also about communal needs and problems. This sense of communal responsibility distinguishes the shamanic from the mystic. In their writing, both turn away from the machine to find healing which that machine has not provided or is no longer providing. Yet Bly's "machine" is not quite the same as that seen in the chapter called "Shame" in Lawrence's THE RAINBOW. Bly's machine belongs to an age of subtler industries, of computer electronics, of high-technology--THE GRADUATE's "plastics," Dow's napalm. Vietnam, for America, was not unlike World War I for England--demoralizing and devastating to the national psyche. The crew-cut, clean cut fifties collided with the dark jungle of Southeast Asia and came up long-haired and raving. While in much of his work he journeys into quiet realms of snowy fields and trees, Bly tries to give voice to this collision anxiety in LIGHT AROUND THE BODY (1968) and even more strongly in SLEEPERS JOINING HANDS (1973). For him, nature is the dark side to which we must reconnect, and war is the violent manifestation of suppression.

While he may not deal with demonic spirits in the geopsychic realms as the shaman does (Houston xiii), the shamanic poet must be sensitive to the messages his tribe needs to hear in peace and in war. In his famous "The Teeth Mother Naked at Last" (SLEEPERS 18-28), Bly depicts the

horrors of Vietnam. By juxtaposing suburbs with bombed peasant villages, he reveals what he sees as the war's roots in our American consciousness (Nelson 89).

At the same time, he revels in that dark side of which the war is a horrific embodiment. For in war that realm of consciousness cannot be denied; it is "naked at last." By ignoring that realm, the American "tribe" suppresses those energies which must ultimately be experienced one way or another, in this case through the cataclysm of war. The shaman's role or duty is to assist his tribe in dealing with these forces. However, in a tribe with no shamans, some aspects of this duty are inherited by poets such as Bly and Lawrence (Froiland 35). In poems like "Teeth Mother," a shamanic poet can "explain" the causal forces of the war, and in a sense, by his words, his shamanic performance, he works to heal. Indeed, this particular poem was crafted, in part, in actual performance (Bly, TALKING 201).

Lawrence seems to anticipate this bloody America in his "The American Eagle" (COMPLETE POEMS 414; hereafter noted as POEMS). In this poem, Lawrence sees England's imperialistic "torch" passed like an "addled, golden egg" to America, which has learned nothing from England's demise and continues on the same path. The eagle, already a symbol of the States, becomes a totem bird for the shamanic poet who is attempting to represent the darker realms.

Lawrence would not have been surprised at the

debilitating effect Vietnam has had, nor at Bly's kindred need to open up the doors to the dark. In "Teeth Mother," Bly reveals just what Lawrence said poets need to reveal:

What about poets then, at this juncture (1928)? They reveal the inward desire of mankind...They show the desire for chaos and the fear of chaos (LITERARY CRITICISM 91-92).

Bly not only show the chaos in his poem, but also the desire and fear:

It is a desire to eat death,
to gobble it down,
to rush on it like a cobra with mouth open

It's a desire to take death inside,
to feel it burning inside, pushing out velvety hairs,
like a clothes brush in the intestines--
This is the thrill that leads the President on to lie.
.....
This is what it's like for a rich country to make war
(SLEEPERS 21)

This poem renders the chaotic realm which the shaman explores in his journeys. Bly dives into the wreck hoping to find a more holistic vision for himself and his fellows.

Shamanic Healing and Myth

For Lawrence and Bly, the poet, like the shaman, teaches us to dive or to fly and tear open what Lawrence called the "umbrella." To fulfill this vision of the poet, these two poets take the shamanic or mythmaking approach to the poem. In response to the cataclysms of war which pummeled the ego-consciousness of each one's country, Lawrence and Bly, as poets, seek a language which can move beyond the ego and

incorporate the spirit. This is the language which the shaman brings back to the tribe when he performs his journey to other worlds for them. Neither poet thought spirit to be separate from the body, and certainly the shaman's rendition of the spiritual is very physical in its articulation. The shaman sees the unity of all realms as a matter of fact: light and dark, spiritual and physical, human and natural. The shaman's performance trusts to that unity for its healing power. The shamanic poet trusts to the image of unity for the same.

This language of spirit and body is part of the language of myth. Spirit and body are a shamanic source of myth. Myth is the language of symbols, "the Word made flesh," and symbols are not reducible. They retain the mystery, the otherness with which the shaman has intimate contact, that reality of the darker spiritual realms which cannot be eliminated. This realm of being undergirds our own (Campbell, POWER et al).

As Sandra M. Gilbert suggests, *BIRDS, BEASTS AND FLOWERS* uses the language of myth. She finds the book a "revisionary synthesis of a group of myths of darkness" ("Hell" 257). According to Gilbert, Lawrence's mythic language is, for the most part, from the Greeks--Persephone and Dis, Orpheus and Euridyce, Dionysius--and from Christianity-- Lucifer. However, Lawrence's Lucifer is Blakeian, full of energy. Thus the myths are revisioned so that for Orpheus and for Persephone the journey to hell is good, not bad. In these poems, myths become new enactments of imaginative energies.

The dark journey of the poems is necessary in order to meet what lies beyond, in that dark hole of mystery where Lawrence's snake goes--into the other of nature, of body, of spirit. The journey is shaman-like for it allows the poet a way to write of non-human worlds. On the shamanic journey of the poems, the poet wrests knowledge from those worlds beyond the human and rational.

The mythic journeys of Orpheus and others may have their source in the shamanic. While the knowledge the shaman brings back from his journey is first only healing for a particular situation, it later may be inculcated into tribal myth to renew and strengthen the community (Campbell, POWER, Part I).

As a shamanic poet, Lawrence portrays encounters with a mythic enemy which the modern world has hidden from the tribe:

That is a grand old lust of his, to gather the great
Rage of the sullen-stagnating atmosphere of goats
And bring it hurtling to a head, with crash of horns
against horns [t/o]
Of the opposite enemy goat,
Thus hammering the mettle of goats into proof,
and smiting out [t/o]
The godhead of goats from the shock.
.....
But they've taken his enemy from him
And left him only his libidinousness,
His nostrils turning back, to sniff even at himself
And his own slitted eyes seeking the needle's eyes,
His own, unthreaded, forever.

So it is, when they take the enemy from us,
And we can't fight ("He Goat," POEMS 381-382).

Underlying this poem is the assertion that "the devil should get his due." Lawrence seems to suggest that we need to

acknowledge and allow that libidinous energy into our consciousness. We need to heed the message that the shaman brings back from that other world, to hear what other beings say (in this case, the "voice" of the goat), to understand those other parts of ourselves to which these worlds connect. If we do not heed, as a tribe or as individuals, it is more than a goat fight that we get.

In SLEEPERS, Bly uses the myth of the four-fold energy of the Great Mother as his symbolic lingua franca. The division of power into four types or aspects is typically shamanic and seen in the American Indian shamans' medicine shields (Andrews, FLIGHT; Neihardt) or in the Peruvian shamans's healing "mesas" (Sharon 62). At any point in history, an individual or tribe may emphasize one or more of these energy sources. If any source is adhered to without balancing it with another, then the individual or tribe will lose energy and power and will eventually have to face the balancing force/s, often in a more serious, even life-threatening way. Balance is an essential part of shamanic healing (Sharon 82, 106).

Bly sees the Vietnam War and other wars as this terrible mandate for balance from the mythic powers that occurs whenever a culture denies some portion of its four-fold energy. Bly's Teeth Mother is only one aspect of the four-fold Mother power, but in Bly's view, She is the one, much like Lawrence's goat-devil, with whom Americans, like

the British, have the most reckoning to do (SLEEPERS 42,44). Bly shows us in "The Shadow Goes Away" that "the woman chained to the shore" must be set free. This is his message of healing. We must recognize "the blood-colored moon" is "gobbling up the sand" (53).

While in "Teeth Mother," Bly emphasizes the feminine in his message of healing, and in "He Goat," Lawrence emphasizes the masculine, both poets call for a balance of masculine and feminine, mind and body, light and dark. Note that these pairings of opposites are not equivalents, reducible one to the other, rather they are symbolic suggestions of the polarity which exists and must be reckoned with according to some shamanic traditions (Andrews, Letter; Eliade, SHAMANISM 34; Metzner 24).

In restoring healing balance, the shaman plays a mediating role. In healing, he restores balance for himself and for his tribe by mediating between dark and light realms, mundane and spiritual, and among the various energies (Hoppal 90). It is important to note that for Bly masculine energy is not simply the eighteenth-century rationalism which says, "The proper study of mankind is man" (Pope). For him the masculine is not only the Appollonian "light," nor is feminine energy tied only to Romantic thought, the dark side, and Dionysian mysteries. Both energies are more complex, and each includes both light and dark.

In SLEEPERS, Bly tries to explain this complexity, in

part, by his discussion of the four-fold nature of the feminine: the Good/Life Mother, the Death Mother, the Ecstatic Mother (related to Dionysian energy), and the Stone or Teeth Mother (34-42). Each aspect is part of his Great Mother myth, yet all together they are only half of the whole balance.

The consciousness of the Great Father stands on the other side, just as complex, with dark and light energies woven in it as well. In a 1970 reading at Antioch College, Bly spoke of a new consciousness that he saw coming into being, a consciousness which would restore the balance (Friberg 127). Also, in the late seventies and in the eighties, Bly has been involved in a deep exploration of the so-called Great Father. He has led conferences on the topic, and his book, *THE MAN IN THE BLACK COAT TURNS* (1981) explores his own masculine heritage. In his exploration of this new consciousness, Bly is shamanlike, helping to bring it forth (Eliade, *SHAMANISM* 34). But at the time of *SLEEPERS* and throughout most of the seventies, Bly deals more with the feminine realms of consciousness because he sees that it has been neglected and that the balance must be righted. He makes sure to note that neither polarity is "bad." They are each part of the whole, which Lawrence gives us, if not in his poetry, then in his novels, part of a whole necessary for our existence. Lawrence's message of shamanic healing is like Bly's: We "want a balanced consciousness" (*SLEEPERS* 49).

In BIRDS, Lawrence appears to be not merely righting the balance, but diving into the "other" side. As Gilbert suggests, it is a journey into hell ("Hell"), and I suggest that it is a place built by Bly's Teeth Mother, for Lawrence's approach to the feminine in these poems is indeed antagonistic, where in Bly's poetry it is not. Where the Bly of the seventies seems a new priest of the Great Mother, Lawrence seems an embattled emissary of the Great Father, one who is alternately antagonistic to, then questioning of the feminine.

In the book's opening poem, "Pomegranate," Lawrence provides this mixture of anger and wonder--pomegranates are red inside, and Syracuse is "a rock left bare by vicious Greek women" (in POEMS 278). In Venice, pomegranates are "bright green stone, and barbed." "And, if you dare, the fissure!" One gets the sense of a knight glorying in the dangerous search for the Holy Grail. The Grail myth is a relevant, powerful myth of the search for the feminine, closely connected to the shaman's search for healing balance when he journey's to other worlds. Lawrence wants us to search and see the fissure: "the end cracks open with the beginning: / Rosy tender, glittering within the fissure." He wants us to see the difficult mystery which he is willing to explore: "For my part, I prefer my heart to be broken. / It is so lonely, dawn kaleidoscopic within the crack (POEMS 278)." This poem provides a Lawrentian vision of Bly's

Ecstatic Mother viewed through the balancing vision of Bly's Stone or Teeth Mother (SLEEPERS 40-41). It also unconsciously alludes to the time, dawn or dusk, which shamans say is the best time to access the other worlds (Castaneda 91). These times between light and dark reveal the crack or doorway between the world (a feminine symbol as well).

Like the knight on his mythic journey in search of the Grail, Orpheus is an emissary of the Great Father seeking a vision of the Great Mother. For Orpheus, the Mother is embodied in Euridyce. Searching for her makes his trip to hell worthwhile. He may gain "kaleidoscopic" vision, the shaman's ability to understand and cope with the knowledge of underworlds (and celestial realms). In "Medlars and Sorb Apples," Lawrence uses this Orphic myth:

Sorb-apples, medlars with dead crowns.
I say, wonderful are the hellish experiences,
Orphic, delicate
Dionysos of the Underworld.
.....
Going down the strange lanes of hell, more and
more intensely alone [t/o]
.....
Orphic farewell, and farewell, and farewell
And the ego sum of Dionysos
The sono io of perfect drunkenness
Intoxication of final loneliness (POEMS 280-281).

Here the kinship with Bly is clear. Both poets see the trip to the underworld as necessary, albeit intoxicating and lonely. The shaman must journey alone, face tests along the way alone, yet he also gains the Ecstatic Mother's intoxicating energy and certain power from that travel. In

"Night Journey in the Cooking Pot," Bly says as much: "I was born during the night sea-journey / . . . I am all alone, floating" (SLEEPERS 59). Later, he is moved to dance "drunkenly about the page, "full of love,": "I love you, / I never knew that I loved you / until I was swallowed by the invisible" (61).

In these poems, both poets depict the lonely shamanic journey and the ecstasy which transports. Solitude teaches ecstasy. The journey all alone is made in ecstasy. Both poets depict being intoxicated by what Bly calls the Ecstatic Mother and what Lawrence refers to as "Dionysos." Dionysos might be called the Ecstatic Father. In the shaman's journey, like the Orphic journey which may take its roots in the shamanic, the shaman sojourner is dismembered so that he may enter the other side of things and be made whole. Jung might say that it is the ego-self which is smashed to achieve wholeness. From one perspective, this dismemberment is simply a revelation of man's essential wholeness, but the baptism of the journey is necessary to that revelation: "For we are like the branch bent in the water . . . / Taken out, it is whole, it was always whole . . ." (SLEEPERS 61).

Both poets portray a mythical, yet real journey of the soul in images of submergence, intoxication, wonder and other-worldly knowledge. Such journeys are indeed shamanic. In these poems, the poets make new myths out of old, renewing images and language in the process.

The shaman is more than a priest: he makes the myths that priests may later retell in their communal rituals, myths which are performances of his real encounters with spiritual realms. His myths are rough-hewn. Still energized by their source, they are vital and healing. The shaman ventures into terrain where human language with its power to shape meanings, to provide constructs and stability, is not the lingua franca. He must go to the other side, sometimes into chaos, to bring back the "delicious rottenness" of "medlars and sorb-apples."

Lawrence's vision of this shamanic journey into chaos (the mythic realm of unformed energies) may be seen especially well in "St. Matthew." St Matthew is depicted as one of the four evangelistic or apocalyptic beasts who hold up the four corners of the heavens and who "rule the night." These four energies may, in some ways, be Great Father parallels to Bly's four-fold Mother, but that comparison is not within the bounds of this discussion. St. Matthew is the one of the four "beasts" who is not beast, but man. Revisioned by Lawrence, St. Matthew not only holds up heaven, but also serves as a shamanistic go-between, heaven to earth:

I am a man, and therefore my heart beats, and throws
 the dark blood from side to side [t/o]
 All the time I am lifted up.

 But put me down again in time, Master,
 Before my heart stops beating, and I become what I am
 not.
 Put me down again on earth . . .
 Where flowers sprout in the acrid humus, and fade into
 humus again. (POEMS 320-323)

The shamanic St. Matthew calls for heaven and the return into earth. The shaman's heaven is earth. Awakened to spirit in his relation with Jesus, he also realizes the need for balance and a return to earth.

He asks to "flicker ever downwards," implying not just down to the earth's surface, but down deep into the root of things, "to the zenith's reversal / which is my way, being man." Matthew is a "traveller back and forth." This is what all men might be, but what the saint, the evangelic "beast," the shaman must be. The shaman is the first to take the mythic, yet real, journey and show the way by his performance. In some ways, the journey is simply a trip back to the body, into its depths where the blood splashes against the walls of the lifted heart.

Bly continues this voyage into the earth and the human body. In *THIS BODY IS MADE OF CAMPHOR AND GOPHERWOOD*, a book of prose poems, Bly delves into the mysterious realms of the physical and reveals some of the same connections of flesh to the spirit that Lawrence found in "St. Matthew." To the shaman, man's physical form is the outward manifestation of the spirit, and the spirit, in turn, represents the body on the journey. Also the shamanic initiation involves physical tests, as well as spiritual feats. According to Eliade, the ritual of bodily dismemberment is a very realistic enactment of the spiritual rebuilding of the elected into the shaman (SHAMANISM 158-59). Transformation of flesh or of spirit

cannot occur without the other.

In his "Looking from Inside My Body," Bly uses a persona who seems like a St. Matthew, returned to earth and exploring "the dark blood" inside his own body:

I look from inside my body. And if my body is earth, then what? Then I am down here, thickening as night comes on. And the moon will stay up there. Some part of me is up there too. How far it is up to that part! (21)

At the same time that the body is part of the "thick" physicality of earth, it also remains part of spirit, mythologized. In the associative leap of imagery, the shamanic speaker in the poem finds the connection of earth and heaven (see Chapter Four on "leaping").

The shamanic speaker finds the connection because he approaches his object with love. The shamanic poet depicts the connection through associative leaping, interweaving images of body with those of spirit. Bly uses this kind of imagery and a reverent tone consistently in the poems of THIS BODY. "We Love This Body" exemplifies the book's imagery and tone:

My friend, this body is made of energy compacted and whirling. It is the wind that carries the henhouse down the road dancing, and an instant later lifts all four walls apart. It is the horny thumbnail of the retired railway baron, . . . the woman priest's hair still fresh among Shang ritual things. . . .

We love this body as we love the day we first met the person who led us away from this world (51)

In the love for the body imaged in this poem, we are shown the spiritual energy contained in the body. For Bly, the body and nature are both strangers with whom we must

reacquaint ourselves through a meeting with, a "love" for, if you will, that "other's" energy. He also uses this idea of love in *LOVING A WOMAN IN TWO WORLDS* (to be discussed in Chapter Five). The shaman goes on the journey to bring back healing answers and with those answers he brings back energy, the power he has gained from communing with other realms.

In the mystical journey which love opens us to, two are found as one. Bly's imagery in *THIS BODY* and *LOVING A WOMAN* reveals another tie to Lawrence. Lawrence suggests that in love it is "not to better 'know [one]self' but rather, to recognize the uncomprehended otherness of the other, and consequently explore . . . the unknown" (Murfin 172-173). For both Lawrence and Bly, love becomes a kind of doorway to the other, an opening or axis mundi between worlds. Love can lead the lover to the mystery locked in all things. I will discuss the shamanic "journeying" power of love further in the chapter on Bly's *LOVING A WOMAN IN TWO WORLDS*.

However, for the shamanic poet, the body and love are not the only openings to the spiritual. Various plants, animals, or things of the natural world also may be doorways to the spirit. Such doorways often involve some of the traditional symbols associated with the shaman: trees, representing the axis mundi by which the shaman travels up or down to spiritual realms; animals, representing forces at work in these realms; birds, also representing these forces, as well the magical flight of ecstatic journeying; or myriad

other parts of the natural realm such as fish, plants, time of day, and weather. Each represents some aspect of the shaman's unifying cosmology (Eliade, SHAMANISM 271, 477, 289 et al).

The shaman is more in touch with nature than the hunter (Campbell, MASKS 250) and thereby more in touch with the sacred through nature. He uses weather, animals, plants, and other symbols from nature to reveal the sacred forces at work in the world and in the body. Change, sexuality, birth, growth, death, rebirth--all these sacred forces fit together to form a whole of which man is a part. To be healthy and whole, individually and communally, man must partake in the sacred world, the "world" of these primordial forces which inform the mundane world (Campbell, POWER 70-71).

As the guardian of tribal myths (Campbell, MASKS 251), the shaman assists "the hunter" or ordinary man by showing him how to partake through the healing knowledge brought back from the mystic journeys (Larsen 59). First, the shaman teaches in his performance, explaining the sacred forces through the images of nature. The performance has the power to heal through these integrating images. Later, the tribe may develop rituals from these performances, rituals which continue to enact the myths depicting the primordial forces and processes (Campbell, MASKS 100).

The rituals are inculcated into the tribe until the next turn in the cycle, at which point the shaman performs

(Hutchinson xxii-xxiii; Campbell in Feinstein 267). These "cycles" occur both for the tribe and for individuals within that tribe, so that it is not just during cataclysmic times that the shaman comes forth with new pieces of myth. While for the tribe this knowledge may help in coping with some environmental change such as drought, or hunting problems, or war and peace issues, for the individual, it may help in coping with infertility, disease, death, marriage, hunting skills. The myths come written large and small, bit and piece and whole. These shamanic symbols are the symbols which shamanic poets like Bly and Lawrence use. In these images of the natural world, the poets open traditional doorways to the mythic (Cook 251), doorways which link human with the numinous realms that inform and energize this world.

Shamanic Doorways: The World Tree as a Poetic Image

Both Bly and Lawrence use symbols from nature in a shamanic way. To discuss how both use such symbols shamanistically, I will focus on their use of the tree in some representative poems. The shaman uses a tree in his performance to symbolize the World Tree. The World Tree, in turn, is an image of the axis mundi which connects all the worlds. On the axis mundi the shaman travels, up or down, into the sacred realms. Of course, the tree is a universally used symbol. In psychology, it symbolizes the personality

(Jung, ALCHEMY 233) or the self. In theology, it symbolizes Christ, the "fruitful tree to be cultivated by our hearts." It is a symbol of all that connects us to the groundwater of spirit. Yet all these meanings for the tree symbol have a shamanic source (Jung, ALCHEMY 309).

Thus, although the tree is a universal symbol, it is "at root" shamanic. Because the tree symbol is basically shamanic, investigating tree images in Bly and Lawrence should help to show further how they are shamanic poets. Also, I have chosen to focus on the tree imagery first because in shamanism it is closely aligned with images of the body, and second because both Bly and Lawrence closely align images of trees with those of the body or the self. In shamanism the tree is used to represent the body because it parallels the axis by which the body's energy centers are aligned (Metzner 245). These centers are called "chakras" in yoga. The tree can also symbolize the physical nervous system, the trunk representing the spinal cord. Or it can symbolize the circulatory system, including the tree-like branches of the veins in the lungs. The tree symbol connects to the human in the body, to the spiritual in the World Tree, and to the natural in itself.

By using the tree image the shamanic poet portrays those connections. In the natural process of being itself, the tree represents the primordial processes of the universe. It reveals the spiritual meaning of change, birth, growth,

death, and even sexuality (especially in Lawrence). The holism of the tree connects not only to the body, but also to the double quaternary (Jung, ALCHEMY 305) seen in Bly's four-fold image of the Great Mother in SLEEPERS. Eliade suggests the image's dynamism in observing that the shaman's World Tree represents the universe in continual regeneration, in an "inexhaustible spring of cosmic life," a revelation of the sacred. It is the "Tree of Life," fertile and perennial, "absolute reality and immortality" united in one image (Eliade, "Cosmology" 25).

For Bly and Lawrence, the tree image, as a doorway to the sacred and to the self, indeed unites the mundane and the spiritual. In their poems, the real details of the tree and the speaker's encounter with the tree are metamorphosed into a spiritual experience. In addition, the tree imagery unifies the poem and thus represents the larger unity not only in content, but also in form. For the shamanic poet, the tree enables a rendering of what Bly calls a "voyage into the imagination" (speaking of some poems) (SIXTIES #5, 66)

The second section of BIRDS includes several poems about trees: "Cypresses," "Bare Fig Trees," "Bare Almond-Trees," "Flowers," and "Almond Blossom." These poems look at particular trees, yet through the particular, Lawrence explores the universal and the spiritual. Just as the shaman uses a particular tree to represent the World Tree in his performance, so do Lawrence and Bly.

Lawrence begins the section with a short preface entitled "Trees." Divided into three parts, it provides a useful frame of reference for the section (POEMS 995n, 996n). The first part is a journalistic observation by an unknown source: "It is said a disease has attacked the cypress trees of Italy and they are all dying" (POEMS 295). This is a simple statement of fact by a removed observer. However, in the second part, the viewpoint changes from this removed observer to that of a participant in the natural world. Here Lawrence employs a mixture of reflection, imagery, and mythic allusions: "Now even the shadow of the lost secret is vanishing from earth." Akin to a voice of Bly's "New Position," the words are like those of the shaman who warns his tribe and makes it aware of its natural source.

Lawrence indicates our need to connect with the consciousness of the cypresses because it contains a myth-like "lost secret," perhaps that secret of a golden age where man spoke with animals and trees, when he did not feel isolated from the earth and all creation. This golden time is shamanic time: once supposedly existent on earth, now contained in world myth, and always existent in the sacred, eternal realm (Houston ix-xi). When the shaman journeys, he takes part in that eternal, golden time, in which all men once participated. As Lawrence's preface hints, trees still participate in this secret, and therefore they might help us to heal ourselves and reunite with the eternal. For the

shamanic poet, closely detailed images of particular natural things may open the door to that vision of eternal unity.

In the third section, Lawrence quotes Empedokles (his spelling) and provides a pre-Cartesian view of trees which is a clue to the secret. He shows us post-Cartesians how to encounter trees:

Empedokles says trees were the first living creatures to grow up out of the earth, before the sun was spread out and before day and night were distinguished; from the symmetry of their mixture of fire and water, they contain the proportion of male and female; they grow, rising up owing to the heat which is in earth, so that they are parts of the earth just as embryos are parts of the uterus. Fruits are excretions of the water and fire in plants. (POEMS 295)

While this is taken directly from Greek scientific thought rather than poetry, in the eyes of the shamanic poet, it becomes both a message of truth and a poetic image. The passage contains a vision of trees as the shaman sees them: primal, "the first living creatures," the life giving World Tree. In primitive cultures, the shaman is the scientist as well as the poet. In Greek culture, too, perhaps the scientist and the poet were not so far apart as they seem today. Empedokles sees trees as an avenue linking the eternal, "before day and night," with the mortal. Also, trees are linked to the human body, described with human qualities of sexuality and birth. Again, this is a shaman-like vision where all things are unified and alive. Trees are not seen in dollars per board foot as they are today. Lawrence sees the change from such a view as modern

man's loss.

In the poems which follow the preface, Lawrence works, shaman-like, to reacquaint himself and us with trees--which hold the "lost secret." The poems are what Bly calls "seeing poems" in their attempt to heal the Cartesian split of mind and universe (SELECTED POEMS audio). Bly says such poems can "carry us to a new place" by their minute detail (SELECTED POEMS 88). Thus details can be a method for shamanic journeying in a poem. After close observation of natural and spiritual worlds, the shaman attempts to heal. In this attempt, he provides messages from both those worlds. For the poet, those messages are his detailed images. In a sense, the shamanic poet is also like the scientist in using detailed observation to discover truths.

Bly speaks of poems which "go out" (SELECTED POEMS 88). Using close detail, the poem may journey out into the consciousness of its object. In the close detail of these tree poems, Lawrence certainly journeys out. Again, through detail, the image can become a doorway into the numinous. Poems which "go out" are poems which investigate the non-human world in an "I-Thou" not an "I-it" relationship, and thus such poems avoid the Cartesian split. Lawrence's "Cypresses" and "Bare Fig-Trees" are both convey such shamanic journeys.

In "Cypresses," Lawrence questions the silent secret of nature, mentioned in the preface, now in danger of being

lost. Shamanistically, his questions and answers seek to retrieve the secret from oblivion:

Tuscan cypresses
 What is it?
 Folded in like a dark thought
 For which the language is lost
 Tuscan cypresses
 Is there a great secret?
 Are our words no good?

The undeliverable secret,
 Dead with a dead race . . . , and yet
 Darkly monumental in you (POEMS 296)

While this poem reveals Lawrence's interest in the Etruscans, it is also an investigation of non-human consciousness. In associating the Etruscans so closely with the trees, Lawrence unifies human and non-human realms. The dead race is "embowered" in the cypresses, and the cypresses are beautifully "sinuous, flame-tall," "sway[ing] their length of darkness all around." The two are one. Thus as the Etruscans were described by the Romans as vicious, so are the cypresses described by Lawrence as "vicious". . . "brooding, softly-swaying pillars of dark flame." In addition, the Etruscans were thought to be evasive like the "cypress trees in the wind."

But all these negative attributes--vicious, evasive, evil--reveal the Roman's view of the Etruscans, not the truth. Thus Lawrence descriptions are ironic: the Roman perception of the Etruscans' viciousness may be as far off the mark as Lawrence's characterization of the viciousness of cypress trees. The poet can only know the Etruscans through

Roman accounts, and thus his words are "hollow seed-pods."
 He laments the loss of the Etruscans. His words cannot bring
 them back, just as his words cannot save the cypresses:

What would I not give
 To bring back the rare and orchid-like
 Evil-yclept Etruscan?
 For as to evil
 We have only Roman word for it,
 Which I, being a little weary of Roman virtue,
 Don't hang much weight on.

 We have buried so much of the delicate magic of life.
 (POEMS 297-98)

Like the shaman, Lawrence mourns the dead, yet he also takes
 a journey with the dead souls.

His journey takes him outside the normal perspectives on
 the natural (the trees), the historical (the Etruscans), and
 his present world. Lawrence's weariness with Roman virtue
 resonates with his weariness of Victorianized English
 virtues. To Lawrence, such virtues only led to hurtful
 self-denial and hypocrisy. So through the "sinuous" and
 un-virtuous trees, Lawrence journeys like the shaman on the
 World Tree. He "goes out" of the everyday viewpoint, for he
 knows that accepted virtue may only be built on the
 subjugation or degradation of someone or something else. The
 Romans conquered then belittled the Etruscans. Humans
 "conquer" nature, then belittle it. But by conquering, we
 lose perspective. We lose the "secrets" which the cypresses
 can tell us in their "dark" way. We lose the connection to
 "the delicate magic of life" which is the unifying shamanic
 vision.

To retrieve that magic, Lawrence "invoke[s] the spirits of the lost," just as the shaman may do in a performance upon his return from accompanying a dead soul. The poem becomes a kind of performance "to bring [the Etruscans'] meaning back to life again." It is also a warning for his tribe, against the "only one evil, to deny life," just as the Romans denied the Etruscans and as today "mechanical America [denies] Montezuma still." Today, the post-Cartesian world denies consciousness to the natural world of the cypress and denies respect to primitive cultures like Montezuma's. To accept Montezuman, metaphorically, means to accept the aboriginal cultures, and thus, in a sense, to accept a shamanic vision of the world. Like Black Elk's vision of the interlocking hoops (Neihardt 43), Lawrence's vision unites many worlds into one: cypresses, Etruscans, Indians, past and present, body and soul.

While in "Cypresses" he unites human and non-human in metaphor, in "Bare Fig-Trees," Lawrence "goes out" farther into the non-human realm, riding on the details as Bly suggests. Lawrence provides beautiful, lyrical, even ecstatic descriptions of the fig-trees:

Fig-trees, weird fig-trees
 Made of thick, smooth silver,
 Made of sweet untarnished silver in the
 sea-southern air--
 I say untarnished, but I mean opaque--
 Thick, smooth-fleshed silver, dull only as human limbs
 are
 dull
 With the life-lustre
 Nude with the dim light of full, healthy life

That is always half-dark,
 And suave like passion-flower petals,

 Great complicated, nude fig-tree, stemless flower-mesh,
 Flowery naked in flesh, and giving off hues of life.
 (POEMS 298-99)

The shamanic poet revels in details. In the performance of the poem, details are repeated, re-combined, and added to, creating a very sinuous movement. The repetition gives it an incantatory, oral quality as well.

The poem presents a new vision of the tree. The tree is portrayed with human limbs, yet it is also "sweet-myriad-limbed octopus, "a many branching candelabrum," "the Jewish seven-branched" menorah. Through various images, Lawrence shows the tree connecting to the physical, the natural, and the holy part of ourselves so often suppressed, oppressed, and denied. Like the candlelabrum, it flames forth with the life that flows in human and non-human veins alike.

Like the shaman's tree, the fig tree partakes of the "full, healthy life" of the eternal. Sitting beneath it, the speaker might "laugh at Time, and laugh at dull Eternity." The observation of the fig tree's particular beauty and the image of the speaker laughing at Time provide a glimpse beyond limiting concepts of time and eternity. The tree image acts as a World Tree, a liminal experience, a journey to a place beyond conceptualizations.

The tree possesses a "marvelous naked assurance"; each branch rises toward heaven as if it were the trunk, "the main

stem." While portraying the tree's beauty, this image also reminds Lawrence of man's self-induced alienation from heaven and thus, of each man's alienation from himself, man's "uncomfortableness." The fig's branches have no qualms about lifting "the one and only lighted candle of the sun," but man is usually uncomfortable, inhibited from fully flowering. The life force in civilized man is stunted. Because this force is stunted, civilized man remains far from his own and all divinity.

Man's divinity, that "sun" power, interweaves with nature's. The processes of nature, including sexuality, link humans to the divine--that is the shamanic and mythic message of unity. To deny the fig tree, as Christ did in the Biblical story, is to deny physical nature or "what is so." Man is part of nature, so when he denies nature, he denies himself. Lawrence might say that the Christianity teaches denial of the physical body and its desires. Thus Lawrence portrays Christ's condemnation of the overtly sexual fig tree as ironic. He uses the adjective "wicked" ironically to describe the undaunted, regenerating fig tree whose every bud "casually gives birth to another . . . which at once sets off to be the one and only / And hold the lighted candle of the sun" (POEMS 300).

The irony of Christ's condemnation is not simple. The poem "grope[s] toward accurate perception" (Gilbert, ACTS 91). Lawrence does not rest in easy answers. Not only is

the tree an image of divine and physical nature, it is also an emblem for the Jewish faith, denied by the Christianity. Lawrence sees the irony in denying the older faith "that lives upon this rock," yet he too "denies" its "tallow righteousness." In fact, Lawrence criticizes all faiths when he sees the tree as a symbol for nature. The tree laughs not only at man's "uncomfortableness," but also at his "attempt to assure himself that what is so is not so."

The complexity of the image develops as Lawrence "discovers" the tree in the poem (Gilbert, ACTS 91). When he "finds" the tree to be an emblem for democracy--"Demos," he condemns it--"Demon." Lawrence thought the egalitarian impulse of democracy led to "the sort of relativism" of Prufrock--because if anyone could address the profound issues, no one would (Gilbert 128). When the tree becomes an emblem of this political system, it changes from "weird" to "wicked."

Irony arises from this wordplay between Demon and Demos. By juxtaposing the two terms, Lawrence approaches the difficult truth. Keats's "negative capability" provides a poetic context for Lawrence's approach here. Lawrence is willing to go against his own first impressions, to examine ideas in all their facets. Lawrence may hope that the antidote to democracy is a "natural aristocracy" (Gilbert, ACTS 125), but the emblematic tree may show him how "natural" democracy is--every and any "one" can be a "sun-socket."

While the emblem also reveals the idea of some natural hierarchical order, no one is special. The shamanic vision may be given to anyone. Lawrence wrestles with the full implications of the emblem. Even at the poem's close, the image remains open for further investigation. The fig tree is an "equality puzzle" with "secret fruits." The "puzzle" has not been solved; the process of discovery goes on.

Lawrence's detailed observation of the fig tree rendered in Whitmanesque long lines, with much repetition and alliteration, builds the details into a poem that, in turn, "builds" the tree again for the reader. The reconstruction allows the reader to examine the tree as if he is there with Lawrence. This sort of organic mimesis is akin to the shamanic performance before and after the trance-journey. In the poetic tradition, Wordsworth's idea of emotion "recollected in tranquility" lays some of the groundwork for Lawrence's approach. The tradition of the shaman offers long-established precedent for such mimesis. Although the shaman experiences his ecstasy in the journey, in performance he must "recollect" it for his audience. In "Fig-Trees," the emotion and drama arise from the use of present tense and "the continual, slightly modified repetition." In a preface to his translation of Verga's *CAVALLERIA RUSTICANA*, Lawrence indicates how these rhetorical strategies reflect the explorations of mind:

when we are thinking emotionally or passionately,
thinking and feeling at the same time, we do not think

rationally: and therefore, and therefore, and therefore. Instead, the mind makes curious swoops and circles. It touches the point of pain or interest, then sweeps away again in a cycle, coils round and approaches again . . . the mind approaches again and again to the point of concern (LITERARY CRITICISM 290)

The structure reflects the exploratory nature of the poem. The ecstatic energy is a reflection of the mind, full of the joy of searching. Of course, it may be wise to ask the poet how "tranquil" this process of recollection is, for the shaman's performance is usually anything but tranquil. For the shamanic poet, the recollection is formulated to take on the organic quality of the experience. Whether the recollection is tranquil or not, the poet must have conscious or instinctive control of the structures and words.

The subject of much poetic debate, Wordsworth's "tranquility" may also be taken to mean "control." Here again one can draw a shamanic parallel. According to Eliade, the shaman is the "technician of ecstasy." He controls his ecstasy in the performance through a number of techniques, just as the poet controls his in the poem. As a shamanic poet, Lawrence performs the fig tree's image from his "inward eye" just as Wordsworth performs the daffodils, hoping to make our hearts fill. But Lawrence investigates the fig tree much more deeply than Wordsworth does the daffodils. Lawrence provides the tree's real physical appearance in great detail. He uses several different metaphors to express the tree's physical appearance and to see into its being. The fig tree image allows Lawrence to take his journey, and thereby the

real tree is transformed into a World Tree, a doorway to other realms.

Lawrence opens the door by his close observation of and inquiry into the particular, for through the particular object, the shamanic poet travels to other realms. Thus the particular fig tree becomes The World Tree. The movement of the poem reinforces this transformation as it begins with the close description and ends with the ritual-like naming of the tree, transforming it from fig to Demon, Demos, and revealing the complexity and diversity within the unity of the tree. The tree becomes representative of the diversity of forms regenerated out of the life-giving World Tree which is also The Tree of Life. Although Lawrence reveals his skepticism of democracy through the tree image, the image reminds the reader of Whitman's "grass"--eternal and growing--and confirms Lawrence's shamanic voice.

Like Lawrence, Bly employs the tree image in a shamanic way, focusing on details, "going out" into the non-human realm, finding truths which may heal the poet himself and his audience--especially those truths which may heal the Cartesian split and modern man's alienation from nature and from his own body and self which are nature's. In Chapter Three, I hope to show how this "going out" method of Bly's is shamanic, revealed not just in his approach to objects, but through much of his work, in images of the journey itself. However, to compare Bly and Lawrence's shamanic images of

trees is the purpose at hand.

Bly's tree imagery can be seen throughout his work, but several poems focus on particular trees as the primary image, just as is true of Lawrence's poems. Of these, I have chosen two that are particularly apt: "Hunting Pheasants in a Cornfield" and "Poem in Three Parts," both from SILENCE IN THE SNOWY FIELDS (1962). "The Fallen Tree" from THIS TREE WILL BE HERE FOR A THOUSAND YEARS (1979) and "A Hollow Tree" from the prose poems in THE MORNING GLORY (1975) are also apropos. But the themes and tone of the SILENCE poems are borne out in the later poems, so that an analysis of these two should suffice for the purposes of this short comparative study.

About the poems in SILENCE, Bly says, "I worked to gain a resonance among the sounds, and hidden below that there is a second resonance between the soul and a loved countryside [Minnesota] (SELECTED audio). Like Lawrence, Bly uses sound in a shamanic way to deepen images. The sound enables the ecstatic tone and is a springboard for journeying into the objects.

"Hunting Pheasants in a Cornfield" appears in "Eleven Poems of Solitude," the first of the book's three sections. The section might also aptly be titled "Poems of the Vision Quest." The names of the other sections also suggest a shamanic movement: "Awakening" and "Silence on the Roads." In silence and solitude, the shaman awaits and beholds his

vision, which is the awakening. However, the poems in each section do not fit neatly into one particular part of the shaman's story. While "Hunting" may use the imagery of the vision quest, it also portrays the vision or awakening itself.

Bly says of this poem:

For when we pass into a deep of the mind, we become
 awake to the intelligence of hills and groves. At
 thirty-two I felt for the first time in adult life an
 unattached part of my soul join a tree standing in the
 center of a field. (SELECTED 26)

The shamanic poet crosses the bridge between self and nature and performs that journey in the poem. Such a journey in poetry evolves out of the tradition of Wordsworth's "sense sublime / of something far more deeply interfused" ("Tintern Abbey"). The Romantic notion of organicism, in part, enables Bly to depict this journey into the tree and to be understood.

But the journey is particularly shamanic because it involves healing. The speaker's soul journeys out, interfusing with the natural world and discovering some hidden part of itself therein. In that discovery comes shamanic healing. In his discussion, Bly suggests that the persona is himself and that he indeed experienced healing.

As in Lawrence's fig tree, in Bly's "Hunting" the healing comes as the speaker partakes in the tree's existence. In both poems, close observation enables this spiritual contact. The experience portrayed suggests

Lawrence's "blood consciousness." Indeed, as Bly says, sound takes us into the body and thereby allows us physical communion with nature and soul (SELECTED audio).

This empathy, "blood consciousness," and resonance all refer to that deep, dark interfusion of self, nature, soul, and divinity. They are qualities of many shamanic poems like Bly's "Hunting." Bly says he had been out hunting about two hours in his native Minnesota when the poem came to him. There was (and is in the poem) some affinity between mind and willow, both being alone in the field (SELECTED audio). In the poem, the speaker questions why he is drawn to the willow:

What is so strange about a tree alone in an open field?
It is a willow tree. I walk around and around it
The body is strangely torn, and cannot leave it.
At last I sit down beneath it. (SILENCE 14)

The variety of sounds based in the vowel "o" are particularly important. They carry the literal resonance in sound of the unifying energy portrayed in the images. The words "so," "about," "alone," "open," "willow," "around," "body," "torn," "cannot," and "down" weave together vowel phonemes--s/o/, ab/aw/t, al/o/ne, /o/pen, will/o/, ar/aw/nd, b/a/dy, t/3/rn, cann/a/t, d/aw/n--which are all articulated in the center or back of the mouth with the tongue in a middle to low position relative to the roof of the mouth (Traugott 49-55). They carry the resonance on which Bly says he concentrated and provide the reader with a sound which seems to duplicate the poet's sensations, just as the shaman uses his drum or other

instrument to induce trance-like states in his audience (while he himself may go into actual trance).

The phoneme /o/ elicits the sound of ecstatic journeying--"Oh!" It also ties together "alone," "open," and "willow," enhancing the message of an ecstatic journey taken when one is alone, meditating and thus open to the energies of the willow.

In addition, for Bly, sound works on the body, and the speaker's body cannot leave the tree. The poem's resonating sounds reinforce the scene depicted. The speaker treats his body as a separate entity and thereby shows how the mind's reasoning powers divide humans from the body. Depicting the body as a separate entity also reveals it as our link with nature and with the soul. In the image and sound of the poem, Bly shows, as the shamans show, that to heal the body means to heal the soul and vice versa (SELECTED audio).

Therefore, the speaker's body is the first to understand and feel the pull of the tree, to feel his essential unity with the tree. His body is "strangely torn," for while the tree speaks to the body, so does his mind. As yet his mind still sets itself apart from the tree's domain "in acres of dry corn" with "its leaves . . . scattered around its trunk." He "walk(s) around and around it," but finally at the end of the first stanza, he sits down. The body wins. Howard Nelson posits that the body first feels the "force-field of myth," citing Jung's description of such an initial

encounter: "The moment when this mythological situation reappears is always characterized by a peculiar emotional intensity; it is as though chords in us were struck that had never resounded before" (Jung in Nelson 17).

Certainly this is the resonance of which Bly speaks. However, the experience, though, is also in a shamanic tradition. As Jung indicates, the resonating chords are not new-made. Rather they are in templates of the psyche awaiting the bell-ringer of experience. Shamans have been "striking" and thus developing these chords or parts of ourselves since prehistoric times. Their tradition is the heritage of poets like Bly and Lawrence today. The leaves of Bly's willow are scattered all around, tree and man. The silence of shamanic union reigns: "only the cornstalks now can make noise." Now only through the forces of nature does the shaman "speak." The words and sounds of the poem, ironically, depict the wordless union of body and tree in "blood consciousness." The eternal unity is realized.

For Bly, the soul's realm is indeed this dark realm of Lawrence's "blood consciousness" (SELECTED audio). These two shamanic poets are both at home in this realm. In the audio-taped discussion of his SELECTED POEMS (1986), Bly discusses what he sees to be the soul's attributes, while also defining Lawrence and Rainer Maria Rilke as "soul writers." One may also put Bly himself in this category. He says that writing from the soul provides a work with a sense

of ritual, silence, darkness, and death. This too is the sensibility of the shaman on a journey into dark, uncharted realms.

Bly implies shamanic journeying when he defines the soul in terms of descending movement. This descending journey, as well as the ritual, the silence, and the sense of death can all be seen in "Hunting." Bly performs the ritual as he goes around and around the tree and then sits in meditative silence beneath it. The poem holds this silence and stillness throughout, with two exceptions. The first exception is in stanza one, when the speaker is self-conscious, questioning his affinity for the tree: "What is so strange about a tree alone in an open field?" The second exception is in stanza three, when the speaker questions his affinity for the winter sun: "Why then do I love to watch / The sun moving on the chill skin of the branches?" Other than these two puzzlings, the poem is silent, resonant, full of a sense of death. This sense of death can be a death of the ego, but more appropriately it is a death of the everyday mind which questions and chatters and cannot take one on a journey into other realms.

For the journey, one needs a meditative state: the persona Bly sits beneath the willow. In both meditation and ecstasy the shaman can journey. The shaman uses meditation "to maintain the purity of [his] communications with the spirit world" (Grim 11). He sits or lies in trance, in the

"shamanic state of consciousness" (SSC), as it is now called (Harner in Doore 3). Through the death of the everyday mind, reflected in the stillness of the dying winter landscape, the soul is free to travel to other realms. The image of the persona is akin to the shaman in trance: he does not physically move, but he is in touch with his soul, deep in "blood consciousness" where there is an awareness of his unity with the tree. Bly speaks of this journey:

Yet at certain moments, particularly moments alone, we can pass into a deep of the mind, and at that instant we may pass as well into a tree or a hill, as when the dreamer travelling to some far place finds himself not farther from the soul but nearer to it, and wakes with the sweet sensation of friendship from other worlds.
(SELECTED 26)

Thus by ritual and silence, the persona of "Hunting" reaches a new place of mind, akin to the shaman's trance state though not necessarily identical. In this place, mind touches soul and is taken to new awareness.

Bly's metaphors for this experience seem a bit mixed--soul and mind--but essentially this is what happens in meditation: through the deepening of the mind, altering from an ordinary waking mode, the place of the soul is found. The concentration of meditative "sitting" is represented in the poem by the close details of the tree and scene. With the leaves scattered around him, the meditator becomes attuned to the tree. He wakes up to a part of himself which is carried by the tree. In the poem, man and tree are unified by the metaphor in the last stanza:

The mind has shed leaves alone for years
 It stands apart with small creatures near its roots
 I am happy in this ancient place . . . (SILENCE 14)

The metaphor "performs" the speaker's realization of unity. The mind is indeed the tree shedding leaves. And the "I" is not merely the man sitting under the tree, he is the tree as well, happy in the cornfield, alone.

The experience is shamanic not only in this realization of unity, but also in its healing--the happiness at the poem's close. Speaking of his three years of solitude and relative isolation in New York City, Bly says that he saw the "tree's experience . . . was not unlike my own fragmentation or estrangement" (SELECTED 26). Here the alienated human is reunited with nature through the action of soul and of the poem.

This willow tree functions for Bly as the fig tree does for Lawrence: as a door through which one may have a vision of unity. While in Lawrence's poem the vision is of Demos, in Bly's it is of an individual's unity with nature. Bly's poem represents the result of the shaman-like initiatory vision quest where the shaman himself is healed. Lawrence's poem may be seen as the vision of a mature shaman seeking healing answers for his tribe, as well as for himself. Bly's willow becomes The World Tree for self-healing, for a sacred message is conveyed to the initiate. The initiate's seeming isolation occurs only when spiritual and physical perception are separated (Houston x). When a doorway is opened, a

linkage is made. The willow becomes The World Tree and enables "deep communication" among parts of the fragmented self and of nature . The shamanic poet conveys the wonder, love, and happiness in the sacred moment.

Although he does not focus solely on a tree image, in "Poem in Three Parts," Bly does invest a tree image with shamanic power as he does in "Hunting." Again, the tree becomes a doorway to the sacred.

Just as Lawrence was interested in Empedokles's writings on trees and other matters, Bly is interested in the Greeks and their pre-Cartesian view of the world. He sees that for them science and soul were not at odds. In THIS TREE WILL BE HERE FOR A THOUSAND YEARS (1979), Bly evokes The World Tree image in the title and agrees with the Greeks when he writes: "Many ancient Greek poems . . . suggest that human beings and the 'green world' share a consciousness" (9). He goes on to say that the poems in TREE contain an instant in which he was aware of this sharing and that the poems in SILENCE, such as "Poem in Three Parts," also can be considered part of the same book (11). Like "Hunting," "Poem in Three Parts" conveys that moment of sharing where the doorway to the sacred is opened. In this poem, Bly gathers more images into the scene, but he builds the movement towards the image of the tree in the third part. It is then that the instant of consciousness meeting consciousness arrives.

The poem begins with an ecstatic statement:

Oh, on an early morning I think I shall live forever!
 I am wrapped in my joyful flesh,
 As the grass is wrapped in its clouds of green.

Here is the shamanic ecstasy which first enables contact with other realms or seats of consciousness. The simile comparing the wrap of his flesh to the green of the grass indicates a readiness to join the "green world" so close to the Greeks. Also, in the speaker's sense of immortality, the eternal is linked to the joyful moment. The speaker is like the shaman who sees the eternal in the doorway of the moment, and experiences the timeless state in his journey. Joseph Campbell suggests that eternity is found only in these moments of epiphany (POWER 207, 227-28).

In Part Two, as the speaker recounts his dream journey or vision quest, Bly depicts a shamanic initiatory testing:

Rising from a bed, where I dreamt
 Of long rides past castles and hot coals,

 I have suffered and survived the night
 Bathed in dark water, like any blade of grass.

As he does in "Hunting," Bly depicts a movement of the soul where one is baptized in dark water. Also, by comparing himself to the grass, the speaker implies the same union of consciousness with the green world depicted in "Hunting." Both speaker and grass are connected in the dark deep watery regions which the soul inhabits (Bly, SELECTED audio).

In the last section and stanza, the connection is no longer merely implied with simile, but is now asserted with metaphor. In this stanza the box-elder tree becomes The

World Tree, a doorway opening to the realm of divine chaos:

The strong leaves of the box-elder tree,
Plunging in the wind, call us to disappear
Into the wilds of the universe,
Where we shall sit at the foot of a plant,
And live forever, like the dust.

The rhythms here are Biblical, underscoring the assertion of sacred unity which the shamanic poet makes. In the language of "strong leaves," the images translate the message of unity from the green world. A sacred language "speaks" through the tree, calls us "into the wilds of the universe," into the mythic realm of chaos where the shaman travels. Out of this realm of the dark unformed waters and wilds of ourselves, we can create our lives and can find, in truth, the eternal the speaker finds only in thought ("thinks" of) in the first stanza.

Returned from the shamanic journey, we will sit. Yet as we "sit," we are paradoxically always on that journey "into the wilds." In the ecstatic moment, the shaman journeys and finds the eternal realm. Only through the journey into chaos can the shaman sit at the foot of a plant and "live forever, like the dust." Paradoxically, eternity exists in the moment of enlightenment. A doorway to eternity opens in the ecstatic moment.

Although the final simile ("like the dust") may at first seem ironic, undercutting the ecstatic momentum, it actually serves to "ground" the poem. In the unifying shamanic consciousness where we partake in the green world

and hear the box-elder speak, we thus partake in the earth and its "dust." At the moment of bliss, timeless, we remain beneath the tree "like the dust."

Lawrence would approve of Bly's planting us "down among the potsherds" (LITERARY CRITICISM 40). Bly reveals not the joy of rational mind alone, but the joy of a more holistic and thus shamanic vision. In the poem's dusty finish, Bly depicts the necessary humility which a shaman must have to serve his tribe, or which any of us need in order to serve.

Bly serves "the tribe" in this poem by shifting the pronouns from the "I" of the first two sections to the inclusive "we" of the last section. In this rhetorical shifting of the pronouns, the poem takes a democratic, Whitmanesque turn. Bly implies a tribal healing in his use of "we." The speaker returns with a message or vision from the box-elder, now The World Tree. But his message is not for himself alone, as it might be for the mystic. His message is for his tribe and is therefore shamanic (Grim 12). The pronoun "we" enacts the vision for all. "We" all are reunited with the universe. In this uniting, Bly depicts Lawrence's vision of a new world, where all are redeemed by "awakened sensitivity to and reverence for the simplest experiences" (Altieri 49). We see a fig or an elder tree and find there The Tree of Life.

Thus, the shamanic poet may use love, the image of a tree or some other natural event or object as a doorway

through which he can depict the journey to other realms. These realms of the soul are hidden from the light of reason and associated with darkness (Bly, SELECTED POEMS audio; Castaneda 91).

Dark Imagery and Spoken Form

For the shaman, the dark or murky dusk itself can be an opening to those realms (Castaneda 91). Often the "open sesame" is simply a willingness to wait for the dark, or at other times, the "open sesame" means to actively dive into the dark. Both patient waiting and quick action are acts of will and of courage, acts which Lawrence feels are central to full living (Alvarez 210). His belief shows his alignment with the shamanic perspective. Sacrifice is necessary for the shaman. Not separate or above his tribe, the true shaman is willing to "take on illnesses, visit other worlds, remind each person he or she meets of the night-side, belongs to no class . . . [and may] work in the spiritual world" (Bly, NEWS 129-130). For the shamanic poet, the metaphors of darkness can be the doorways for his depiction of spirit and unity.

In his poem "The Red Wolf," Lawrence depicts a shaman-like persona who, through an exercise of will and patience, simply waits for the "night-side." The persona is a white man, probably Lawrence himself, willing to let the sun go down and to wait in the dusk and dark for "tall old demons,

smiling / The Indian smile, / Saying: How do you do
pale-face?" With courage, he responds, "I am very well, old
demon. / How are you?" (POEMS 404).

This shamanic encounter with a demonic world becomes an
aboriginal baptism when the demon names the pale-faced, red-
bearded persona "red wolf." By this naming, the father-
demon transforms the initiate from a white dog without a god
to a red wolf, full of dark, shamanic energy. Through the
assistance of this masculine spirit-helper, the persona
ascends into his own shamanic powers (Gilbert 257) and waits
without fear of "long fangs" for the demon "to come back with
a new story." Here is the go-between shaman-persona, waiting
on the edge, the place between worlds, existing in Bly's
two-fold consciousness (NEWS). For Lawrence to render the
shamanic experience as a poet, he has had to come to terms
with his own dark side: "I have tried to let the demon say
his say " (Alvarez 212).

Lawrence renders the demon's voice using devices of a
primary, oral tradition. The use of question and answer
(which may repeat part of the question) is one of those
devices. In their poetry, both Bly and Lawrence use anaphora
and other types of repetition--seen in stories and poems of
an oral tradition. Repetition, in all its forms, originates
in oral cultures as a mnemonic device. Bly and Lawrence, in
part, may use this technique to enhance the primary, shamanic
ideas in their poems. In the written poetic tradition, Whit-

man "teaches" such a technique, for instance, in the repetitions of his great, unifying "I am."

But the technique originates in the performance of the shaman. Repetition of sounds and words is used not only in the performance of his journey, but also in the performance which puts him in a trance state so that he may take his journey. The audience too is put in a trance-like state, so that it is more amenable to the shaman's performance (Grim 12). Repetition serves the memory and hypnotizes the mind, hammering home visions with the rhythms of the blood (Alvarez 218).

The form is loose, associative, open, lacking closure, for the tribe's story is ongoing. Of course, each healing message contains resolution, as even a poem in free verse has some stopping point. What each poem of this type gives us is a slice in time of consciousness in flux. The solution to an individual's illness now, may be different from the solution to the same illness in the past or future. Writing on "vers libre," Lawrence suggests a similar concept of the form: ". . . free verse has its own 'nature' . . . instantaneous like plasmIt is the instant; the quick" (Alvarez 211). Thus, free verse is well-suited to the needs of the shamanic poet. By setting down a moment which reaches into the darkness, to the other, the shamanic poet puts us in the realm of the Australian aboriginal dream-time where we are timeless--where we meet our demons and our Teeth Mother, and

see that they are us.

Indeed, Bly's long poem in free verse, "Teeth Mother," depicts the shamanic speaker actively diving into the demon dark. The doorway to the dark is opened by the poet through a phantasmagoria of images and through repetition and other sound devices. Like Lawrence in "Red Wolf," Bly in "Teeth Mother" conveys a mythic, shamanic perspective through these devices of the oral tradition. The loose form of the poem also conveys that even now the mythic stories of the tribe continue to unfold. In the next chapter, I will discuss Bly's "Teeth Mother" at length, covering his use of dark imagery and rhetorical devices of the oral tradition.

Conclusion: Shamanic Healing

Whatever metaphorical doorways Bly and Lawrence use to reveal the shamanic vision of unity and and new myth, the vision is essential in both poets' work. Their shamanic approach to poetry responds to the wars and cultural divisiveness of their times. They also respond to the emphasis on commerce and technology over human, natural, and spiritual values. War, greed, and the machine have all separated the modern tribe from those values which are taken as a matter of course in primitive cultures. In these cultures, the shaman's role was essential, for he mediated among human, natural, and spiritual worlds.

Both poets seem to call for a return of the shamanic perspective. In their poems, they use shamanic imagery. In some poems, they depict shaman-like personae, courageous and aware, entering the heart of darkness, exploring other worlds to bring back healing knowledge essential to the tribe's well-being.

The healing aspect of the shamanic approach is important in their work. It allows Bly and Lawrence a new didacticism: through the performance or image of the poem they reveal healing. The healing may or may not take place, but success is not necessary to the didactic poem. At least, they provide the lesson. They believe their poetry performs a real and two-fold function: to make us aware of the debilitating sickness of our divided consciousness and to show us the dark and hidden side, to reveal other worlds. Lawrence says, "Art itself doesn't interest me, only the spiritual content" (Alvarez 210).

Poetry is a journey to find a new and renewing myth. The renewal may come in an encounter with a energizing spiritual entity, as seen in "Red Wolf," a god full of dark energy like Blake's Satan. Lawrence wants to reveal "unmediated reality." He wants to depict the place where the shaman journeys. In that place, "the voices of education" fall away, and we may see the dark god, rendered by the shamanic performance of the poem.

Bly, too, wants to depict this reality in his poems.

But, like the shaman, the shamanic poet is continually developing his perception. The shaman is not better than the tribe, so much as he is off to one side, called in at certain times for his healing expertise. The shaman is not above "the ever-anxious, loveless crowd" as Wordsworth thought himself to be. Bly says

I see in my own poems and the poems of so many other poets alive now fundamental attempts to right our own spiritual balance, by encouraging those parts in us that are linked with music, with solitude, water, and trees, the parts that grow when we are far from the centers of ambition (SLEEPERS 50).

The shaman strives alongside his tribe. So does the shamanic poet in his attempt to portray union and healing. Bly strives where once Lawrence did. Neither of their visions of unity with the dark side is yet realized by their tribes. However, today, Bly is not as solitary a singer as Lawrence once was. Now there are "so many other poets" journeying, or hoping to journey, as Bly is doing, in the dark, rich mines of other worlds, the same mines where Lawrence once dug and where he surely left a few rich veins to Bly, his kinsman.

CHAPTER III

THE SHAMANIC PERFORMANCE: BLY'S RHETORIC IN

SLEEPERS JOINING HANDS

While critics such as Howard Nelson (32-72) and Richard Sugg (37-70) look to Bly's *THE LIGHT AROUND THE BODY* (1967) as his political book, they look at *SLEEPERS JOINING HANDS* (1973) more as "the poetry of psychospiritual myth" (Sugg 70) and as poetry often best explained in Jungian terms (Nelson 97, 99). Critics seem hard put to find a holistic way to look at Bly's work and particularly at *SLEEPERS*. His published work contains intensely personal poems like those in *SILENCE IN THE SNOWY FIELDS*, yet also includes very political poems like those in *LIGHT*. Representative of Bly's works, *SLEEPERS* itself contains a mix of these two types of poems, making it indeed difficult to analyze as a single integrated work. Of this book, Sugg believes that

the differences between the book's parts...often seem greater than the similarities....the book represents a transition in Bly's development, reflecting at least two different periods in his career, and two different aspects of his poetic imagination. (71)

On the contrary, the book's poems do not represent a clear transition in Bly's work. Bly himself indicates that the personal poems and the more rambling long poems and political poems were sometimes written alongside each other (*SELECTED* 27). Also, since 1973 when *SLEEPERS* was published, Bly has

written many poems which are in tone and style much like those in SILENCE, so the case for a clear progression cannot be made.

How then can one interpret Bly's work and particularly SLEEPERS? Nelson admits some images may be best explained in Jungian terms, yet he refutes Michael Atkinson's and David Seal's strictly Jungian interpretation (98). Sugg too suggests the importance of Jung in Bly's work (84). He interprets SLEEPERS in light of various Jungian ideas, with no unifying theme except for the term "psychospiritual myth." Of course, Jungian interpretations are quite valid, in part because Bly has read much Jung (Nelson 97). However, Bly has remarked, "the way to ruin a poem is to put in a lot of archetypes" (TALKING 260). While it is dangerous to assess a poet solely by his own criticism, Bly's comment does provide a clue to a more satisfying approach--one which would bring more holism to the interpretation of Bly's work. Again, I suggest that looking at his work as shamanic will show how both his personal and his political poems are of a single vision.

SLEEPERS is a good example to investigate since it embodies the apparent dichotomy of public and private approaches in Bly's work. Interpreting this book in light of the shaman's role, particularly in light of the shaman's performance, I hope to show not only how rhetoric is an essential element to the form and function of Bly's poems,

but also how these diverse poems represent a unified poetic vision.

In the late sixties and early seventies Robert Bly danced, sang, chanted, ranted, and raved his poems to audiences across the country. Dressed in multicolored caftan, with beads and wild hair, Bly seemed the epitome of the hippie poet, but rather he was presenting the image of poet as shaman. Among other poets like Gary Snyder and Jerome Rothenberg, Bly was reviving the oral traditions of poetry (Bly, SELECTED 62). While his persona, costumes, instruments, and improvisation (Nelson 51) were certainly of that time and also naturally Bly's, not merely false show, they were definitely artistic choices. Bly was not and is not merely a wild, hippie poet. Albeit outside the academy, teaching only at workshops here and there, Bly is a serious critic of contemporary poetry and quite influential. His widely read and now re-issued FIFTIES, SIXTIES, and SEVENTIES journal series are only some of the evidence of that. Also, despite his education at esteemed institutions like Harvard and the Iowa Writer's Workshop, he chose to avoid the academic life (Bly, TALKING 15). By that choice, he stands outside the usual place for the poet in America today. The outsider's position is typically shamanic.

Bly's choice of shaman-like persona, including clothing and musical instruments, was and is part of Bly's rhetoric, as Kenneth Burke suggests such things may be in his RHETORIC

OF MOTIVES (695-96). This persona was as much a part of Bly's rhetorical stance as was his decision to found American Writers Against the Vietnam War with David Ray, to stage anti-War readings, and to publish an anti-War anthology (Nelson 37). While the choices themselves are part of Bly's personal development as a shamanic poet and poetic inspiration is part of his shamanic journeying, the poems in SLEEPERS may be interpreted as shamanic performances: they are both public and rhetorical in nature, as well as private and mystical. The rhetoric of a shamanic performance persuades the tribe of a healing method as a solution to a tribal problem. The poems of SLEEPERS work to persuade the American tribe of the societal problems which the Vietnam War unveiled and to persuade them of a cure.

SLEEPERS is divided into three parts. The first begins with poems which are private or "expressive" as rhetorician James L. Kinneavy might call them (63), but finishes with more public and politically oriented poems--seemingly unrelated to the first poems. The second part bifurcates the book and is a prose essay entitled "I Came Out of the Mother Naked." Here Bly discusses ideas about Great Mother culture, which I shall explain later, in a free form, non-academic style for which, he says, he saw the possibility in D.H. Lawrence's FANTASIA OF THE UNCONSCIOUS (Faas 223). Like the poetry of the first part, Bly's essay works to persuade. The third and final section of the book is the long poem from

which the book takes its title, "Sleepers Joining Hands." This long poem is itself divided into four parts: "The Shadow Goes Away," "Meeting the Man Who Warns Me," "The Night Journey in the Cooking Pot," and "Water Drawn Up Into the Head." These poems in particular represent a shamanic performance of the journey carrying a message of healing for the tribe. By looking at particular poems in each section and at the essay, I hope to show just how the shamanic poet Bly works to persuade his tribe of a cure and thus how rhetoric is integral to the shaman's role.

SLEEPERS: Section I

The book opens with a six short poems entitled "Six Winter Privacy Poems." If there were any question, the title itself settles the issue that these are indeed in the more private, expressive mode of the shamanic poet. The poems are a series of meditations where we can envision the poet as persona at his very real writing shack (Froiland 35) meditating and being inspired to write:

1

About four, a few flakes.
 I empty the teapot out in the snow,
 feeling shoots of joy in the new cold.
 By nightfall, wind,
 the curtains on the south sway softly.

2

My shack has two rooms; I use one.

The lamplight falls on my chair and table
 and I fly into one of my-own poems--
 I can't tell you where--
 as if I appeared where I am now,
 in a wet field, snow falling. (3)

The shaman-like speaker prepares for and begins his ecstatic journey into the realm of dreams. In the book's essay, Bly says poems are in a "dream-voice" (29). The place where the speaker flies is full of mystery: he can't tell us where he goes, yet he arrives "in a wet field, snow falling." In performance, the shaman never gives his secrets away, yet he will provide enough information to keep the audience intrigued.

Bly elicits a quiet magic by the alliteration of /s/ and /f/ sounds: "four, a few flakes," or "south, sway softly," by the /l/ sound of "flakes" and "softly," and by the assonance and other use of vowel sounds: the /ɔ/ sound in "four," "softly," and "falling;" the /aw/ in "out" and "south;" the /o/ of "snow" and "cold;" the /e/ of "sway" and "flakes." As Bly believes sounds do, these sounds may travel through the ear directly to the soul (SELECTED audio).

The beautiful sounds and the quietude of the poems may appear to contradict a rhetorical purpose, but Bly's use of these stylistic elements already begins to define the rhetorical reaches of SLEEPERS. After all, Aristotle sees stylistic elements as having rhetorical purpose (Cooper 182-217). In fact, he states that "the appropriateness of your language to the emotions will make people believe in

your facts" (Cooper 197). Bly underscores the simple beauty of the snowfall and the sense of "being there" by employing the alliteration and assonance as well as by the rhythms. He creates the sense of "being there" by using first person and present tense.

All these stylistic elements work to create a oral quality in the poems so that the words will perform on our inward ear, enhancing the images performance for our "inward eye." The combination makes for a drama, albeit lyrical and personal, being performed in the poem. Bly makes the poem a present moment, a "now." Rhetorician Kenneth Burke might say that through this drama (ear and eye) and through identification ("being there"), the poems involve the audience in the scene (MOTIVES 50,89-90,22). Rhetorically, the poems work because they involve the reader in the scene, and for the same reason, they work shamanistically. By effective sounds and images, the shaman involves his tribe in the performance of his journey in order to convince them of the healing message it contains.

Indeed, in one of these poems, Bly portrays himself as a poet-shaman who flies into other realms: "...I fly into one of my own poems--/I can't tell you where--." Here he uses direct address ("you") to bring his readers into the quiet, meditative play which re-enacts the writing process. Of course, one might say that Bly is merely talking to himself in the poem, that both pronouns are different aspects of him-

self. Yet here too, there is what Burke calls a rhetorical "scene," for one may work to persuade oneself (MOTIVES 38). Bly may not seem to be persuading, but he is attempting to understand or identify with that part of himself which creates the poem--this movement towards identification whether between parts of himself or between himself and his audience, or more likely both, is a rhetorical movement, in Burkian terms (MOTIVES 21-23).

Surely when a poem is performed by publication or reading, the identification motive is towards an audience as well as within the psyche of the poet. In either situation, the shamanic poet wants his audience to see his writing process as best he can describe it. Because it is a mysterious process, journey-like, in a mysterious realm, and not easily explained, his very admission of inadequacy brings the audience into the fold. We are empathetic. We too have difficulty telling our dreams, and so we are made ready to listen. This is St. Augustine's idea of "flectere" (to bend): we are persuaded to attitude if not to action (MOTIVES 50). In this way Bly begins his book, with intimacy, letting his audience get to know him, establishing his ethos--the appropriate introduction for any artful persuasion.

The process described in these first poems of SLEEPERS is very much a shamanic one: "Sitting Alone" describes a singing joy akin to the shaman's ecstasy in the seance; "I Fly" describes a journey; the lines "More of the fathers are

dying each day./It is time for the sons," reveal some knowledge gained in trance; "Listening to Bach" indicates the mystery mixed with ecstasy that the shaman knows; and the last poem "When I woke..." depicts the shaman-like return. All elements of the process of a shamanic journey are paralleled in these six meditations. In rendering in quiet drama that process and in speaking directly to the audience, Bly certainly is being rhetorical.

In fact, the shaman's performance, which is both dramatic and lyrical according to Eliade (SHAMANISM 510), is ultimately rhetorical, for the shaman must persuade in order to heal. Eliade suggests this when he says that the pre- and post-trance performance parallels and is the source for the poetic act of recreating an inner experience within a dramatic structure which reveals a mysterious realm where all seems possible (510). In that realm, healing can take place, for by the euphoria and the mystery of the performance, the audience (tribe) can be persuaded of the possibility of healing. For the shaman, the tribe must first believe before it will act, and sometimes belief is all that is needed; that is, inculcation or restoration of faith itself alone may be the cure. As indicated, Kenneth Burke sees the rhetorical importance simply of gaining belief in his assessment of St. Augustine's views. Burke suggests that in DE DOCTRINA CHRISTIANA Augustine redefined rhetoric by using the word "flectere" (to bend) instead of Cicero's "movere" (to move)

(MOTIVES 50). Burke sees this shift as permitting rhetorical analysis of any poems, not just overtly persuasive ones. Burke's ideas suggest how to look not only at Bly's very obviously public and didactic poems as rhetorical, but also at his seemingly merely private poems.

In fact, one may make a case for linking not only the origins of the poet, priest, mystic, doctor, and psychologist in the shaman's role, but also the rhetorician. To persuade, the shaman uses poetry, as well as many other devices--sounds, clothes, drama, myths, special knowledge, tribal history and politics--just as the rhetorician may. Only the multi-faceted and knowledgeable citizen can be a good orator according to Cicero in *DE ORATORE* (Golden 76). The shaman too must be multi-faceted and knowledgeable in pragmatic as well as mystic realms, since he must know how to render the mystical into the practical. The shaman must know well how to use the power of symbols to persuade. Burke suggests that all symbolic forms have rhetorical power (LANGUAGE 28), thus as an expert in various sorts of symbols, the shaman indeed wields rhetorical power.

As part of and in addition to the devices of sound, style, costume, tribal knowledge, etc., the shaman, the rhetorician, and the shamanic poet use mystery. All three use language to transport the audience, to enable them to experience what Longinus would call "the Sublime." Kenneth Burke indicates that rhetoric's power is carried by the

innate mystery of language itself as a system of symbols which can never be ultimately explained (MOTIVES 43). Thus, like shamanism, rhetoric has both a mystical and a pragmatic side. In this similarity, too, there may be a connection of rhetoric to shamanism, as well as to poetry. Shamanism may be a common ancestor (still very much alive, however) for poet and rhetor. Burke suggests that primitive magic was not simply "primitive science," but more aptly often "early rhetoric" and should be assessed as such--and not by anthropologists alone. By this suggestion, Burke is working to widen the scope of rhetoric. Certainly, the shaman did and does use some form of rhetoric, as well as poetry, to achieve his ends. The two functions were quite compatible within his role; indeed, they serve each other to enhance mystery and belief for healing purpose.

When the shaman uses the language of natural, divine, and human spirits and depicts them in costume and dance, he employs and emphasizes the innate mystery of language. That mystery arises from its abstraction and its representation. It speaks of things seen and not seen, just as a shaman must. Language is mysterious because it is truth, yet not. The shaman's mask for an animal spirit is like his language for it: he embodies the spirit, but he is not it. Or is he? The question of transformation is an important issue in shamanism, but not in the scope of this discussion. What is clear is that the shaman's performance is not unlike language

itself: a representation of another world. The mystery of that "separate reality" (Castaneda) is intriguing, and the intrigue of performance, enhanced by the intrigue of language itself, provides the shaman with a powerful persuasive tool. A poet who consciously or unconsciously employs the devices of language to suggest the mysterious resonance of other realms is a poet who has at least some shamanic attributes and some powerful rhetorical tools.

Thus Bly's brief meditations here, and elsewhere, take us in rhetorically by their mystery and their poetry. The last of these "Privacy Poems" leaves us with that mystery which is so intriguing:

When I woke, new snow had fallen.
I am alone, yet someone else is with me,
drinking coffee, looking out at the snow. (4)

The image is clear, quiet, and mysterious. We all have had a morning cup of coffee. We can see Bly doing the same. We can see the new snow with him. We identify while at the same time we are mystified--who is with him?

The next poem in SLEEPERS is entitled "The Turtle." In shamanic terms, we may have the answer to who is with Bly in his writing shack. After the ecstasy "sitting in this darkness singing" and in "Listening to Bach," he awoke with a presence, "someone else," in the cabin. While that "someone else" implies many things, it may also mean the turtle itself. Shamanistically, the order of poems in the book works well. Like the good shaman who invokes a helping

animal spirit early in his performance, Bly depicts the turtle as such a spirit, joining the speaker(s) and the poet at the outset of the book's journey.

In addition, the helping animal spirit may represent a deeper aspect of the speaker, for in the shaman's world, man and nature are unified (Grim 31). Bly infers that unity in his "Poem in Three Parts" in SILENCE IN THE SNOWY FIELDS discussed in Chapter Two. He also speaks of it in NEWS OF THE UNIVERSE--for example, when he discusses the tradition of Novalis-Holderlin-Goethe which he admires: "the awareness that the old non-human or non-ego energies the ancient world imagined so well were impinging again on human consciousness" (80).

Bly submits that the poetic mode of this tradition is one of swift association of images, or what he calls "leaping" poetry, rather than the trope of irony. This leaping poetry is better able "to approach the nourishment of night-intelligence" (81). Night-intelligence is the dark, spiritual realm where nature communicates meaning. It is that deeper aspect of the self where human and nature are one. Bly's translation of some lines by Spanish surrealist poet Antonio Machado may help further to explain this shamanic idea of unity which Bly sees as important to poetry:

What the poet is looking for
is not the fundamental I
but the deep you (NEWS 79).

In SLEEPERS, "The Turtle" poem represents the discovery of

this "deep you," which comes during the shaman's journey. One may also look at "Calling to the Badger" in this light as well, although in this later-placed poem the badger (and the otter) seems to represent a helping spirit for the entire tribe and its suppressed Indian culture, not just for a solitary speaker. Of course, in the performance of "The Turtle" poem, Bly is giving us the turtle as well, but within the confines of the poem, the turtle is his power animal.

In the performance, the shaman invokes his helping spirit by representing it through costume, sounds, secret language, and images. All are part of his rhetorical power to persuade the animal to protect, to teach, and to empower him:

How shiny the turtle is, coming out
of the water, climbing the rock, as if
the body inside shone through!
As if swift turtle wings swept out of darkness,
crossed some barriers
and found new eyes.
An old man falters with his stick.
Later, walkers find holes in black earth.
.....
No one finds the huge turtle eggs
lying inland on the floor of the old sea. (5)

The presence of the helping animal spirit conveys that the shaman is favored by the spirit world, welcomed there and empowered by it. When the audience "sees" that spirit in the performance, the shaman's own power is represented. The helping spirit becomes as persuasive tool, for the shaman is employing "authority" to lend credence to his argument. Bly's close and magical description of the turtle lends

authority by its sensitivity to the natural world. Here the speaker of the poem, typically Bly himself, has taken the time to watch the turtle, presenting the audience with the image born of that time, just as the shaman presents the tribe with the images of his journey. By the image, we are sensitized to the natural world and can experience its mysterious "wings swept out of darkness" and thereby its power.

Then, too, the speaker's ethos gains credence and thus persuasive force. In addition to this ethical appeal, the mystery of other worlds represented by the spirit animal, here seen in the turtle's "shining body," has an emotional impact, a pathetic appeal. Both appeals are important in any orator's introductory remarks; therefore, from a shamanic standpoint, Bly's placement of this poem within the book seems appropriate rhetorically. In turn, good rhetorical organization poetically helps Bly to create an integrated work.

Besides these traditional shamanic uses of the animal helping spirit, Bly employs the image of the turtle and its "hidden eggs" for another rhetorical purpose--to help him assert his thesis. The image is of the dark side of consciousness, "swept out of darkness/crossed some barriers,/and found new eyes," which Bly believes must be recognized by Americans in order to begin healing the wounds which the Vietnam War has uncovered (SLEEPERS 50). Later in

SLEEPERS, Bly says that this dark realm of consciousness which has been suppressed in the West was once represented by a matriarchal culture, later overcome by the patriarchy which is still in power. The matriarchy was, of course, feminine in its attributes and its symbols. Thus, he says, its favorite images were of the night and the sea; its favorite creatures the oyster, the owl, the dove, and the turtle (32)--all of which he believes to be feminine in nature or imagery. So the turtle is an appropriate helping spirit for this book in which Bly calls for an American consciousness which is balanced and no longer solely patriarchal in nature. Behind the poetic image of the turtle lies this other rhetorical motive, based in logos. The image represents the balancing feminine force his thesis calls for. Through the turtle, Bly introduces his audience to other forms of consciousness, "the deep you" which the shamanic poet seeks and wants all of us to find.

This rhetorical purpose for SLEEPERS which is shamanic in nature and which unifies the book is perhaps more clearly delineated in the book's third poem, "Water Under the Earth." Bly begins very personally, "Oh yes, I love you, book of my Confessions," but again he does not stay with what Machado calls "the fundamental I." For, although this first line probably refers not only to the book itself but also to St. Augustine's CONFESSIONS which Bly mentions in a later poem, Bly blames, not loves, the Church and St. Augustine's

converting (rhetorical) power for much of the imbalance and dis-ease in Western consciousness. He says in NEWS:

The Christian Church, in its Augustinian emphasis on the evil of nature, from which human consciousness should out of sheer common sense hold itself aloof, contributed to the gap Western human beings feel between themselves and the universe. (81)

Hence, the pun on "confessions" reveals Bly's own Augustinian heritage, yet as a figure it allows him to condemn while it acknowledges. He turns from "the fundamental I" by next employing the pronouns "we" and "you." In the poem, the journey seeking "the deep you" becomes the rhetorical use of these pronouns and gains Burkian "identification" in the process.

In performance, the "I" of the shamanic poet always must find the common ground of identification with his tribe in order first, to heal them of sickness (individually or as a group); second, to convince them of where to find game or how to be healed; third, to convince them that he has indeed taken a dead member to his rightful place in the spirit world; and/or fourth, to assert a new myth (i.e. a new method or conceptual approach to the world). All four of these tasks are types of healing and are also rhetorical. All four are helps for approaching a mysterious world.

Certainly, if the call for help is rhetorical (MOTIVES 42), so is the answer. Both are kinds of "inducement(s) to action" (MOTIVES 42). The performance of the shaman employs many aids towards that inducement (as well as to action).

of the book. These parts are the "hidden eggs" of the turtle; indeed they are also like spirits from shamanic realms being given voice by the shaman. In this way the poem itself attempts to perform the task which the partially implied "thesis" asserts--to reveal what we need which is now hidden. Of course, Bly also asserts that this revelation shall come when he says, "what is beneath us will be triumphant."

In any case, as representative of his tribe and its problems, the shamanic speaker takes the first step in the process--recognition of the problem within himself : "I see how carefully I have covered my tracks as I wrote." Like his tribe, he suppresses parts of himself. He hides feelings and imperfections. He tries to appear whole when he is not. Suppression, hiding, and lies--all create imbalance.

The next step is entering another realm to find answers, crossing the threshold: "I enter rooms full of photographs of the dead./My hair stands up/as a badger crosses my path in the moonlight." He takes the tribe on his journey into a darker, hidden realm, often feminine in imagery (according to Bly's own definition), where badgers, owls, leopards and other creatures have knowledge and energy and power that can make one's "hair stand up." In this realm, he sees "faces looking at me in the shallow waters," and he gives them voice by paradoxically saying

So much is not spoken!
I stand at the edges of the light, howling to come in.

Then I follow the wind through open holes in the blood--
So much ecstasy
long evenings when the leopard leaps up to the stars,
and in an instant WE understand all the rocks in the
world. [t/o]

(SLEEPERS 7)

He speaks paradoxically for what cannot be spoken, as the shaman does, through the vehicle of performed ecstasy.

The order of these lines should be noted: first the claim of the unspoken, then the wolf-like request, followed by his entry into ecstasy. This is a standard shamanic performance: the claims of the hidden spirit world, the request to enter that world using the spirit animal helper's secret language, and the entry then to that world via the ecstatic trance. The silence of the trance state is implied in Bly's use of ellipsis. Then he depicts the post-trance performance, telling of more journeying. He enters the mysterious, hidden realm of his own body which is his link to the natural world. In his SELECTED POEMS, Bly says that descending "into the body" (being aware of the body) enables one to glimpse all sorts of "beings" one cannot see with the "mind" (the solely rational approach) (130). In the pathways of Laurentian "blood consciousness," the shamanic speaker unites self and tribe with leopards, stars, and rocks. He and thereby the tribe are "full of energy" which is the shaman's energy (Sharon 49), but which Cartesian and Augustinian thinking has suppressed, according to Bly (NEWS 4, 81).

At the poem's close, the shamanic poet ends with some beautiful images which recognize the hidden, the things

buried which we need, and makes a bold assertion:

There is consciousness hovering under the mind's feet,
 advanced civilizations under the footsole,
 climbing at times up on a shoelace!
 It is a willow that knows of water under the earth,
 I am a father who dips as he passes over underground
 rivers, [t/o]
 who can feel his children through all distance and
 time! [t/o] (7)

Here first is the recognition of the consciousness of the body at "the mind's feet," which in turn becomes the assertion that this body's consciousness is as sophisticated and complex and respectable as that rational, mind consciousness which Descartes elevated as supreme in saying, "I think, therefore I am." Bly's assertion in counterpoint to Descartes is reinforced by the feet and shoe imagery and its humor. What game is afoot? In the play of mind and words there is an opening to things not logical in an ordinary sense. It is Zen-like play, but also shamanic--the trickster-shaman reveals that our concepts of the world are just that, concepts, not the whole show. What is afoot? In truth and in fun, the body is part of the earth, part of the "dust"--an image Bly uses later in "The Teeth Mother Naked at Last" (26).

The earth and our connection to it, our bodies, are our literal ground of being. Hence, the shift of imagery to that of the willow tree is appropriate-- from foot to roots, both tap something hidden in the earth. The metaphor associating "willow" with the body in consciousness does not merely reveal similarity but real unity. Such depiction of unity is

a touchstone of the shamanic approach. When the poem shifts back to the pronoun "I," Bly depicts the speaker not only as representing the patriarchy ("a father"), but as a patriarch who works to balance his consciousness with matriarchal ideas ("underground rivers," "feel his children"). The speaker is a father who realizes that part of himself is buried, that he covers his tracks, but who now can dip into the hidden resources of "mother" earth.

The ability to tap the spiritual resources of nature is the shaman's ability and one which Bly would like us all to have--or perhaps he would say that we already have that potential. Bly's rhetorical purpose is to show the tribe the beauty in using that ability, the need for it, and to encourage us to get in touch with what is "underground." The final lines are not overtly didactic. They, too, work to persuade through identification. The shamanic speaker reaches ecstasy, then says, "we understand all the rocks in the world." He and his tribe are one in this understanding, the poem asserts. Thus, in the use of "I" in those final lines we are still journeying with him as either part of his great "I am" father or as "his children" or both and more. Of course, the children are not just human children, but of all earth's children--all of which must be recognized, Bly asserts, if we are to right the balance of consciousness.

As shown, in these first three poems Bly presents some of the important movements of SLEEPERS. By the word "move-

ments," I am suggesting, first, the movement of pronouns from "I" to "we" to "you" and back by which Bly reinforces rhetorical identification so that his performance can be successful. Second, I am suggesting the movement, here called "journey," from the everyday realm into the darker spiritual realms which unite with the natural world. This second sort of movement is from the everyday mind "down" into the body and through it into the earth and nature. Bly reveals this journey in poetic images, such as the willow metaphor. He agrees with the poet Robert Duncan that an image can be "a received sign of the great language in which the universe itself is written" (in Faas 229). In fact, Bly insists that "the image is a physical thing" which does not work through the brain, but through the heart, and he agrees that this idea of image is perhaps an Orphic concept when he says, "And Orpheus . . . decided to go down here" (pointing to his body) (in Faas 229).

Therefore the image of poetry takes on a mythic, yet physically real meaning. The image is both a symbol and an act of unity between spirit and body. Such a view of the image is shamanic. The image is not simply a picture in words on a page. For a shamanic poet like Bly, the image includes a physical performance. In the image, the speaker is present in the moment, and by that presence, has rhetorical vigor. Bly's view of image is parallel to Robert S. Ellwood, Jr.'s view of magic and ritual in his book ALTERNATIVE

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(1979), and thereby his view is parallel to shamanistic ritual:

Magic and ritual seem to evoke a primal stage of human development when psyche and physiology were much more intimately integrated than after distance senses and ego began to create worlds of consciousness separate from the "world" of the physical body--its wordless energies, needs, and knowledge.

A correlation can be made that for a shamanic poet like Bly the image indeed functions as a ritual, shamanistic performance in the poem. The image comes from and through the body to make a real and physical statement to its audience who partake in its action, as a community in a ritual--the ritual of the poem. Because the image's source is deeper than a mental concept alone, its rhetorical force can be greater. The rhetorical power which Burke argues that all words carry (LANGUAGE 3-24) is amplified when the poet combines words into such images. Hence the second movement in the book, the shamanic journey, is one from which Bly's images arise and take rhetorical strength.

The shamanic journey thus can provide creative "products" or images while it represents creative "process." When it represents process and is "performed" in the poem, it is also another method of identification. The poet does not "cover his tracks;" by the act of admission, he "uncovers" them in the process of the poem. He reveals himself and his creative process--at least within the confines of the poem. This openness is an essential part of Bly's rhetorical stance

as a shamanic poet. It engenders an organic approach to form: the poem appears to unfold before our eyes, in the present moment. The form of the poem often enacts the journey: the audience travels with the shamanic poet, and thereby we feel we know the poet, although, in truth, the poet gives only a mask made of more subtle fabric. Thus the poet works to make us feel we do know him and have journeyed with him, and so he hopes we will be more likely to agree--"flectere"--with him, although not necessarily act with him.

Thus the journey is both creative process and rhetorical approach. The performance of the journey heals as it persuades. In performance, in the first section of SLEEPERS and throughout the book, Bly makes connections, identifications with hidden parts of himself, with his audience, and with nature. Bly depicts the journey towards holism as healing, not just the arrival. His purpose is make his readers aware of the need for unity and balance, which at once makes him a shamanic mythmaker and brings him, of rhetorical necessity, close to his tribe. The tribe must all partake in his mythmaking performance, if his task is to succeed; that is, for his tribe to recognize what "now is buried." At the close of Section I, Bly reveals the buried myth (the matriarchal/feminine energies) in its most horrifying aspect, the Teeth Mother.

"The Teeth Mother Naked at Last": Part I

Although one can see Bly's rhetorical and shamanic stance in the other poems of section one, in none is that stance so powerfully portrayed than "The Teeth Mother Naked at Last." Here Bly reveals how the matriarchal energies "beneath us will be triumphant" one way or another. If the tribe suppresses them, they will rise up in the horrifying aspect of the Teeth Mother. It is she who rises up in the form of war (here Vietnam) or genocide (the Holocaust or slaughter of Indians) or some other horror, just as Joseph Conrad depicted in HEART OF DARKNESS. Bly explains these views in the prose essay in section two which follows the poem (27-50).

In this poem, the shamanic rhetoric of myth is full of that energy of which Bly so often speaks. It is the energy the shaman acquires in traveling to other realms (Grim 4). Here too the rhetoric is more public and traditional than in some of the other poems in Section I. Although there are several other "public" poems in the book, such as "Hair" and "Condition of the Working Classes 1970" (in which Bly addresses "You United States"), in "Teeth Mother" Bly is perhaps at his best in writing a poem which is at once real poetry and real public rhetoric. Joyce Carol Oates says, "The Teeth Mother" is a "small masterpiece . . . which will probably be remembered as the finest poem to have grown out of the anti-war movement of the Sixties" (in Nelson 96). Critic Howard Nelson compares it to T.S. Eliot's "The

Wasteland": "both describe a man's struggle against spiritual desolation" (97). However, it is not just one man's struggle which the poem depicts, but an entire "tribe's" struggle. Also, the poem is more than a description; it asserts an opinion, assesses the War's causes, proposes a solution amidst a warning. Ultimately "Teeth Mother" is a call or exhortation for balance and holism.

Bly's opinion is his message of healing: "Americans are killing others because they are not psychically whole themselves." In the poem the Teeth Mother represents the dismemberment of the psyche (Sugg 77) which occurs when there is psychic imbalance. To represent healing, the good shamanic poet offers his muse, the Ecstatic Mother, his muse of poetry and song, as the counter to the Teeth Mother. While her voice of ecstasy resonates in some lines of "Teeth Mother," it is especially evident in poems such as "Water into the Head" and the "Privacy Poems," and in the long title poem, "Sleepers Joining Hands." But at present, let us look at "Teeth Mother" which presents Bly's thesis that the American psyche is incomplete, as evidenced by Vietnam, and in need of healing.

As indicated, this poem's rhetorical potency derives in part from the power of the mythological lore of the Great Mother and her four-fold aspects of which the Teeth Mother is one (SLEEPERS 27-50). The public rhetorical power also derives from Bly's method of composition for the poem. He

composed much of the poem as he read it aloud to audiences (Nelson 51). Bly became well known for his presentation of this poem and others. This is the type of poem that brought large audiences to his readings in the late Sixties and early Seventies (and continues to do so). Bly performed it shaking his beads, whirling his caftan (Workshop). But the words perform on the page as well as on the stage. Bly "speaks" through the use of a number of schemes (e.g. alliteration, anaphora, parallelism) and tropes (e.g. metaphor, synecdoche, onomatopoeia) (Corbett 493-95). Especially through the devices of repetition (in sound, structure, and sense) and of sound, Bly echoes a primitive, oral poetry, enabling his voice on the page to make bold declarations. The poem "shouts" the horror of the War in particular and bloody images.

The method of "logical" reasoning which undergirds and helps to structure the poem is the rhetorical "topos" of cause and effect. Bly declares the Vietnam War itself as the most obvious and horrific effect, but he believes there are others as well. The causes for the War which he proposes are difficult to see in the poem, but are essential to understanding his stance on the War. A close reading of the poem should help define Bly's argument of causes and effects. In addition, it should help define some of his other rhetorical strategies and reveal the devices which provide the oral texture of the poem.

In using cause and effect as one of the major reasoning methods, the good poet-orator Bly uses examples as the most effective means of presenting causes and effects. Through examples he vividly shows the War, the most obvious effect. Through examples he vividly reveals the imbalanced American psyche which is the major cause of the War. For the poet, examples are images based in truth--some real, some not--, but presented to best persuade the audience of the correlation between cause and effect. As a good rhetorician, Bly juxtaposes images of cause and images of effect to boldly claim their direct relationship. The poem begins:

Massive engines lift beautifully from the deck.
Wings appear over the trees, wings with eight
hundred rivets. [t/o]

Engines burning a thousand gallons of gasoline a
minute sweep over the huts with dirt [t/o]
floors. (18)

Here is the ironic juxtaposition of American technology with nature and with "huts with dirt floors." Also, the description of the warplanes which is paradoxical--beautiful engines. The image may be viewed as oxymoronic when one considers Bly's point of view, for as the poem progresses, he reveals how horribly beautiful these planes are as they drop bombs and napalm on "marginal farmers." The "wings over the trees" and the beautiful engines provide a butterfly metaphor, yet the wings of these butterflies are riveted on.

In his FIRST MANIFESTO OF SURREALISM (1924), the poet Andre Breton states that the metaphor achieves its effect

through its use of DIS-similarity (in Hardison 251). Much influenced by the Surrealist movement, albeit by the Spanish more than the French (LEAPING 15-16), Bly seems to work from Breton's definition often in "Teeth Mother." Thus the poet sees the beautiful in the evil. Here certainly is ironical truth which Bly employs a number of times. The War itself is an irony embodied, all too real and true. Bly will look at this irony more deeply in Section II of the poem.

By depicting the devastating irony of the War, where warplanes can be metaphors full of beauty, Bly reveals technology's evil enticements alongside its good. The planes are beautiful, but deadly: they carry bombs, napalm, Agent Orange--instruments of death and devastation.

In order to enhance these ideas of death and devastation, Bly increases the pace of the poem, in both rhythm and imagery. While many sentences are long and complex, there are also many which are short and simple. These short sentences, set in the rapid pace of asyndeton, increase the poem's speed and thereby intensify the effect of the images. The images are also intensified by the sharper focus and emphasis gained when there is only one image or few images per sentence:

Helicopters flutter overhead. The death-
bee is coming. Super Sabres
like knots of neurotic energy sweep
around and return.
This is Hamilton's triumph.
This is the advantage of a centralized bank.
B-52s come from Guam. All the teachers
die in flames

Do not ask for mercy.

.....

Blood leaps on the vegetable walls.

Yes, I know, blood leaps on the walls--

Don't cry at that--

Do you cry at the wind pouring out of Canada?

Do you cry at the reeds shaken at the edge of the
sloughs? [t/o]

The Marine battalion enters.

This happens when the seasons change. (19)

The powerful punch of the rhythm, which the short sentences and repetition provide, underscores the pathetic appeal of each image (Corbett 475), and through that appeal the argument implicit in the images is furthered. Here Bly uses strong style as a forceful persuasive tool. Bly asserts that War may be caused by the natural flow of things, "when the seasons change." It is the horrific, yet natural emotional counter-balance to an over-emphasis on reason and technology.

The "helicopters flutter" seems to reinforce the bird or butterfly metaphor implied in the poem's first lines, but now the image quickly changes to that of a "death-bee"--stinging and dangerous. Even the association with the natural world becomes a representation of death. Then Bly uses the simile "like knots of neurotic energy" for the Super Sabres to convey more pointedly how the War is the result of nature suppressed and twisted--America's own nature, imbalanced and neurotic. Again, through metaphor, Bly has joined nature with machine in a horrific way. Later, in the prose essay, Bly implies that his metaphors did work to reveal a hidden truth, a hidden connection of cause and effect, and a hidden

unity of things, as Aristotle suggests metaphors can reveal (RHETORIC 212). Mother Nature spawns beauty and horror--even the machine is hers, despite its being manmade, for the war machine represents the Teeth Mother side of nature which is also in man himself. Revealing the unity of man with nature and spirit is essential to the shamanic performance. In this poem, Bly's metaphor enables him to depict unity as well as to argue more subtly and complexly.

In the next two short parallel sentences ("This is . . ."), Bly makes his case for the economic causes of the War which he sees as additional effects of our psychic disease: the War is really and ironically Hamilton's "triumph." It is a result of Hamilton's genius in solidifying federal power in "a centralized bank." Here again Bly uses irony when he calls the bank an "advantage." Only by such an awful irony, that of concentrated wealth and power, can such wars be waged. In A RHETORIC OF MOTIVES, Kenneth Burke proposes that as any system becomes larger and more complex the call to identification is greater, as is the need for identification greater with the possibility of greater division. While Burke speaks of our increased global interdependence and of world war, his statement also applies to the United States' situation and relationship with Vietnam. As I will show, Burke's point is particularly relevant not only here at the poem's start, but throughout, and is closely tied to Bly's position on the War's causes. Burke says:

Possibilities of deception arise particularly with those ironies whereby the scientists' truly splendid terminology for the expert smashing of lifeless things can so catch a man's fancy that he would transfer it to the realm of human relations likewise. It is not a great step from the purely professional poisoning of harmful insects to the purely professional blasting and poisoning of human beings, as viewed in similarly "impersonal" terms. And such inducements are particularly there, so long as factional division (of class, race, nationality, and the like) make for the ironic mixture of identification and dissociation that marks the function of the scapegoat. Indeed, the very "global" conditions which call for the greater identification of all men with one another have at the same time increased the range of human conflict, the incentives to division. It would require sustained rhetorical effort, backed by the imagery of a richly humane and spontaneous poetry, to make us fully sympathize with people in circumstances greatly different from our own (34).

In this passage, Bly answers Burke's call for such a "rhetorical effort, backed by the imagery of a richly humane and spontaneous poetry."

The following lines from "Teeth Mother" indeed are full of this spontaneity, probably as a result of Bly's oral composing process:

Now the time comes to look into the past-tunnels,
 the hours given and taken in school,
 the scuffles in coatrooms,
 foam leaps from his nostrils,
 now we come to the scum you take from the mouths
 of the dead [t/o]
 now we sit beside the dying, and hold their hands,
 there is hardly time for goodbye, [t/o]
 the staff sergeant from North Carolina is dying--
 you hold his hand, [t/o]
 he knows the mansions of the dead are empty,
 he has an empty place [t/o]
 inside him, created one night when his parents
 came home drunk, [t/o]
 he uses half his skin to cover it,
 as you try to protect a balloon from sharp
 objects [t/o] (19)

In the time tunnels, Bly provides a vivid and humane portrait of soldiers as children (and examples of sources for any American's imbalance), of soldiers dying, of the North Carolina sergeant in particular, filling the portrait with empathy--especially by the use of the pronouns "you" and "we" which put the readers there. By this use of rhetorical identification, in the time tunnels, we are there by virtue of these pronouns and are shown an additional cause to Hamilton's triumphant bank. It is a cause deeper than economics, a cause out of which economic aggression may arise, a cause which, in turn, may be created by putting profits above people. In the schoolroom, children learn what their culture values. In coatroom scuffles, the War takes place in miniature: the foam then changes to the image of scum taken from the war dead, "now." The poem telescopes time to make its point more immediate: the causes of war are seeded in the classroom. The classroom is where a nation's culture is passed on for good and ill and, in Bly's view, where the emphasis on economic goods over human "goods" is taught. Thus the classroom image is a figure of metonymy, representing the American culture.

The humanity of the poem is particularized in the image of the staff sergeant. We see into his childhood. We identify or empathize as we are shown that his wound is not just from artillery, but from being the child of alcoholic parents who perhaps covered feelings with alcohol as he

covers his with militarism. Not unlike the "hollow" men of Conrad's HEART OF DARKNESS, he has brought "the empty place" in his soul with him to Vietnam. In turn, Bly shows, and thereby argues, that Vietnam (War) is that empty place or wound in our national psyche. The War represents and is those suppressed feelings of the sergeant and the nation rising up:

as you try to protect a balloon from sharp
objects [t/o]

Artillery shells explode. Napalm canisters roll
end over end. [t/o]
800 steel pellets fly through the vegetable walls.
The six-hour infant puts his fists instinctively to
his eyes to keep out the light. [t/o]
But the room explodes,
the children explode.
Blood leaps on the vegetable walls. (19)

Thus to protect the sergeant's wound, made symbolic of the nation's collective wound, the suppressed energy, the feelings must burst forth and do, in the War. The artillery shells exploding become a metaphor for that release. Yet this "method" of release has a horrible cost--the sergeant now dies physically, as once he was wounded only emotionally.

But the cost is more than just Americans dying--the Vietnamese "six-hour infant" also dies. In these images, Bly makes both sides real, vulnerable, human. And by showing our likeness with the Vietnamese, he works to make us sympathize and identify with people vastly different from ourselves, as Burke suggests a poet writing this sort of poetry can. This kind of identification is, in a sense, an ultimate form of

comparison, revealing an underlying psychic connection or unity between wealthy America and victimized Vietnam. The shamanic poet continues to reveal unities.

The next stanza of the poem further elucidates the connections between the two countries and cultures. Bly here employs the "topos" of definition. In fact, he uses definition throughout to identify the genus to which the War belongs. Here, as in the opening lines, nature and the machinery of war are disclosed to be parts of the same whole:

The Marine battalion enters.

.....
This happens when the leaves begin to drop from the
trees too early [t/o]

"Kill them: I don't want to see anything moving."
This happens when the ice begins to show its teeth
in the ponds [t/o]

This happens when the heavy layers of lake water
press down [t/o] (19)

The anaphora and the personification of the ice with a Teeth Mother allusion effectively support Bly's point that the War is a result of a natural process, set in motion by repression and by strong movement or change. The change is suggested in the imagery of the seasons changing and of the wind blowing. Yet the imagery reveals natural process as itself changed from what is normal: "the leaves begin to drop . . . too early" and the ice has teeth and the "layers of the lake press down on the fish's head." However, even this sense of nature being off kilter is natural too. Change is the only constant; even the change of seasons may exhibit change within change. Fall will change to winter, and some winters

have teeth. Suffering results but is natural. "Don't cry at that," Bly says, signaling first that what is required may be simply a clearer view of things, sans tears. But he also may be signaling an irony through the use of this cliched balm for those who suffer, because in not crying, in suppressing feelings, the tribe may continue the devastating cycle where those suppressed feelings ultimately burst forth in violence.

Bly's images here, which are his rhetorical examples, and those throughout "Teeth Mother," define the war: by genus--what kind of beast it is--and by division--what it is in its parts. Consequently, while cause and effect provide a major topos or method of argumentation, definition is also important. For Bly hopes that as we learn what war really is, we will better understand both causes and effects.

Rhetorician Richard Weaver proposes that a rhetor makes the highest order of appeal when arguing by definition or the nature of a thing. Weaver bases his idea on "a very primitive metaphysics which holds that the highest reality is being, not becoming . . . in Western civilization . . . usually expressed in the language of theism" ("Language is Sermonic" 280). Like Kenneth Burke, here Weaver connects rhetoric to transcendent purpose: it may resolve the problems of the barnyard of human endeavor (Burke, MOTIVES 23), but more it can remind us of divine realms (MOTIVES 298-324). The best rhetoric which uses definition enables us "to see . . . what transcends the world of change and accident"

("Sermonic" 280). This transcendent realm seems akin to the spiritual realms where the shaman journeys, where the poet imagines, outside of time.

"Teeth Mother": Part II

In Part II of the poem, Bly increasingly emphasizes his concern with the linguistic and rhetorical causes of the war. Here, again, we see the functions of shamanic poet and rhetor aligned in their concerns. As in the first part, he uses a number of supposedly real quotations from news reports of the War: "From the political point of view, democratic institutions are being built in Vietnam, wouldn't you agree?"; "Let us not be deterred from our task by the voices of dissent" Bly presents these as examples of the lies that are told and that reveal the failure of government to listen to "the voices of dissent." These lies and the refusal or inability to listen represent a failure in the rhetorical forum as much as they represent a deadening of the national psyche:

As soon as the President finishes his press conference
 black wings carry off the words [t/o]
 bits of flesh still clinging to them.

* * *

The ministers lie, the professors lie, the
 television lies, the priests lie
 These lies mean that the country wants to die.
 Lie after lie starts out into the prairie grass,
 like enormous caravans of Conestoga wagons

And a long desire for death flows out, guiding
 the . . . caravans from beneath, [t/o]

.....
 It is a desire to eat death,

 It's a desire to take death inside,

 This is the thrill that leads the President on to lie.
 (21)

Like the North Carolina sergeant, the President is symbolic of his country-- particularly of its soul, damaged by its misuse of language. According to Bly, the President lies just like all authority figures are lying. He is the "evil lover," the evil orator of Plato's PHAEDRUS (in Golden 49-50). Speaking of Plato's position in the PHAEDRUS, Richard Weaver says that speech is a means by which man "express(es) his soul (in Golden 50). When that expression consists of lies, the soul must be distorted, imbalanced in some way. Bly uses a synecdoche in which, as the symbol of his country, the President who lies stands for the country which has a sick soul: "These lies mean that the country wants to die." The good rhetorician wants to cure the sickness of language, while the good shaman wants to cure the sickness of soul. The shamanic poet sees that to heal one may mean to heal the other. The healing process can only begin by diagnosing the illness.

In this passage, the President's words are associated with the wing motif established in Part I, so that they become equivalent to the warplanes and weapons--"bits of flesh cling to them." This vivid association illustrates Burke's concept that language is indeed symbolic action

(LANGUAGE AS SYMBOLIC ACTION 3-24), as well as illustrating the concepts of speech act theory. The President orders the Pentagon to drop bombs. Literally, his words cause death. Yet Bly also is saying that the President and the country he symbolizes are themselves dying spiritually, and thus desire physical death. The President's lies depict that inward sickness, while his orders mirror it in a horrific way, resulting in the War. In turn the lies engender further sickness and desire for death, just as they represent them.

The parallelism and other devices of repetition in this part, and throughout the poem, intensify the emotional effect of Bly's suggestions. Rhetorician Edward P. J. Corbett believes that the stylistic devices of repetition, by intensifying emotion, aid not only memory but also argument (414-415, 475, 477). Bly's use of repetition here and elsewhere in the poem give it much of its oral quality since repetition is the mnemonic device of oral traditions. It is as much the shaman's tool as it is the orator's. Bly's repeated words and grammatical structures work to embed themselves in the audience's memory, to increase the force of the poem, in its performance and its argument.

The repeated lies are all from those in authority whose words perform actions on a wider scale than other individuals' words, such that their lies have covered the country "like enormous caravans of Conestoga wagons." The simile well represents Bly's view of Western culture, epitomized by

the western movement in this country: settlers coming in Conestogas to populate the plains which were the source of the Indians' livelihood, the Army slaughtering Indians to "protect" the settlers, the "caravans" carrying the West European culture already imbalanced, suppressing that dark side which the Indians seemed to mirror.

Bly's views of western culture can also be seen in SLEEPERS' earlier poems: "Condition of the Working Classes: 1970," "Calling to the Badger," and "Pilgrim Fish Heads." These three poems come immediately before "Teeth Mother," showing how our relations with the Vietnamese are not unlike ours with the Indians:

The Indian goes on living in the rain-soaked stumps.
This is our enemy, this is the outcast,
the one from whom we must protect our nation,
the one whose dark hair hides us from the sun ("Pilgrim"
17).

Bly uses "the lie" ironically in his poems, twisting the already (in his view) twisted words--"the one from whom we must protect our nation." The Sioux, like the Vietnamese, "dead sleep all night in the rain troughs on the Treasury Building" ("Working Classes" 15). Because the lie/s continue, based in a profits before people ethos, the psyche's imbalance or dis-ease is not healed, and Americans go from killing Indians to killing Vietnamese farmers. Because the rhetorical use of authority is tainted when those with authority lie, in support of the unsupportable horrors of war, the rhetorical forum loses its power to heal, and

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worse, becomes a tool for Plato's "evil orator." In Bly's rendering of Orwellian "doublespeak," rhetoric itself is degraded, and thus words themselves are too.

In this way, the shamanic poet asserts that the lies are effects of the tribe's illness, and he also asserts that the lies continue the illness and, in part, cause the War. Therefore he must reveal the lies to heal the tribal soul. The depiction of the misuse of public rhetoric and of the distortion of language is important as part of that healing. As stated earlier, Bly uses that depiction with some irony to reveal his own position behind the lies. However, the words which he quotes from news reports are ironical in and of themselves, for what they say and what they mean are at odds. Bly points to this irony when he writes: "this is what it's like to bomb huts (afterwards described as 'structures') / this is what it's like to kill marginal farmers (afterwards described as 'Communists')" (22). The shamanic poet's warning is clear: our language is debased by its misuse. If language is distorted and rhetoric maltreated, we may find it difficult to heal ourselves. For language used properly provides a way of seeing, but used improperly it blinds us. Thus the shamanic poet works to tear the fabric of lies, enabling vision, and thus, healing.

On this important point, regarding the importance of language and rhetoric to Bly's shamanic approach, I would like to elaborate. In much the same way that Lawrence was

influenced by World War I, Bly was influenced by the Vietnam War in a similar manner. Both took a moral stance on those wars, demonstrating in a shaman-like way their concern for the tribe. This stance was also rhetorical and public. They were both anti-War and defined the causes as they saw them--mechanistic, technological, economic. Bly's anti-War position, his earnest work to end the War in Vietnam, his attempts to heal the cause, and his hope to prevent future wars--all are part of his concern for his tribe. In that concern he is like not only Lawrence, but a number of well-respected rhetoricians such as Kenneth Burke and Richard Weaver.

In his work, Kenneth Burke responds to the global debacle of World War Two and to the problems of rhetoric represented by the War, Nazism, and Communism (after the War). He shows a concern for the way Nazi rhetoric was used towards the terrifying ends of the Holocaust. He reasons that such misuse of rhetoric is not confined to the Nazis and can again have terrible consequences if work is not done to prevent that misuse (MOTIVES 26, 29-33, and in Golden 329-342). Burke sees the misuse of rhetoric as just as dangerous, debilitating and deadly as acts of war because man is the "symbol-using animal" (LANGUAGE 5-6). To a being who responds to symbols, distortion of those symbols, shifting their signification for ill, may be tantamount to violence. Once that violence has been committed, physical violence is

facilitated. Therefore, one must address the problem of language debasement in order to solve societal problems and conflict. In this view, Bly seems aligned with Burke, for he says: "Since so many words have had their energy corrupted, it's very difficult to write poetry" (TALKING 229). As Burke often does, Bly is speaking of the distortions of language by those in authority--technocrats and bureaucrats. Shamanistically, Bly seeks the reasons for his tribe's illness and finds one in the misuse of rhetoric.

In his THE ETHICS OF RHETORIC (1953), like Burke, Richard Weaver is concerned with the degradation of rhetoric, language, culture, and psyche in the post-World War Two world. Like Bly, Weaver sees that the misuse of speech damages the tribe (in Golden, 273-274). The orator has a responsibility to use speech rightly for the good of his tribe ("Language is Sermonic" 279). Weaver proposes that:

man is not nor ever can be nor ever should be a depersonalized thinking machine. His feeling is the activity in him most closely related to what used to be called his soul. To appeal to his feeling (pathos) therefore is not necessarily an insult; it can be a way to honor him, by recognizing him in the fullness of his being. ("Sermonic" 285)

Like Bly, Weaver has a holistic vision: he wants rhetoric to address his fellow man "in the fullness of his being." Feelings connect us with our spiritual life and must be honored by the rhetor. Bly would certainly agree, adding that feeling (feminine in nature) must be honored not only by the rhetor, but by everyone. Weaver believes that "the

rhetorician is a preacher to us (in Golden 274)" might be revised to read "is a shaman to us," for his definition of the rhetor holds that the rhetor functions in a situational and inventive way, more close to the shaman's way than to the priest's institutionalized way. Of course, the rhetor is not a shaman, but some rhetors may have attributes which originate in the shaman's role, just as some poets do. In the concern for language as it relates to the tribe's health, both a poet like Bly and a rhetor like Weaver find some common ground in the shamanic perspective.

The rhetor's place in contemporary society is not unlike the poet's. When language is misused and thus devalued, so are the roles of both rhetor and poet whose craft depends on language. Weaver is among a number of mid-twentieth century rhetoricians who hope/d to reassert rhetoric's place by returning to its classical roots. Bly too hopes to reassert poetry's place by returning to its oral roots (NEWS 131), and by enlivening it with spiritual and political purpose (TALKING 95-105). Just as the shaman reveals the possibilities of spirit in his performance, both rhetorician and shamanic poet may uplift us out of the barnyard scramble from time to time (MOTIVES 23) to see those same possibilities. Because language's importance in its spiritual, psychological, and social effects may be viewed as originating in the shaman's role, so may rhetorician and poet, whose crafts depend on language, be viewed. Concerned

poet, like concerned rhetorician, reasserts values and balance. Both are concerned with the health and values of the community.

As a shamanic poet, Bly takes up the issue of values--in "Teeth Mother," in SLEEPERS as a whole, and in other work--as part of the problem of spiritual imbalance. Later in SLEEPERS, he praises those who revalue the feminine, saying (of himself as well):

I see in my own poems and the poems of so many other poets alive now fundamental attempts to right our spiritual balance, by encouraging those parts in us that are linked with music, with solitude, water, and trees, the parts [in Bly's view, associated with the feminine] that grow when we are far from the centers of ambition.
(50)

Herein lies the book's thesis--that we must "right our spiritual balance" and that poems themselves can work to do so. Such poems encourage the parts of the psyche that have been suppressed, while they may also reveal the effects of the imbalance seen in acts of language in private and public life, as in acts of war. For the shaman, revelation in performance is part of his healing technique. In order to be healed, the tribe must first recognize what is ultimately wrong, by looking behind the appearances of things. Thus the "topos" of cause and effect is most appropriate for this healing technique. Since ultimately, all illness has its source in spiritual imbalance, according to the shamanic view, Bly is correct in believing that the Vietnam ills and linguistic ills have their roots in spiritual wounds.

Thus in Part II, and throughout, Bly continues to develop the intricate cause-effect relationships between spiritual illness and linguistic lies, between spiritual death and real death. As quoted earlier, he depicts repeatedly that the lies are the effects of "a long desire for death." The repetition pounds the point home. We desire to die because we have already buried part of ourselves--the non-technological, soulful side of ourselves; therefore, we long to join with that "buried life" as Matthew Arnold called it.

"It is the longing for someone to come and take you by the hand to where they all are sleeping," Bly writes (22). His speaker is like the shaman leading his audience into the land of the dead, to journey with him seeking the souls of the dead, seeking parts of the national self that are buried, like memories--" . . . all those disappeared children, who used to go around 'you' in the rings at grade school . . . " (22). This joining in death is the ultimate identification, for death reveals that we are all mortal. In his RHETORIC OF MOTIVES, Burke discusses at length this identification of a thing by its ends (16-22). Death is certainly one of the most powerful ways we humans have of identifying ourselves with others: "All men are mortal." Therefore, Bly's emphasis on death and its connection with desire (perhaps the second most powerful identification or unifier) makes for a strong rhetoric. Here, as Bly sees it, this desire for death is

truth, and good rhetoric follows--perhaps as Plato suggests it would in the PHAEDRUS (in Golden 49).

Eventually in "Teeth Mother," the shamanic speaker embraces even the evil orator, the lying President, in a ritual of forgiveness which enacts the spiritual holism the poem and book espouse:

Do not be angry at the President--he is longing to
 take in his hand [t/o]
 the locks of death hair--
 to meet his own children dead, or unborn
 He is drifting sideways toward the dusty places (22)

The alliteration and other repetitions of sounds--"drifting sideways toward . . . dusty places,"--has a soothing effect by using the pleasant sounds of /d/, /s/, /l/, and /t/ (like "cellar door"). The settling feeling of the sounds reinforces the admonition not to be angry. Indeed, through the performance of the poem (sounds and meanings), Bly works to take his audience with his speaker to the "dusty places" or spiritual realms where we can see that part of the President which is "drifting," normally unseen. Bly depicts healing by retrieving lost parts and souls in the imagery of the poem. The shamanic poet works through the revelations of language.

It is that piece of the puzzle which, when retrieved, can heal the wound of the North Carolina sergeant and the President. But more importantly, because Bly has identified Americans with both sergeant and President, the image works to heal all of the tribe. Whether we are men or women, black

or white, in Bly's vision, we participate in the national imbalance or disease. Both sergeant and President are part of each of us as we are part of them. The shamanic poet's use of identification throughout by the shift in and mix of pronouns (I, he, you, we, it) and his use of direct address, as in the above admonition, deftly weaves the audience/tribe and all the elements of the War, the economy, and the nation into the performance. Bly hopes his audience will partake in the performance, and he hopes it will persuade us, in part, by our participation, as any good orator's speech persuades us. The images work to persuade by their very real implications and their humane truth.

The shamanic performance must persuade through identification, for the performance works with not only the "outward" but also what Jacob Boehme calls the "inward man" (qtd. in Bly, LIGHT 1). Bly is fervently concerned with balancing outward and inward selves, as well as masculine and feminine aspects. In fact, in his work outwardness correlates to the masculine attributes and inwardness to the feminine. He first developed this point in his earlier political book THE LIGHT AROUND THE BODY (1967), a book which has been discussed much more than SLEEPERS and was better received (Nelson 96). In fact, it won the National Book Award in 1967. But in SLEEPERS, Bly develops "the two worlds" idea in greater depth, perhaps making the book more difficult, yet more rich with critical possibilities as Howard Nelson suggests of the

title poem.

The shaman travels between the mundane and the spiritual, between outward and inward worlds in order to heal. As a shamanic poet, Bly reveals each world's characteristics in the performance of his poems, working to inform the outward world with inward truths.

"Teeth Mother": Part III

In Part III of "Teeth Mother," Bly reiterates what he believes to be the War's economic causes first introduced in Part I with the images of Hamilton's centralized bank:

This is what it's like for a rich country to make war

 This is what it's like to have a gross national product.

 This is what it's like to be told to fire into a reed
 hut with an automatic weapon [t/o] (23)

With much anaphora, parallelism, and other devices of repetition, this section, too, pounds home the economic causes and effects in a long drumming list. The shaman beats his drum to carry his tribe on his journey. Bly beats his to carry we his readers along the journey of the poem and to persuade us that his images of the economic causes are valid. The images are made stronger and more persuasive through the sounds they make. Like Corbett, Bly believes that sound is important for emotional response (SELECTED audio). To that effect he uses assonance, alliteration, and other repetition of particular sounds, in addition to the repetition of

phrases and syntactic structures.

The following passage is a good example of his use of such devices:

This is what it's like to send firebombs down from
 air-conditioned cockpits. [t/o]

 It's because we have new packaging for smoked oysters
 that bomb holes appear in the rice paddies [t/o]
 It's because we have so few women sobbing in back rooms
 because we have so few children's heads torn apart by
 high-velocity bullets [t/o]
 because we have so few tears falling on our own hands
 that the super sabre turns and screams down toward
 the earth. [t/o] (23)

The use of assonance slows down the rapid pace to emphasize certain words and relationships, while the use of alliteration can speed up the pace, resulting in a mixture of rhythms which, nonetheless, work together for emotional impact. To see how the sounds do slow and increase the pace, it is useful to transliterate some parts of text into the phonetic alphabet so that combinations of sounds can be seen without the distraction of spelling:

Th/I//s/ /I//z/ what /I/t'/s/ l/ay/k to /s/end
 /f//ay/reb/a/mb/z/ d/aw/n /f/r/U/m [t/o]
 a/ae/r-/k//a/nd/I/ti/U/nd /k//a//k/p/i/t/s/. [t/o]
 (assonance, alliteration, and repetition of /s/ and /z/)

 /I/t'/s/ /b/ecau/z/ w/i/ h/ae/ve new p/ae//k/ae/ging
 f/o/r /s/m/o//k/ed oy/s/ter/z/ th/ae/t [t/o]
 /b//a/mb h/o/l/z/ /a//p//i/r /I/n the r/ay//s/ [t/o]
 /p//a/dd/I//z/ [t/o]
 (assonance, alliteration, repetition of /s/, /z/,
 /k/, /p/, /b/)
 /I/t'/s/ /b/ecau/z/ we have /s//o/ few w/I/men
 /s//o//b/ing /I/n /b/ack room/z/ [t/o]
 (assonance, alliteration, and other repetitions)
 because we have /s//o/ few children's /h/eads /t//o/rn
 /a/part by /h/igh-vel/a/city bullets [t/o]
 because we h/ae/ve /s//o/ /f/ew /t/ears /f//a/lling
 /a/n /aw/ur /o/n h/ae/nds [t/o]

(assonance ,alliteration and other repetitions)
 that the /s/uper /s/abre /t/urn/z/ and /s/cream/z/
 /d//aw/n /t/owar/d/ the earth. [t/o]
 (alliteration, assonance, and repetition of /d/ and /z/)
 (see phonemes in Traugott 48-50)

The repetition of the words "so few" turns on the alliteration of "few tears falling" to underscore the suicide-like action of the Super Sabre. The /b/ and /z/ work onomatopoeically, buzzing, to reflect the earlier bee image of the Sabre and to reflect its name. These sounds speed up the pace, while diphthongs like /ay/ and vowels like /i/, /a/, and /o/ slow it down. The "slower" sounds are articulated lower and farther back in the mouth reinforcing the sensation of sadness and tears falling, in contrast to the the swift downward flight of the bomber. The downward movement of the bomber is reinforced by the repetition of the /d/ and the "hiss" and "buzz" of /s/ and /z/. Thus the sounds help to underscore the basic contrast of images: those of human feeling versus those of technological power.

The downward, death-like movement of the plane suggests Burke's discussion of ultimate identification in death (MOTIVES 19-20). The pilot is in Vietnam killing not only others but also his own psyche; or rather, in killing others, he reveals the death already existing in his psyche. The outward man kills what the inward man has already let die. The denial of the feminine--revealed in the image of "so few women sobbing--" is seen not only in victimizing a poorer nation, but also in the economic dis-empowerment of women and

the subordination of womanly attributes.

Bly proposes that this denial and murder are what happens when a nation values profits over people: "this is what it's like to have a gross national product." The pun on "gross" is surely intended. Our profits first policy is in part cause, in part effect of our spiritual imbalance. In either case, economic or spiritual myopia results in social inequalities, political problems, and wars.

Along with the topos of cause and effect which structures the poem and that of definition which identifies the spiritual malaise (in Part III especially, but elsewhere as well) Bly employs the topos of contrast to highlight the horror and the irony of "what it's like for a rich country to make war." To reveal the economic imbalance, and thereby the spiritual, he uses contrastive images such as an American hospital room which costs \$90 versus a bombed North Vietnamese hospital, a successful American aluminum shade business versus firebombed grass hut villages, or taxpayers in the suburbs owning their own homes versus burned thatched roofs. Such images convey the complexity of the economic issues. Secure at home, Americans worry about the costs of a hospital room, not like the Vietnamese who must worry if the hospital has been bombed or if there is even a doctor. "This is what it's like for a rich country to make war" on a poor one.

Americans are proud in owning their own homes; they move

of their own free will according to what they can afford. Yet Vietnamese are lucky if they have a home not destroyed by war, lucky if they aren't forced to evacuate their village. Americans can make money on products as seemingly superfluous as "aluminum window shades." The specificity of the image is clever on Bly's part, for it, like the other images of America, conveys the infinite variety of choices one has in a "fat" economy. It also conveys the emphasis on consumption: Americans are called consumers, not citizens. This consumer society is placed in striking economic contrast to the agrarian Vietnamese society being bombed and burned.

In the images which are contrasted, Bly often uses the tropes of synecdoche and metonymy (as def. in Corbett 490). While Part III begins with the whole picture of "what it's like for a rich country to make war," what follows is, with some exceptions, a series of parts and/or attributes which illustrate that whole. War is represented in bombing huts and hospitals, and in cutting the best Vietnamese men in two. America is represented by its "gross national product," by the "aluminum shade business," by the "milk trains hitting the right switches," by "air-conditioned cockpits," "new packaging for smoked oysters," and taxpayers in the suburbs; Vietnam by reed huts, "marginal farmers," villages, men (not machines), and rice paddies. As discussed, all these "parts" or attributes are economic (and social) in nature: each trope builds the overall contrastive picture of a country of wealth

and technological muscle bullying one of poverty and human muscle.

In this section of "Teeth Mother," American soldiers are not pictured as human. In a twist on personification, Bly "mechanizes" the Americans as automatic weapons and Super Sabres. Only when he speaks of the Vietnamese does he use the word "man." In the contrast of machines versus farmers, Bly elucidates his didactic purpose by stylistic choice of words and images. In Part III, he directs his audience's empathy toward the Vietnamese. He reveals the terrible contrast, as he does throughout, in order to show how that contrast reflects our own inward sickness, our failure to feel or to respect feelings: "It is because we have so few women sobbing in back rooms . . . so few tears falling on our own hands." It appears that Bly hopes to elicit our empathy so as to start the "tears falling on our own hands," our own war-bloodied hands he might add. By eliciting such feeling, he may begin the shamanic healing process. Empathy is strong emotional identification, as powerful a persuasive tool as it is a healing tool.

"Teeth Mother": Part IV

In Part IV, Bly continues to use sound, as throughout, in onomatopoeic words and rhythms, "setting an emotional and ethical tone" (Corbett 491), honing in on certain images

which signal some of the motifs of the poem. The first image represents the important machine motif of the poem. Although the image itself occurs only here and at the end, by its position, it is a key to the entire poem:

I see a car rolling toward a rock wall.
The treads in the face, begin to crack.
We all feel like tires being run down roads under heavy
cars. (24) [t/o]

The alliteration and repetition of consonant sounds helps to emphasize the idea (feeling represented) of being run over by technology. The /k/ in car, rock, crack, and cars create a harsh sound, working towards an onomatopoeic effect. The "roar" of the /r/ in car, rolling, rock, run, and roads has a similar effect. These and other rhythmic effects--all devices of sound--do indeed elevate the emotional intensity of the poem, as they intensify the car image's effect.

In the first line, the shamanic poet envisions the "car rolling toward a rock wall." In the next line, the car is "us," a collective face, the car's tires with treads cracking--we are "the machine," as the soldiers were imaged in Part III. From the beginning images of beautiful, riveted wings, the machine motif runs through the poem along with its paradoxical comparisons to the nature. But here the machine image is domesticated and homely: simply a car. This is a vehicle we all can drive, not like a Super Sabre. This is an image in which we can all partake. He brings the War home in this machine image of the car. This is the vehicle we all drive, and are driven down by as it rolls "toward a rock

wall." In this image of the domestic vehicle, we become the tires, and Bly shows us the irony that what we drive, drives us. The implicit pun is quite effective, for it also refers the reader back to the idea of "desire" and ambition, both synonymous with drive. Tragically, such ambition drives us toward death or the desire for death, "a rock wall," for it weights the technological/rational aspect of the psyche more than the spiritual/feeling aspect.

There may be another pun adding texture to the image: that of rock and roll, alluding to the protesting youth whose music was rock. An image of a "teenager" may bear out this idea. Bly refers to her as one who "imagines herself floating through the seven spheres." Her longing seems to represent all teenagers' longing to escape from parental expectations and culture. In a sense, she represents the young part of the national psyche which is still in touch with the shamanic world of "seven spheres." She represents that part of the American psyche still open to change. In this latter half of the poem, Bly represents hope in this image of youth.

Yet later, Bly depicts a less hopeful image of youth: a personified "soot" "has children, takes courses, goes mad, and dies." Bly depicts American college student experiencing the failure of education to address the real issues of Vietnam. In fact, educational institutions have helped to cause Vietnam, as Bly indicates in Part I. So the "soot"

settles over all. Although hope may lie with the young, "We ALL feel like tires being run down" by these machines of our own making.

The image of the machine, of the car, becomes a way to express Western civilization in its post-Cartesian state, where feeling, intuition, soul, feminine attributes, spiritual goods, and primitive cultures have already been run down. Now in his imagery, Bly as a shamanic poet shows where the next turn in the gyre takes us, his tribe. We bear the weight of heavy metal: the civilization's over-emphasis on reason, logic, mind, masculine attributes, material goods, and technological cultures. Yeats' "rough beast slouches" in Bly's humble (grey, bureaucratic, Huxleyan) car. The car image is akin to Eliot's "whimper" in "The Hollow Men."

But the rhythms are Yeatsian:

There is a black silo inside our bodies revolving fast.
 Bits of black paint are flaking off
 where motorcycles roar, around and around,
 rising higher on the silo walls,
 the bodies bent toward the horizon,
 driven by angry women dressed in black. (24)

The poem spirals like Yeats' "The Second Coming," eliciting the gyre image through the circling motorcycles metaphorically within the missile silos. It is an image full of the great and terrifying sweep of history. The Teeth Mother image is similar to the beast Yeats' portrayed. Bly may be harkening to Yeats as his "old shaman" forefather (qtd. in Froiland 35).

This passage also continues the machine motif of the

poem and of this section. The image, now of a silo, again unites the machine with the natural world; however, this time, the natural world is that of "our bodies." While at first the silo is inside us, later we are in it, consumed by it. The silo is a missile silo, black with death, and finally our very bodies become the missiles. In this image, Bly effectively and forcefully associates cause with effect to reveal what he sees as the underlying and true relationship of his tribe to the War. Our sickness of soul is the real cause of the War. Thus as the soul's outward manifestation, the body itself becomes the weapon. In a discussion of Bly's work, defining poetic surrealism, critic Charles Altieri implies that images like this one "abolish the division between imagination and real, metaphor and fact," (85). Bly's image may be spiritual fact to Bly. In his shamanic vision, Americans have allowed our bodies to become machines by denying the spiritual and promoting the material.

This image also makes further assertions. The mechanism of the silo, the war machine, is "driven by angry women dressed in black." Here is the first clear female image of the Teeth Mother in the poem, and as such, it is pivotal. In previous section, women were first mentioned as "few sobbing," referring to America's denial of the emotional self. Here the image is filled with power: they drive the missile silo. As Bly later explains in the essay, the Teeth Mother is one aspect of the four-fold feminine energy. When

the feminine is suppressed, not allowed to "sob in back rooms" for instance, it will find expression in violent or distorted ways. These ways are ways of the Teeth Mother, also of the death mother (SLEEPERS 37, 42). Thus the women who drive the silo represent this darker side of the feminine energy as Bly sees it. The shamanic poet gives us this mythic image from the spirit realms, "dressed" in modern concepts of missile silos and motorcycles. He is like the shaman who brings forth representations of spirits into his performance. At this pivotal point in the performance of the poem, Bly unveils the spirit which moves behind all the events of the War in Vietnam and at home. The Teeth Mother drives the machinery of war, despite our efforts to suppress that feminine part of our nature.

Within the shamanic performance of the poem, her image carries rhetorical power because of the real spiritual energy associated with the image. Truth persuades. Furthermore, all the images of war--in Vietnam and of words at home--are metonymical in one overriding sense: all images are attributes of the destructive Teeth Mother. While she is only mentioned by name once at the poem's end, and first seen as feminine in this section (IV), she is the source, in Bly's truth, for all the images of the poem. She represents the mythic forces which drive the War.

"Teeth Mother": Part V

In Part V, Bly uses the rhetorical device of repetition again, in an almost whining fashion, to assert once more the reasons for the War:

Why are they dying? I have written this so many times.
 They are dying because the President has opened
 a Bible again. [t/o]
 They are dying because gold deposits have been found
 among the Shoshoni Indians. [t/o]
 They are dying because money follows intellect!
 And intellect is like a fan opening in the wind--

The Marines think that unless they die the rivers will
 not move. [t/o]
 They are dying so that the mountain shadows will con-
 tinue to fall east in the afternoon, [t/o] (25)

After he has brought the War "home" in Part IV, Bly now gives the soldiers a human identity once more, as he did in Part I with the image of the North Carolina sergeant. While Part V is a new set of images and attunes us to the spiritual death of the soldiers, Bly's underlying assertion is the same: the War is caused by the over-emphasis on material wealth, "gold deposits;" by the suppression of the feminine, including nature (represented here by the Shoshoni, as "nature's children"); and by the distortion of spirit and language, seen in the President reading Scripture. For Bly, the President may quote Scripture for his own purpose, not for any larger spiritual purpose. In addition to this aspect of the image, Bly uses the Bible to represent western Christian culture. This is the culture of St. Augustine and his separation of spirit and flesh, engendering a vision of body,

nature, sexuality, and women as vile and unspiritual, while elevating the mind, reason, and men as spiritual. We see this association of intellect and spirit in the simile of "a fan opening in the wind," the wind being taken as that of the spirit. This is a dry spirit, not wet and soulful (Bly, SELECTED audio). The emphasis on wealth in this world results from such emphasis on mind (NEWS 9).

The focus on wealth and Christian culture also may allude to the Puritans, mentioned earlier in the book in "Pilgrim Fish Heads" (SLEEPERS 17). The Puritans saw wealth in this world as representing wealth in heaven; to Bly their idea may seem a distortion of the edict "Store not your treasures here on earth." He asserts that this over-emphasis on material wealth is a result of over-emphasizing mental prowess--all at the expense of the tribe's soul. The effect is the War. He implies that ultimately our inner drive will right the balance between mind and body, material and spiritual, man and nature. The War is depicted as a catharsis of soul: "The Marines think that unless they die the rivers will not move." Unfortunately, the catharsis of war is a terrible price to pay. It becomes the bloody sacrifice required by the Teeth Mother to "pay" for the tribe's love of money and intellect.

"Teeth Mother": Parts VI and VII

In Part VI, the good shamanic poet, Bly vivifies the Teeth Mother's "tax" by showing the sacrifice of children. He asks us to imagine seeing "one of those children . . . that we have set on fire" coming near. Again, he brings the War home, puts it on his tribe's "turf," the better to persuade us of the War's horror and of our individual responsibility for that horror. He claims that "if one of those children came toward me," "I would drop on all fours, screaming,/my vocal chords would turn blue, so would yours" (25). Using the "I" and speaking directly to the reader/s ("you"), he personalizes the effects of what he is saying in the poem, brings the reader with him in identification, and forcefully works to gain agreement for his ideas, saying "so would yours." Using the highly emotional subject of children, associating the Vietnamese child with his own and our children, Bly reveals another terrible cost of war, that innocence is killed.

In the poem's final part, desire for death becomes the desire for sleep. In this new image of desire, two things are represented: escapism, most immediately obvious, and contact with the dream world, offering or indicating a healing solution to the horrors of war so vividly portrayed in the previous part.(VI). Escapism is portrayed in the incantatory, hypnotic repetition of the word "don't":

I want to sleep awhile in the rays of the sun slanting
 over the snow. [t/o]
 Don't wake me.
 Don't tell me how much grief there is in the leaf . . .
 Don't tell me how many children have been born with
 stumpy hands all those years we lived in [t/o]
 St. Augustine's shadow. [t/o] (25)

Yet, while escapism is portrayed, the internal rhyme joins grief to leaf, attributing life and spirit to the natural world. This is a pre-Cartesian vision, the classical world's infusion of nature with feeling, Lucretius' "tears in the nature of things." Bly mentions this idea in NEWS (286). In Part VII, he suggest it when he shows that despite the desire to avoid the problems of spiritual disease, both the shamanic speaker "I" and the tribe "we" acknowledge our tie to the natural world through body and emotion by our very denial of that tie. In our denial is at least the potential recognition of what is wrong. The shamanic poet depicts the tribe's new found awareness, as if he has gained their agreement. This assumption functions as a rhetorical device of Burkian identification. In a sense, Bly also uses identification per se in this passage, having his speaker say, in effect, I too, like you, want to pretend none of this is happening, that there is no problem. In performance, the shaman is the representative of his tribesmen. In Bly's poem, the speaker is.

In the variations of denial, there is the subverted recognition of the problems, of both causes and effects. Of course, here we can see the "orator's" biases very clearly.

Just as Bly condemns Descartes (NEWS 50 et al), he condemns St. Augustine for helping to separate man from nature. Augustine condemns the flesh as weak in his CONFESSIONS, saying the body and its desires must be suppressed to live a spiritual life. Nature, of which the body is a part, is evil (NEWS 81). In contrast to Augustine, the shaman sees no split between the life of the body and that of the soul. Nature and body are at one with spirit (Grim 31). Bly, the shamanic poet, wants to retrieve that vision of unity and incorporate it once again into his tribe's life. In NEWS, he says:

. . . I wanted to suggest a certain unity of consciousness that we haven't arrived at yet. All of us, since the rise of technology, have been torn into parts so often that we can hardly grasp what an interior unity could be. High School rips body and mind apart, science rips the perceiver and . . . perceived apart, the Industrial Revolution rips man and woman apart So I've chosen a few poems from other cultures in which I sense a deeper union Eskimo, Ojibway, Zuni All grant nature consciousness (in some) we sense a unity inside the personality as well as a unity of the human psyche and nature. (5)

In NEWS, working to provide that vision of unity, Bly provides some real shaman's poems. In "Teeth Mother" and in all of SLEEPERS, Bly provides his own. As a shamanic poet, Bly is continuously "performing" his vision of unity. His appreciation of real shaman's work makes a statement about the idea of unity he is asserting in SLEEPERS.

St. Augustine's vision is "shadow," not the "rays of the sun" he longs to fall asleep under. That shadow separates us from our bodies, nature, and primitive cultures--like those

of the shaman: the Eskimo, Ojibway, Zuni . . . Vietnamese. That separation allows suppression, imperialism, and economic exploitation (NEWS 9, 12). The shamanic poet uses the persuasive pictorial power of the image to blame St. Augustine: the image persuades us that "children born with stumpy hands" are the result and fault of Augustinian perception. So the audience can see that the things which the poem's speaker asks not to be told are, ironically, the very things he is aware of by the poem's end. Also, through the speaker's performance of his acquisition of knowledge, he conveys that knowledge or awareness to the audience. The poem is that performance. The things which he wants to be told--"the pollen of daffodils" and "the particles of Babylonian thought"--are like pieces of scientific knowledge which have become poor pacifiers. The rhetor uses irony to reveal that the speaker, who represents the audience, can no longer be satisfied simply with scientific explanations and solutions. The myth of science cannot answer the horror of war.

In the next stanza, Bly offers his shamanic vision as a new myth, or an old one renewed, which can heal his tribe. The shift from the first person pronoun, with audience identified in the escapist's desires, to the third person underscores the shift from escape as denial to escape as dream vision:

Now the whole nation starts to whirl,
the end of the Republic breaks off,

Europe comes to take revenge,
 the mad beast covered with European hair rushes through
 the mesa bushes in Mendocino County, [t/o]
 pigs rush toward the cliff,
 the waters underneath part: in one ocean luminous
 globes float up (in them hairy and [t/o]
 ecstatic men-- [t/o]
 in the other, the teeth mother, naked at last. (26)

Instead of providing escape, sleep can take one to that world where shamans travel, where truth may arise in the language of myth, a language not debased, still full of "hairy and ecstatic" energy. This language which shaman and shamanic poet use may be more true than scientific language in explaining the horror of war, Bly implies. In using the language of myth, they touch on the ultimate knowledge, not just mundane knowledge. Joseph Campbell says mythology renders "forms through which the formless Form of forms can be known," cites Gerhart Hauptmann as saying "that poetry is the art of causing the Word to resound behind words" (in MASKS 55).

All poets speak in this language of images (Vickery 187), but the shamanic poet works to unify myth and poetry, forms and words to better reveal truth, and by rendering truth through myth to better persuade. The shamanic poet uses myth because it is so fundamental and thereby persuasive because his task is to depict (in poems) healing for his tribe--other poets do not have this mission. Certainly, because Bly works to represent healing (and thereby hopes to heal), he uses language in this mythmaking, resonant manner.

In MYTH AND LANGUAGE, Albert Cook suggests that myth is

a technique for handling and explaining the unknown (1). His definition might also apply to science, but Bly would say why myth renders a more unifying, holistic vision because of its non-analytical approach. Bly would agree with Campbell who says that the mythic image originates, not in the intellect, but in the body and thus has a more immediate and primary impact (MASKS 42). Therefore Bly's presentation of the dream image in this last part of "Teeth Mother" rather than escaping or avoiding, confronts with an immediacy which an economic, political, or scientific approach would lack: out of the whirlwind, the teeth mother is "naked at last."

The horror of the war is not discussed but personified in Bly's mythic image of the dangerous mother. The bold metaphor reveals the War as horrible, yet human nonetheless. The teeth mother is the parent who kills her children as portrayed in Part VI. But in this final part, she is "naked" and realized as part of ourselves. In this nightmarish vision, Bly vividly portrays the dark side of ourselves. Through the shamanic speaker, he shows that the wound of the North Carolina sergeant has festered into War because it went unseen and unhealed. Through the performance of the poem, Bly depicts the wounds, works to make his readers recognize what and where the wounds are. Working through the shamanic persona, Bly depicts healing. Rhetorically, he wants to persuade the readers to agree, "fletere," and he hopes they will act as well. But whether he succeeds in healing or not

does not determine the shamanic success of the poem. However, the efficacy of the images does. And Bly's images are effective in portraying both disease and healing. The teeth mother arises from where the wound is, deep within us, from "the waters underneath." She is our feeling, bodily selves reacting to suppression. Her image makes a forceful rhetorical statement, persuading us of the reality of the illness, in the naked embodiment, the personification of it. In vivifying his concerns, the poet hopes seeing will elicit believing. Shamanically, Bly adds to the force of that vivid persuasion by including primitive, oral, mythic, and healing holistic elements.

The poem closes with a cyclic image, an shamanic vision of healing unity:

Let us drive cars
up
the light beams
to the stars . . .

And return to earth crouched inside the drop of sweat
that falls
from the chin of the Protestant tied in the fire. (26)

At the stanza's opening, the longing to escape is again portrayed. As Howard Nelson suggests, this longing was "especially strong during the Vietnam period, particularly in the conventional culture . . . and in much of the counter-culture" (96). While this is true, the image of escape also may represent the journey to a healing dream vision. The modern shaman may use a car, instead of an eagle, to travel up the axis mundi to the spirit realms. In

fact, while the car represents the machine motif of the poem, the car is also one of the poem's dream symbols for the body: in the punning language of dreams, the body is the "vehicle" for the spirit.

In the shaman's performance, the feathers of flight and bird costume in one sense are real aids to a real journey, but in another sense they are symbols (which are actions themselves Burke would say), representing the shamanic soul's flight from his body in the seance and vision quest. Thus Bly employs a valid shamanic "tool" of performance, which is the rhetorical device of the pun, to reveal another level of meaning in the poem. Nelson sees the injunction "let us drive" as enigmatic (95), but in light of the shamanic approach and Bly's earlier reference to cars, this concluding image seems less so.

Saying "let us," Bly exhorts his audience to take the very machinery of war (evoked by the car image) which originates in ourselves (also evoked by the car image) and to "drive" it into the light of recognition. He says, "let us" recognize our technological expertise, our physical bodies, and our emotional selves as part of one whole, no part of which can be denied.

Because of the double-play of the car image, Bly depicts not only the causes of the War, but also our inner spiritual imbalance. The tribe must first recognize the body as literally a vehicle of spirit. Recognizing this, the tribe

can then revalue spirit, body, and nature--all part of a whole. The image is one of transcendence. Bly's metaphor works like the topic of similarity (Corbett 117-118). The car going into the light may be seen as representing the ultimate similarity of union. The inward (light) and outward (car) are merged by desire (drive), a mystical identification of body and soul, inward and outward man, spiritual and mechanical visions join.

Therefore, when the shamanic speaker exhorts the tribe to "return to earth" from the performed journey, the return can be understood as part of this transcendent vision. These last three lines complete that vision and make it a holistic one. Thus the final imagery depicts a cycle: the poem performs the going out and the return of a journey. That full circle of the journey is in itself the healing vision of the quest. The journey image is integrative. The poet uses the first person plural, so we are all identified as journeying with the shamanic speaker and as part of that whole which the journey image reveals. Depicted in the poem, "We" come full cycle. The poem powerfully and effectively portrays healing and thus succeeds shamanically. In the poem, the tribe is healed: "we" are part of the whole "crouched inside the drop of sweat/that falls".

Critic Richard Sugg, while agreeing with such inward aspects of the "droplet" image, apparently denies the equality of the outward half of the equation and denies Bly's

implication of rapprochement with what Sugg calls the "mother-denying Protestant heritage" (78). Sugg says that these final lines "abruptly return the reader to awareness that inward success or failure always takes precedence over achievement in the external world." This point Bly would question, for his emphasis throughout SLEEPERS and later works is on balance.

As I will discuss further in Chapter Five, balance is the key to Bly's shamanic vision of unity. Although in SLEEPERS he is calling for a renewal of feminine consciousness, Bly does so not to suppress the masculine, including that Protestant heritage, but to right the balance. He says, "So it appears the next step is a union of the two, of some sort, of some unknown kind. (A new wholeness?). Yes." (TALKING 221). His recent work with male consciousness in conferences and various writings corroborates my view. In addition, he is calling for a balance between inward and outward. While the Vietnam War is over, he has not turned away from political and social issues as Sugg suggests (78). For example, in reading "The Teeth Mother" these days, Bly revises it to include Central America, appropriate to the current time and audience, true to a shamanic tradition of improvisation. Also, he continues to be involved in numerous conferences, as those on men, and to support himself with public readings across the country. Clearly, his interest in meditation does not lead him only to emphasize the

psychospiritual. Bly returns from his writing shack again and again to "chop wood and carry water" in the public forum.

Thus in the final image, Bly works to balance inner and outer, feminine and masculine, body, soul, and mind. As "we" "return to earth in the drop of sweat falling from the martyred Protestant, Bly is not merely "going for the cheap shot" by burning the Protestant heritage in effigy. He is working toward unity and holism with the forces which caused the imbalance. Just as his portraits of the North Carolina sergeant, of the President, and later of the Marines contained sympathy and understanding, so does this final portrait of the symbolic Protestant. This is an image of the martyr being burned at the stake for his vision of God. The vision may represent a lopsided schema, over-emphasizing masculine values, but the human sacrifice and faith nonetheless carry worth. The sacrifice may be the sacrifice in the fire of the War or the sacrifice of individuals' spirits to that misguided theology. But, within the poem, through the sacrifice and the horror of war, some realization occurs. Bly's poem performs that realization.

Rhetorically, we are made part of the Protestant's pain as we "crouch in his sweat," and part of his persecution, just as we are persecuted by what he symbolizes. But at the close, we return to mother "earth." Performed in the poem, the return conveys Bly's realization of unity. With the teeth mother or Teeth Mother (Bly sometimes capitalizes it)

arisen from the deep waters of soul (SELECTED audio), what is needed is no longer buried as it was in the earlier poem "Water Under the Earth" (6). In the shamanic performance, at least, the spiritual imbalance is now recognized and a vision of healing unity portrayed.

SLEEPERS: Section II: "I Came Out of the Mother Naked"

In the prose essay, "I Came Out of the Mother Naked," which comprises the Section II of SLEEPERS, Bly elaborates on the ideas behind "Teeth Mother" and the other poems of Section I. It is an appropriate next step in the "dispositio" of the book because it assures the audience by providing a context for the deluge of images in Section I. While Bly denies the relevance, most would agree (e.g. Sugg and Nelson) that the essay is indeed relevant not only to what comes before it, but to what comes after it in Section III. In the essay, Bly delineates the Teeth Mother myth and more--the whole Great Mother myth and some of the Great Father myth which in tandem can balance the national psyche. Again, the emphasis in SLEEPERS is on the Great Mother myth because it has been offset and needs weight for the necessary balance; however, for Bly both are important. The shaman is the "guardian of mythological lore" for man (Campbell, MASKS 251), so the shamanic poet Bly employs that lore in his poems and depicts the whole.

Bly begins the essay by once again establishing his ethos and rapport with the audience. He begins conversationally:

I know the poet is not supposed to talk to the reader in the middle of the book. We're supposed to communicate only through the dream-voice of the poem. But I often long for some prose when I'm reading a book of poems. So I'm going to set down here some ideas about Great Mother culture and drop a poem in now and then. [N.B. some poems are translations] (29)

The conversational tone helps to establish the rapport, as does his earnest assumption that his audience will like some prose amidst the poetry as he does. Next, with his "foot in the door," so to speak, he states one of the essential elements of his thesis for SLEEPERS:

When the TAO TE CHING talks of the growth of ecstatic life as "the Return," the implication is that each man was once with the Mother--having gone out into masculine consciousness, a man's job is to return. (29)

Stated in mythic and shamanistic terms as a one sentence paragraph, the thesis of the book is highlighted. Bly asserts it not as his own, but as a "matter of fact," as a correct reading of the mythological lore of his world tribe, and as a correct reading of Eastern philosophies. Thus in his apparently true assessment of the Tao, Bly employs the rhetorical proof of authority to gain further ground with his audience. He associates himself with spiritual ideas and authority from the orient. Such ideas might be foreign and new to many in his audience, yet these very qualities have rhetorical "drawing" power by virtue of their inherent "otherness," and mystery (Burke, MOTIVES 115). In the

sixties and early seventies, the knowledge and myths of the East were still new to many Americans, especially to the young. Eastern thought was mystery that was indeed drawing people as evidenced by the influx of gurus to America and the migration of young American seekers to the East. Bly might say that this mystery of the other also contributed a sort of magnetic quality to Vietnam. The Mother in all of her aspects, some suppressed and therefore mysterious, is reflected in the East. In Vietnam, she is there as horror, the Teeth Mother. Through the War and spiritual seeking, the masculine polarized West meets mysterious and feminized East. This rendition of the "meeting" reflects Bly's own masculine bias, yet he at least attempts to investigate the feminine.

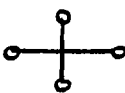
Next, Bly delves into the historical implications for the West of his version of this Taoist myth of "the Return." Here too he uses authority. This time the authority is western: a Swiss scholar named Bachofen who suggested that matriarchal societies have always preceded patriarchal ones. Bly provides further evidence for this idea with references to BEOWULF, the BIBLE (particularly "Job"), and to fairy tales. Also, he cites Carl Jung's work regarding the masculine/feminine aspects of human consciousness. Bly uses authority to reassure the audience that he is not a mad mystic, but rather a concerned citizen-rhetor. The concern for the tribe is also shamanic.

Just as he uses the essay form (albeit loose) to reassure the audience of his ties to the rational, he also uses concrete data and respected experts to prove his assertions. In Bly's rendition of history (and of Bachofen), the pendulum swings back and forth from matriarchy to patriarchy. He works like the shaman to reassure his tribe that the current crisis is part of a larger picture, and that this larger view can incorporate the changes they are undergoing. The Teeth Mother and the horror of war and subversion of things feminine, including the earth, will not last. The Good Mother and the Ecstatic Mother will also arrive as the pendulum swings toward a balance. Bly suggests that poets and other artists herald the Ecstatic Mother in some of their works. Bly's own shamanic approach in poetry certainly works to voice the ecstasy of the shamanic journey.

With the backing of authority, Bly then proceeds to make bold assertions about the culture of the Great Mother, based on his readings of those authorities and ancient texts and on his own intuition. The essay "leaps" (see LEAPING), associating ideas rapidly, so that some might attack his reasoning process. Despite his use of authority, many of his assertions seemingly go unsupported. However, he might answer that his task is not to prove logically, but "to boldly go where no man has gone" (STAR TREK). That is, he sometimes asserts his case in an intuitive or, what he might call, "feminine" method. By using this method, Bly reveals

his view of how non-masculine consciousness may function and, at the same time, undergirds his thesis calling for balance. In expecting his audience to take the leaps of logic with him, he courageously assumes their further identification with his attitude toward the material. Rhetorically, such expectations and assumptions of audience are akin to the use of the rhetorical question--the speaker takes a chance, but the gains for audience participation are great. By speaking of the feminine in the manner of the feminine consciousness, Bly enhances content by form, while using both to help swing the balance. By his and, he hopes, our participation in the essay's performance, Bly helps to engage us in the reality of the myth he makes.

Bly's second declaration in this essay uses the rhetorical topos of definition. He defines, by genus and division, the aspects of the Great Mother myth. Before the myth can be fully active in the tribal life, it must be fully defined. As discussed earlier, rhetorician Richard Weaver suggests that definition is the highest in the hierarchy of "topoi" ("Language is Sermonic" in Golden 274, 275-85). Definition and image are closely aligned. Defining is declaring; declaring is showing; showing is metaphor. In poem or prose, image has the poetic power to persuade. In definition, the appeals of pathos and logos may align, precisely what the shamanic poet has in mind in his myth of balance.

Bly's defining picture of the Great Mother is one of "a union of four force fields"-- . The vertical line is a "life-death line" with the Good Mother ("all vegetation mothers, the Demeter and Isis mothers") at the top with life, and the Death Mother (Hecuba, Kali) at the bottom. The Good Mother creates, while the Death Mother eats up creation. If the vertical is the physical plane, Bly suggests that the horizontal is the mental and spiritual life plane. To the east is the Ecstatic Mother (inspiring saint and artist) while her opposite is the Stone or Teeth Mother (making war, causing alcoholism, drug addiction, catatonia).

This last mother "suggests the end of psychic life." She "perhaps represents in history the Mother culture . . . implacably hostile to masculine consciousness." Bly shows us that neither feminine nor masculine consciousness is inherently better than the other; both need recognition and representation. The Mother culture's hostility arose in the Vietnam War. In particular, Bly sees it there in the soldiers' fear of "Vietnamese women who are said to have had razor blades inserted "surgically" into their vaginas." It can be seen in numerous rock songs which portray the dangers of "evil women." Bly says:

the Vietnam War has helped everyone see how much of the Teeth Mother there is in the United States. The culture of affluence opens the psyche to the Teeth Mother and the Death Mother in ways that no one understands. (43)

Thus shaman-like, Bly discusses a vision, a myth being played out, and he asks us to see what he sees. Like the man in the

crow's nest at sea, the shamanic poet looks for the new land, a renewing myth, and calls out to make his tribe aware.

Bly ends the essay admitting he has used Father consciousness while writing of the Mother, but states, "there are no other possibilities for a man." He may mean that in this endeavor he does not want to seem too egocentric and egotistical. While he assumes much in the essay, he does not purport to be the final authority. He even admits that he does not expect his ideas "to help writers write better poems nor should anyone examine my own poems for evidence of them." Along with Nelson (88), however, I find this a weak assertion since so many of the ideas in the essay are so obviously part of Bly's poetic context. In fact, his admissions may be rhetorical tactics to soften the shock of his suppositions. Disclaimers make the dish more palatable. Remove expectation, and poet, the shaman, or the rhetorician has an easier time of it. Besides Bly wants to mend the rend between the two-fold consciousness, not create more strife. Bly seems careful not to alienate those who might question his definitions of the feminine and masculine. He works to heal not to alienate. Healing is the shamanic goal. As Bly says at the essay's close his poetic vision is an attempt "to right our own spiritual balance . . ." (50).

Section III: "Sleepers Joining Hands," A Long Poem

Bly follows his essay with the four part title poem which appears less public and traditionally rhetorical than the essay and many of the poems in Section I. Yet "Sleepers Joining Hands" offers a solution to the imbalance in a detailed and specific way. It suggests the shamanic journey is the way in which an individual may right the balance in his inward and outward life. It is a vivid performance of that journey, offered as a healing map for fellow tribesmen. In Bly's vision, public ills are begun to be solved by a change in each individual. Social action is necessary to cure social ills and political paralysis, but ultimately each individual must make a choice to change his own life for the whole to change.

In *LOVING A WOMAN IN TWO WORLDS*, Bly writes of that choice: "What can we do but choose? The only way for human beings/is to choose ("Out of the Rolling Ocean" 1). Certainly choice is always rhetorical in nature, whether private or public, for this is the way human beings must solve problems: "Rhetoric is the study of men persuading men to make free choices" (Everett Lee Hunt qtd. in Golden 13). Bly agrees with Rainer Maria Rilke who says, "You must change your life," in the poem "Archaic Torso of Apollo" (Norton 181). In his own life, Bly seems to have followed Rilke's dictum in both inward journey and public performance (Faas

208, 238). In this poem he offers a way to change.

In the journey of "Sleepers," the shamanic speaker further develops the Great Mother myth, working to right the balance as he goes. Coming after the essay, the images gain depth; they are the surface entry or doorway to a great mine of mythology--old and new. In fact, this section depicts the forging of new myth, welded to the old, arising from the journey experience.

"The Shadow Goes Away"

In the first part of "Sleepers," called "The Shadow Goes Away," Bly represents the Great Mother's presence in the patriarchy as "the woman chained to the shore." As the tribe evolves and incorporates knowledge from the journey, this "woman" will be released. Through the shaman-like persona (painted as Bly), Bly depicts how the ocean of feminine consciousness will "rise to take us." The speaker gives the tribe hope as the journey performance begins. Of course, implicit in this image is the danger of drowning in the Great Mother, but in Bly's view, this fear is unwarranted, like the American soldiers' fear of Vietnamese women. Yet at the journey's start, the speaker, who represents the entire tribe, is fearful . . . there is danger in the unknown. He watches "the blood colored moon gobbling up the sand (53).

Next, the shamanic speaker travels in a dream journey, performing it so that "we," his "constituency," may partake in it:

I fall asleep, and dream I am working in the
 fields [t/o]
 Now I show the father the coat stained
 with goat's blood [t/o]
 The shadow goes away,
 we are left alone in the father's house. (53)

We are isolated in the father consciousness; we must escape: "I sent my brother away." Here Bly merges Biblical images into the sweep of western history and into America's own west. The brother is taken by the Sioux Indians who represent the feminine consciousness as Bly suggests in his essay. The push and pull of masculine and feminine is set down early in the poem. The father consciousness is embedded in the tribe's Judeo-Christian heritage as in our scientific thought--both are myths which are no longer viable in their current forms.

As the poem continues, the journey "leaps" in rapid association of images from continent to continent, time to time, establishing the lineage of masculine consciousness and its interplay with the feminine. Stanley in Africa and the Puritans are juxtaposed with Indians. Mothers are juxtaposed with images of sons, wives with husbands, until the representative "I" is transformed by the journey's magic into a Vietnamese prostitute--"The Marines turn to me. They offer me money." The "I" is transformed from a masculine speaker to a feminine one: the journey sends the traveller into other

realms of consciousness so that he (or she) may understand and incorporate. The audience is thus transformed as the shamanic speaker is, as he renders his journey in the performance. The image also implies the masculine need for the feminine balance, no matter the cost--at the time the cost was the War. It also reveals another cost of imbalance: the perversion of natural desires into economic transactions and the subsequent distortion of men and repression of women.

"Meeting the Man Who Warns Me"

In the second part of "Sleepers," entitled "Meeting the Man Who Warns Me," the persona is again presented as the shaman on the journey, waking into another realm: "I wake and find myself in the woods, far from the castle." Bly's study of fairy tales is evident here (e.g. THE PILLOW AND THE KEY). The feminine, mysterious woods are reached magically. The shamanic persona intrigues his audience to read on, and thus the mysteries depicted function rhetorically to engage the audience. The castle represents the masculine consciousness, fortified and rigid. In the woods, a woman speaks to this dreamer, and asks that he speak truth. This is the traditional shaman's test. He must give the right and true answer. In the poem, the answer must incorporate the feminine consciousness along with the masculine.

In "Meeting the Man," the shamanic persona journeys in

search of answers. These answers must contain truth which addresses the feminine, as well as the masculine consciousness. In this part, the shaman is leading us toward recognizing the imbalance within so that we may heal it. Thus the "I" begins to "dream that the fathers are dying," and to ask, "Who is this that visits us from beneath the earth?" (56). Of course, the journey is revealing the future when the idea dies that father consciousness is the only consciousness. Through the questions, the speaker hopes to elicit a response in the tribe and thereby enable them to imagine what will arise when that old ethos does pass away ("Who . . . ?"). Then he reveals that "The energy is inside us . . ." (57). Overall, this part moves in much the same way as the first to establish the myth, in great associative leaps and in the language of shamanic dream journey, but here the speaker has begun to bring the vision up from "underneath." Yet the shaman as portrayed by the poet must qualify himself by saying, "so much (is) just beyond the reach of our eyes," letting us know that the journey myth while a solution, is always a mystery continually unfolding.

"The Night Journey in the Cooking Pot"

The tribe is "present" as the shaman unrolls his performance's piece of that mystery. In the third part of "Sleepers," "The Night Journey in the Cooking Pot," the

shamanic speaker brings back (and thereby performs) his journey in the dark realms of spirit where this time he is immersed in the Ecstatic Mother. More and more, the shaman-persona teaches how to incorporate the feminine into one's consciousness. The method involves the muse aspect of the feminine, the Ecstatic Mother. The fuel for poets, the energy she represents is appropriate for Bly, the poet, to depict through his shamanic speaker:

I was born during the night sea-journey.
 I love the whale with his warm organ pipes
 in the mouse-killing waters,
 I love the men who drift, asleep, for three nights
 in octopus waters, [t/o]
 the furry men gathering wood, . . .
 I love the snow, I need privacy as I move,
 I am all alone, floating in the cooking pot
 on the sea, through the night I am alone. (59)

Here is rebirth in the spiritual realm of the feminine. Bly fills the poem and this passage with feminine imagery: the whale, the sea, octopus, even the cooking pot. The latter provides a touch of humor, as well as truth in its feminine associations. Yes women traditionally are the cooks. Aha, here this man is cooked! Also, in the shamanic initiation, the shaman may be symbolically dismembered and cooked so that he may be born anew (Larsen 62-63). In the new birthing process, the shaman experiences ecstasy--"I love . . . I love . . . I love" This is the energy of Bly's Ecstatic Mother, the aspect of the Great Mother which inspires creativity, engenders change, and enables union. This union is seen throughout this piece as the shamanic "I" falls in

love with all that surrounds him.

Another important method for incorporating the feminine and for balancing the self is through solitude:

I float on solitude as on water . . .
 there is a road
 I felt the road first in New York, in that great room
 reading Rilke in the womanless loneliness.
 How marvelous the great wings sweeping along the floor,
 inwardness, inwardness, inwardness,
 the inward path I still walk on (59)

From this passage, it is clear that Bly depicts himself as the shaman-like persona of the poem. The mask is transparent, yet still there--this is the performance not the real moment. Through the rhetorical device of repetition, the shamanic poet asserts the need for solitude in order to make contact with the Ecstatic Mother who can reach one even "in the womanless loneliness." This passage is central to Bly's canon: it depicts his private shaman-like initiation (accompanied by master Rilke); at the same time, it asserts his public position on everyone's need for "inwardness." The crux of his seemingly double-vision is contained in that experience and its subsequent performance in throughout his work. As he depicts himself, Bly takes on shamanic attributes: a "tribe's shamans are special individuals who have deepened their dream and vision experiences of the cosmic forces by extensive learning and solitary meditation" (Grim 76).

The poem goes on to show the shaman experiencing a reacquaintance with the body and the feminine: "I feel the

blood galloping in the body, / the baby whirling in the womb" (60). This is an embodiment of that energy which the shaman experiences (Grim 176-79). It is also the inspiration, the creativity ("the baby in the womb") which the poet experiences. With the reacquaintance, comes understanding of and mystical union with all nature--of self, of other--and a subsequent joy:

Deep in the mountain the sleeper is glad.

 The tree becomes naked and joyful.

 Suddenly I love the dancers, leaping
 in the dark, jumping
 into the air, and the singers and dancers and leapers!
 I start to sing . . .

 green rain carries me nearer you,
 I weave drunkenly about the page,
 I love you,
 I never knew that I loved you
 until I was swallowed by the invisible (61)

On the journey, as the shamanic persona is "swallowed" in ecstasy "by the invisible," he finds love and a vision of unity--the solution to healing the tribe's and each tribesman's wounds is found:

For we are like the branch bent in the water . . .
 Taken out, it is whole, it was always whole (61)

Herein too is the irony of the problem of imbalance: it lies in perception not in reality. Through the language of dream and myth, the shaman gives his tribe a vision of truth, a way to perceive rightly. Although it is within the poem, the shamanic poet, likewise, hopes to enhance perception through the performance of the poem. He deals in words and symbols

which create a world (in the poem) by the perceptions they allow. Burke suggests this world-creating and limiting power for symbols in his essay on "terministic screens" in LANGUAGE AS SYMBOLIC ACTION (44-62).

Bly's "Night Journey" uses the imagery of the Ecstatic Mother and also the Good Mother who nourishes, incorporating the fullness of the Great Mother myth in its life-enhancing aspects. However, "Night Journey" also reveals the Death Mother: "I decide death is friendly." Yet this is the view of death when the joy of the Ecstatic Mother and the caring of the Good Mother are there, helping to balance. But the vision is four-fold, so Bly brings in the fourth Mother once again, at this part's close:

I sit down again, I hit my own body,
 I shout at myself, I see what I have betrayed.
 What I have written is not good enough.
 Who does it help?
 I am ashamed sitting on the edge of my bed. (63)

The Stone or Teeth Mother stops the flow of poems and myth. The shamanic persona as writer damns himself. Ironically in this self-condemnation, the Stone Mother makes him realize the greatness of the feminine energy which he has denied for all those years, and she also makes him question both his adequacy to depict or perform that greatness and the inadequacy for that performance to heal. She forces the "I" (and thereby forces his tribal constituency) to question himself as shamanic poet and as a rhetor.

She forces that self-doubt in the passage immediately

before this where the shaman, after accepting death as friendly, meets "singing women carrying to the burial fields the look I saw on my father's face." She helps him to see not only the greatness of the feminine, but the danger of burying the masculine. Yet she offers no solace, so this part ends with the shamanic poet returned from the journey, having had his vision of unity, but as yet not fully capable of the public action, the performance necessary to persuade and to heal. Then too, this admission of self-doubt is a rhetorical tool to gain identification with the audience. All of us doubt our capabilities to perform in the world. Therefore, the very real sense of inadequacy is transformed into rhetorical power when the shamanic poet represents it in his performance.

"Water Drawn Up into the Head"

In the final section of "Sleepers," entitled "Water Drawn Up into the Head," Bly develops the myth of a future where the water of the Great Mother will flow up to touch the mind now full only of the Great Father. Here is a poem which shows a realization of balance where the Teeth Mother does not need to violently remind us of the feminine energies. In this last part of poem and of book, Bly provides a sense of resolution for both the long poem and for the entire book. It is a companion poem to Section I's "Water Under the

Earth." The feminine energies once depicted as buried are now envisioned as freely flowing up, into the dreams of the shamanic speaker and of all his tribe. Here is the final healing vision, a solution to Vietnam, and a prevention of future Vietnams if it can be incorporated into individuals' lives.

"The feminine creature at the edge of town" must be invited in. Bly suggests what it is like to consciously ask "her" in: "When we come face to face with you/the holder laughs and is glad!" The he suggests a method he has used soas to be able to invite her in: "I have sat her alone for two hours . . . / I have sat here alone for two years!" Again, solitude and patience are the keys to the door of the feminine realms of the soul. This emphasis on privacy in this poem and "Night Journey" brings the book full circle back to the meditative "Six Winter Privacy Poems." There Bly showed us his shamanic method: the waiting, the ecstasy, the journey, the return for performance (the public aspect). By the book's close we can fully understand his method. That "privacy" the shamanic speaker uses is not for selfish purpose, not for his enlightenment alone, but for tribal reasons, for the tribe's healing and salvation. The poet who takes up the tribe's concerns takes up a portion of the shamanic mantel and, within the poem, uses the art of rhetoric to persuade the tribe. Bly believes that if his tribe goes inward, we will encounter the Great Mother and

Father in ourselves: "I love the Mother. / I am an enemy of the Mother." He depicts that encounter through the shamanic persona, a persona which is himself. Through rhetorical identification he hopes he can make the tribe see what is wrong so that healing may come.

Bly continues the poem with a long, flourishing passage of Whitmanesque identification and anaphora; e.g., "I am the man locked in the oakwomb," "I am the steelhead trout that hurries to his mountain mother," "I am the one whom I have never met," "I am what remains of the beloved." The shamanic persona becomes all things. He is part of nature, and both masculine and feminine. He joins in the mystery of the other, of the "beloved." Through the repetition and the identification, he joins his tribe to that mystery as well. We partake in the myth with him in this powerful performance.

Bly ends the poem with the speaker's vision of global unity--widening the scope of healing with the expansion which ecstasy allows:

The panther rejoices in the gathering dark.
 Hands rush toward each other through miles of space.
 All sleepers in the world join hands. (67)

Here is performance which enacts the unifying possibilities of the myth for the tribe. This vision, as a transcendent image, is a well wrought persuasive tool. Here Bly has left the "I am" as a unifying persona, for the third person. The natural world, embodied by panther, joins us here out of its own mystery. That mysterious aspect of nature cannot be

incorporated by "I" or ego-energy; it must be welcomed by a change in consciousness, represented here by "the gathering dark" which is the inrush of the feminine. In Bly's view, this method of being open, allowing the other to "come in" is that of "yin," a feminine approach, akin to the Good Mother--passive in nature, yet nourishing.

The panther can also be seen as the spirit animal which the shaman attains in his arduous initiatory journey. While the book's spirit animal has been the turtle, representing the feminine realms of energy, that turtle may no longer be adequate to the task alone. Certainly, the turtle depicts patience and solitude, and thus emphasizes the necessity of these qualities, yet as a helping spirit, it lacks the dynamism which the panther embodies. This is a dynamism which the shamanic speaker and his tribe also may need in order to carry out the change which the vision warrants. In addition, the panther image may pay homage to Rilke's poem "The Panther" (NEWS 210-211, 246). This is like the newly initiated shaman paying homage to the master shaman, acknowledging his debt to that master.

With the panther's rejoicing, the joining can take place. The call to action here is not a call to protest or a call to end the War, but it is an implicit call to incorporate the myth into our consciousnesses. The myth itself is both vision and persuasion. Again, by the power of the picture we may be convinced, at least to agree

("flectere") that the vision is a good one, even a possible one. Indeed in the poem's dream vision from the journey, we are already joined; that is to say, in the realm of the spirit, where the true answers lie, we are joined in actuality. As we see "the branch bent in water," it is only our mundane perception which keeps us from seeing that it is and always was whole. Bly's reference to Rilke's panther poem underscores this, for he calls it one of Rilke's "seeing" poems. Rilke sat and watched a panther at the zoo for hours, waiting to truly see it, enter into its world, and there realized this joining (NEWS 210-211). But most of "the tribe" does not see, does not know that patience and solitude (and work) are required to see. They are asleep, yet still all are joined. This holds the reassuring message of the poem, as well as the challenge to wake. With its unifying vision and challenge, the poem is shamanic.

Conclusion

With "Water Draw Up" completing the journey of Section III and the cycle of the book itself, one can see that all the images, poems, and the book as a whole are performances, public and rhetorical, which seek to persuade and to heal by rendering and retrieving the private knowledge of truth which the shamanic speaker gathers on his inward journey. SLEEPERS' seemingly dissimilar private and public poems fit

together as one wholistic piece.

The shamanic approach which allows SLEEPERS to be seen as a unified work, also allows all of Bly's work to be seen as of one cloth. Both public and private poems arise from the same vision. Bly himself indicates this idea when he says: "The true political poem does not order us either to take any specific acts: like the personal poem it moves to deepen awareness" (TALKING 101). Herein lies the rhetorical and shamanic method by which to judge Bly's political and his private poems. Both types have rhetorical purpose: to deepen awareness. Both types arise out of shamanic experience, moving from inward to outward worlds, bringing the deep awareness which is healing truth. Bly says as much when he states: "Once inside the psyche (the journey), (the poet) can speak (the performance) of inward and political things with the same assuranceThe truth is that the political poem comes out of the deepest privacy" (TALKING 98-99). Thus SLEEPERS and all Bly's works may be seen as arising from a single fount: the shamanic vision. In his poems, Bly works for the tribe by performances of of visions of healing and deep journeys into dark realms.

CHAPTER IV

THE SHAMANIC JOURNEY IN BLY'S POETRY

"I was born during the night sea-journey."--SLEEPERS JOINING

As I have already indicated, Robert Bly's work can be viewed as a unified whole when it is approached as shamanic. As in the shamanic tradition, the seemingly separate modes of political and of private poetry are drawn from the same source. In the previous chapter, I investigated the performance aspect of the shamanic poet in order to show how both public and private poems arise from the cycle of the shaman's performance. In this chapter, I intend to show how the more mystical and private of Bly's poems may be seen as shamanic journeys. While both public and private poems are performed, the private poems represent the personal, investigative journey which the shaman must take before he can heal others. The primary ritual of the shaman is his journey to the spiritual world. As I argued in Chapter Three, he performs his journey for the tribe to bring back healing messages and answers to tribal needs or questions (Grim 11-12). The journey itself occurs when the shaman enters the ecstatic trance and travels out of his body (Eliade 5). This journey can be seen most clearly in Bly's poems which use the specific image of the speaker "going out." Portrayed as Bly himself, the speaker walks out to the

barn, drives out across the countryside, or looks out of his writing hut and his spirit flies out. This sort of image is perhaps the single most important image in Bly's work. This "going out" motif emphasizes that Bly is indeed a shamanic poet whose poems participate in a vision closely corresponding to that of a real shaman--in journey themes, in deep images, and in associative techniques ("leaping").

The image of "going out" suggests the idea of the shaman, and thus of the shamanic poet, who must go out of his ordinary self and of his particular world view in order to journey to spiritual realms where he may seek and find divine truths. Poet and shaman are empowered by that journey. This may be what Bly often speaks of as "desire-energy" (NEWS 289) or the psychic energy of the poet (LEAPING 4). In his anthology LEAPING POETRY (1972), Bly calls for this energy to be released in American poetry through "leaping" imagery. Such imagery contains metaphors compacted together, related by associations. These "compacted" metaphors require emotional and/or mental energy or "leaps" to bridge. That Bly believes he himself uses this leaping associative technique is clear, for he includes an excerpt from his own poem "Teeth Mother" in LEAPING (86).

How is this leap shamanic? Bly maintains that leaps often occur in primitive poetry (LEAPING 1). Thomas Henighen suggests a similar idea in his discussion of the primitive in contemporary poetry, saying that primitive poetry is "capable

of energetic leaps into an imagery" (606). In addition, Henighen identifies the primitive poetic tradition in general with the shamanic, as does Bly (Froiland 35). In fact, Bly's description of ancient poets reveals his own shamanic perspective:

In ancient times, in the 'time of inspiration', the poet flew from one world to another, 'riding on dragons', as the Chinese said. Isaiah rode on those dragons, so did Li Po and Pindar. They dragged behind them long tails of dragon smoke. Some of that dragon smoke still boils out of Beowulf. The Beowulf poet holds tight to Danish soil, or leaps after Grendel into the sea (LEAPING 1).

This statement implies what Bly later says in a 1978 interview--that the role of the poet was once part of the role of the shaman (Froiland 35). In ancient times it was the shaman who flew to other realms seeking healing answers for his tribe and himself.

Bly's awareness of these connections between shaman and poet, leaping and primitive poetry, ancient and modern is seen in his inclusion of Jerome Rothenberg's contemporary rendition of some American Indian shamanic poems in LEAPING. Called "Crazy Dog Events" (88), this piece is spoken by the "trickster" shaman who reveals the world beyond societal conceptualization (Schmidt 62-63). Bly's belief in these connections may also be seen in his NEWS OF THE UNIVERSE anthology (1980) where he discusses the problems and power of the poet's energy and includes samples of shamans' poems as indicative of poems where energy is allowed to "go out" (25). One example Bly includes is an Eskimo shaman's taken from

Knud Rasmussen's accounts. In this poem the energy of the world joins with that of the shaman in an ecstatic encounter (257). This is the encounter to which Bly himself aspires. Indeed, this encounter is the "desire energy," the motion, the image, and the link which is "leaping." To reiterate, it seems clear that Bly himself aspires to leaping in his own poetry because he does include his own work in these anthologies (LEAPING 88, NEWS 172-174) as examples of poems which "go out" or "leap" into other realms.

Bly himself defines the leap loosely as a jump from a "known part of the mind to the unknown and back to the known" (LEAPING 1). He also suggests that the leaps may go between different parts of the brain which he calls the reptile, the mammal, and the new brains, basing his ideas on the hypothesis of neurologist Paul MacLean (LEAPING 59). He says that the human brain retains vestiges of its evolution within it: the early reptile phase in the limbic node, the mammalian in the cortex, and the new or most advanced "light" brain in the neo-cortex (59-62). These parts of the brain may well be the "geopsychic realms" where shaman's travel (Houston xiii). For as Douglas Sharon says of the shaman's ecstatic flight, his spirit "soars into realms of knowledge and vision" (112). These realms are the three cosmic regions connected by the axis mundi (often the World Tree discussed in Chapter One) (Eliade, SHAMANISM 259) which would appear to correspond to Bly's tri-fold schema of the brain. As anthropologist

Michael Taussig suggests, the shaman travels in realms outside of the mind's and culture's ordinary consciousness, concepts, and constructs (in Schmidt 63-66). The shaman leaps beyond things defined into the realm of chaos where things are becoming (66).

The shaman's leap seems like Bly's leaping. Of course, the shamanic poet leaps linguistically through his ability to "associate [images] fast." Bly adds that the faster the associations, the greater the "psychic energy" a poem may exhibit (LEAPING 4). Similarly, the more a shaman journeys, the more energy he may glean from the divine realms.

Yet later, Bly expands his definition, suggesting that poetry which leaps also may be quiet and meditative in tone. This quietude in Bly's work has been termed "deep image" poetry (see Piccione). By all accounts, particularly in Piccione's detailed discussion, deep image poetry appears akin to leaping poetry, for it too "travels" or "journeys" among or between "worlds." Piccione cites poet Jerome Rothenberg as saying that the deep image poems reveal non-rational realms, and both Piccione and Rothenberg agree that deep image poetry is process, rather than product, oriented, thereby being a way of seeing for the poet (Piccione 25-31). The shaman's journey is exactly that--a way of seeing: in the ecstatic trance, he travels that he might see and gain new understanding. From the journey, the shaman derives his power. Thus, journeying techniques,

especially ecstatic flight or movement, are an important shamanic attributes. Depending on the consistency and number of other shamanic attributes as he has, a poet may be shamanic if he uses poetic journeying. Leaping and deep imagery are such methods of shamanic "journeying" for Bly. With these methods, he journeys in a poem and gains poetic power.

The journey occurs within the cyclic framework of the performance. In the midst of the performance, the shaman goes into an ecstatic trance, often in almost death-like quiet, sometimes with spirit languages spoken. The trance indicates that the shaman has left his body to journey to spiritual realms. The shaman has left the communal performance to "go out" on his mystical travels. Ecstasy propels the shaman on the journey. And, according to Bly, it is by the psychic energy of ecstasy that the poet (or anyone) may reach the neo-cortex, where lies the source for the next step in human evolution (LEAPING 61). In poems which journey there, the shamanic poet depicts this forward movement of the tribe: expanded concepts and perceptions, and new ways to survive.

In both leaping and deep image poetry, Bly certainly writes with this journey in mind. In her 1977 study of Bly, MOVING INWARD, Ingegird Friberg discusses Bly's imagery in light of the journey. Although she uses other terms and fails to develop the shamanic idea she brings up, she does

see the journey's importance to Bly's work. Calling it a "theme of movement," she traces the journey in his works from his M.A. thesis at Iowa up to SLEEPERS, his latest work at the time of her study (16-22, 56-57). She says that in some poems the movement "becomes that of the shaman or the mystic hero. Strange symbolic objects, beings, and circumstances (surreal) are revealed and constitute a framework for poems of mystical experience" (202).

More recently, Howard Nelson also sees the journey as a method or way by which Bly organizes many of his books, including the M.A. thesis entitled TOWARDS POVERTY AND DEATH. Bly takes his title from Rilke's BOOK FOR HOURS OF PRAYER, and he takes a chapter title from Rilke--"The Book of the Pilgrimage" (45). Bly's homage to Rilke in many of his writings helps to make Nelson's case. Interestingly, in LEAPING, Bly speaks of Rilke as a poet who wrote of "change, paths, doors, roads, opening," citing the importance to Rilke of Orpheus whom "Eliade noticed . . . to be an early shamanic figure who flies from one world to the next" (73).

In addition, Richard Sugg (1986) states that Bly's "most enduring poetic theme is the importance of the inward journey . . . and his entire career thus traces his devotion to the geography of that dark region and to understanding the inward causes of external events" (3). Certainly, Bly's use of the journey in his poetry is shamanic. I intend to show that for Bly the motif is not only a technique of image and

association, of form as process, but also a shamanic approach to content, a structuring poetic vision. Bly himself describes his initiation as a poet in "Night Journey in the Cooking Pot" as a vision of "a road," "the inward path I still walk" (SLEEPERS 59). His statement suggests the importance of the journey to his writing.

While some of Bly's poems do not specifically use journey images, all his poetry is, in a sense, derived from this poetic vision. Furthermore, in SELECTED POEMS, Bly says that "All poems are journeys" (88). But his private, mystical poems especially reveal the realms of the shamanic journey. I will look at one or two poems as representative of this type from each of his major works, excluding LOVING A WOMAN IN TWO WORLDS which I will discuss fully in Chapter Five. By looking at these representative poems, I hope to show how Bly uses the shamanic journey as content--in the quiet of the deep image, in the excitement of the leap, in the inward journey represented by outward movement,-- and how he uses it as form--a structuring device.

Journeys in SILENCE IN THE SNOWY FIELDS

In his first book, SILENCE IN THE SNOWY FIELDS (1962), Bly depicts the journey within the "silence" which pervades the book. This silence is the quiet state of the shaman as he journeys in trance. It is also the quietude of some deep

image poetry. One of the poems which is typical of Bly's use of the journey motif is "Driving Toward Lac Qui Parle River" (20). While this poem surprisingly is not in the third section entitled "Silence on the Roads," but in the first section, "Poems of Solitude," this poem and this section may be viewed in terms of the shaman's vision quest, the initiation journey to the spirit realm. The second section, "Awakening," may be seen as the shaman's realization--both in public stance in poems like "Poem Against the Rich" (27), and in mystic development in poems like "Driving Through Ohio" (33)" and "A Man Writes to Part of Himself" (36). And the third section may be viewed as the shaman's ongoing shamanic journeys. In any case, however the book may be organized, the overriding imagery throughout the book is that of the journey and the realizations of the journey. Thus to discuss "Lac Qui Parle" will illumine many of the book's images and associations.

The poem begins with an image that Bly uses not only in SILENCE, but in much of his work: the image of the speaker "going out." Here the speaker typically is driving across the Minnesota landscape:

I

I am driving; it is dusk; Minnesota.
 The stubble field catches the last growth of sun.
 The soybeans are breathing on all sides.
 Old men are sitting before their houses on carseats
 In the small towns. I am happy,
 The moon rising above the turkey sheds. (20)

The late summer landscape is beautifully depicted, full of

the quiet resonance of the deep image. The scene of someone driving is typical. The speaker is a shaman who travels by magical car instead of by magical eagle. The time of day is the shaman's time, and as such is a key to unlock the poem: the time is "dusk" (Castaneda 91). It is emphasized in the first line as a three syllable independent clause between two four syllable independent clauses. Like the drum which the shaman uses to aid his travel into other worlds, the poem's rhythms are emphatic. Indeed, the poem sets up a drumming through the use of the /d/, /k/, /m/, /n/ and /t/ sounds. That the very name Minnesota is an Indian word enhances this primitive sense.

The /d/ creates a downward movement as if the poem itself is driving into some other realm of awareness. Recently in fact, sounds have been shown to induce trance and trance-like states (Harner in Doore 3). Also, deep image poetry often involves some kind of descent into the landscape or the psyche (Breslin, 178). The sense of descent, the sounds, the placement of the clauses--all these elements reinforce the word "dusk." By the time the moon rises, the speaker has entered through the "crack between the worlds" (Castaneda 91) and begun his journey. The moon rises in this other realm.

Twilight is the time when shamans travel, for according to Castaneda's Don Juan (91), and according to Bly, it is the time of day when "man's unconscious opens." He says that he

writes many of his poems "at dusk" (TALKING 130-131). So this car ride at "dusk" is more than an image of a physical journey: it is an image of a shamanic journey and of a writer's journey. This layering of associations--physical, mystical, and writer's process--within the image are part of what deep imagery is all about. Piccione says that deep image poems themselves recreate the process of finding "non-rational awareness" and are thus "the transmission of an essentially non-rational glimpse at cosmic vision" (31). Piccione may be kindly offering a disclaimer for Bly, in regards to the difficulty some critics have in assessing Bly's work, but the work can be approached rationally. The cosmic vision of the shaman has pragmatic applicability; likewise Bly's journeys are not solely non-rational. Piccione assumes that rational and non-rational realms are divided, separate. However, from a shamanic perspective, these realms are not divided. All realms are part of a unity. In his 1984 study of modern and contemporary poetry, James E.B. Breslin suggests Bly's shamanic perspective, saying that Bly's deep image "shakes conscious mind into awareness of our hidden connections with the perceived world" (178). In addition, Charles Altieri says that Bly's metaphors are "literally true relationships"; i.e., "disclosures of sacred truths" (in Breslin 178). Bly's approach to metaphor as unifying revelations is shamanic.

As the shamanic persona journeys through the crack

between worlds, he finds the "hidden connections" with the earth and thereby within his own psyche. He feels the soybeans "breathing on all sides" and he is "happy." The journey portrayed in the poem is a real, physical journey across the earth, while at the same time it is a metaphor for the mystical journey across sacred terrain. But more than metaphor, the journey image becomes a tool by which the poet may portray that mystical world which is real and not separate from the natural world.

The speaker journeys to discover "Gott Natur" of which Bly speaks in NEWS OF THE UNIVERSE (281). "Gott Natur" is akin to the shaman's sense of relatedness, Breslin's "hidden connections," to the natural world from which the shaman derives his power (Grim 31). So in the poem, human, vegetable, and animal worlds are connected together as the traveller views the "stubble fields," and later hears the crickets and sees the people talking. The silence in the car enables the speaker to hear the natural world: "The soybeans are breathing on all sides."

In addition to this kinship found in the journey, the poem also depicts the shaman's ecstasy: "I am happy, / the moon rising above the turkey sheds." This quiet ecstasy wherein he journeys is associated with the natural world, the moon, symbolically, carrying him into another realm-- the darkness. The moon makes a path for him to see. In a sense, it is his spirit helper for the journey.

The quiet ecstasy evolves in this stanza, culminating in the last lines, through the use of assonance and consonance. The /s/ sound predominates, but a variety of sounds based in the vowel "o" are important: /o/, /u/, and the diphthongs /aw/ and /ɔy/. The /s/ in "dusk" appropriately begins the sequence. It continues: "Minne/s//o/ta," "/s/tubble," "cathe/z/," "la/s/t," "/s/un," "/s//oy/bean/z/," "/s/ide/z/," "/o/ld men," "/s/itting," "h/aw/z/e/z/ on car/s/eat/s/," "in the /s/mall town/z/," and "m/u/n." In fact, the /s/ is important throughout the poem, stitching it together. The /o/ also functions as a connecting device. Again, Bly's emphasis on assonance, consonance, alliteration, and other sound patterns is important. He says that sound works on the body and thereby more directly influences the soul than sight images alone (FOR THE STOMACH audio). In "Lac Qui Parle" certainly the /s/ and /z/ (the closing "s" of several word/z/) provide a sensuousness to the poem. The /o/, /aw/, /ɔy/, and /u/ ("moon") tend to lengthen the lines, slowing the pace while they repeat variations on the "Oh!" of the ecstatic moment when the shaman "goes out" on his journey. Bly says that in writing the poems of SILENCE he worked "to gain a resonance among the sounds, and hidden below that there is a second resonance between the soul and a loved countryside" (SELECTED POEMS 27). Typically, in "Lac Qui Parle" the sounds reinforce the deep images which journey, shamanically, into the soul.

In the next stanza that journey into the soul via the image continues, but the pace is quickened, or rather, the image of driving is no longer that of a slow meander, but of a long and fast night drive. Throughout "Lac Qui Parle" and the other poems, image and structure work together to reveal mundane, mystical, and poetic meanings. Indeed, the lines in this stanza are generally shorter than in the first stanza:

II

The small world of the car
 Plunges through the deep fields of the night,
 On the road from Willmar to Milan.
 This solitude covered with iron
 Moves through the fields of night
 Penetrated by the noise of crickets. (20)

The speaker is seemingly isolated in this "small world," jettisoned through the "deep fields of the night." Yet the energy of the natural world penetrates through the "iron." Bly later notes that he should have written "steel," but to change that word would have changed the sound pattern (based on /r/, /n/, and phonemes based in the letter "o") he had built from that line onto the following lines (TALKING 136). Whether iron or steel, the car image works to reveal the shamanic journey "on the road" into mystical realms where the human and the natural worlds interpenetrate: car plunges through fields; crickets' songs penetrate the car. Thus, and Friberg notes this as well (18), the car becomes a metaphor for the speaker's own psyche.

It is appropriate to call the car/driving image "deep," for the image works through a number of associations and

interplays between real and surreal realities (Piccione 45). First, the car image reveals the sense of alienation, isolation, and fears which the traveler feels. The traveler rides alone, surrounded in "iron." The shaman experiences these kinds of feelings too: alienation from his community as being different and fears on his journey into the unknown. He is alone on his journey, relying on his own skills. In this sense, the traveler in the poem is shamanic. Of course, one of those skills is the ability to find or attract spirit helpers. In this poem, not only the moon, but also the crickets may be those helpers, for the speaker is not fearful on his journey; he is happy.

Second, the car represents the physical body of the speaker. The body is our link with the natural world; with it we move in and through that world. It is part of earth, our bit of dust--in the poem connected to the noisy crickets, despite being encased in iron.

Thus the car is itself physically and is the human body metaphorically. Yet both car image and body metaphor may take on further mystical aspects, deepening Bly's imagery. Jean Houston speaks of the shaman's development of an "imaginal or secondary body" with which he can experience a mystical dimension of reality. He does this through much mental and physical practice, blocking out ordinary perceptions (xii) (see also Castaneda 204-212). The practice also can include meditation leading to the ecstatic

trance--another "vehicle" of transport. The shaman's new "body" gives him the ability to literally and metaphorically "see in the dark," according to Houston (xii), who cites the same Knud Rasmussen accounts of the Eskimo shamans which Bly has read (NEWS 251). Eliade also uses Rasmussen's studies in comparing the shaman's seeing powers "after long hours of waiting" to the Upanishads' idea of the atman's "inner light," the Buddhist's yogic achievements, and the Christian mystic's goal (SHAMANISM 61).

Through the quiet meditation of the ride, the traveller gains a "way of seeing" into the landscape that goes behind or beyond the physical. Through the image the poet, like the shaman may build another body with which to see, an imaginal body. This imaginal body is akin to Charles Altieri's idea that Bly's use of image results not in abstract "artifact" but in perception (84). The deep image provides a way of seeing into everyday reality, so that the car is a car, a body, a vehicle of meaning and a vehicle for the poem to move. It allows Bly and his readers to see the landscape in a particular way, and it allows his poem to have a particular structure which enhances the way the poet and readers perceive that landscape. Form and content are woven together by the image of the speaker driving toward the Lac Qui Parle River.

In the second stanza of "Lac Qui Parle"--its centerpiece, "on the road" between Willmar and Milan,

Minnesota--the emphasis is on that road and its meaning. Stanza two continues the ideas begun in stanza one. That the two central lines of the eighteen line poem focus on this road and on solitude is essential to the poem's meaning. As in "Night Journey" in SLEEPERS, Bly focuses on solitude as important to the journey. For the shaman, solitude teaches new journeying techniques which he will later use for the tribe. Through solitude, the shamanic speaker in "Lac Qui Parle" touches some deeper truth that does not leave him in isolation. This deeper truth is shamanic unity: through the journey, nature and its spirits reveal an interconnecting universe. Bly calls this deeper truth or unifying spiritual energy "Gott natur." In depicting the idea of "Gott natur" interfusing all, the journey of the poem reveals a shamanic message of healing. The journey itself is both the message and the healing. In the process of poem or of journey, the form engenders healing. Yet the journey is also the healing message: it is content.

In stanza three, the poem depicts a bridge. Here too the images take on mystical qualities, as well as structural qualities, within the construct of the poem itself:

III

Nearly to Milan, suddenly a small bridge,
 And water kneeling in the moonlight.
 In small towns the houses are built right on the ground;
 The lamplight falls on all fours in the grass.
 When I reach the river, the full moon covers it;
 A few people are talking low in a boat. (20)

After intermingling with nature, the shamanic speaker crosses

the bridge from solitude and returns to the human community. However, he returns transformed, retaining the visionary ability of his journey. Through his new eyes, first nature, now the human world is transformed: they shimmer with inner light. Moonlight and lamplight cover the world. The journey of the speaker constructs the poem: along country road, across moonlit bridge, by lamplit houses and talking people. Thus the spiritual shimmer is depicted by concrete, physical images. The bridge itself shimmers and has significance as a shamanic symbol. Like the world tree, the bridge is a traditional symbol of the axis mundi, the path by which the shaman travels between worlds (Eliade, SHAMANISM 121, 202 et al).

The human community to which the traveler returns is represented by the "few people talking low in a boat." Again, quiet covers all like the moonlight. The talk is low. The sense of happy peace provided by the first stanza is maintained, but with the sense of quiet spirituality intensified simply through the addition of images, especially those of light. Bridge, grass, people are all covered with light.

By image and tone, Bly ties the poem's ending to the close of each of the other two six-line stanzas, showing his meticulous attention to form despite what might seem to be a contradictory emphasis on process and deep image content. The third stanza's close is an image of people talking low,

while stanza two closed with the "noise of crickets." A parallel between the two worlds is drawn: a bridge between worlds made in the association of images, a leap, and made in the image of the bridge at the line "between" stanzas. People talking, crickets talking, both penetrate the driver's solitude in "the small world of the car," penetrate via his imaginal body.

Also, while the images are serious, not "jokes," they do contain a gentle humor or happy tone like the speaker's mood at the end of stanza one. Bly himself thinks that "a certain gaiety carries them (these lines) along" (SELECTED 26). That the poet chooses to use the image of the moon rising over "the turkey sheds" rather than of it rising over a barn seems to indicate some sense of humor which plays in the poem. The poem itself is "the small world of the car" similar to Ingmar Bergman's look at the "small world of the theater" in his film FANNY AND ALEXANDER. It is a world where some escape from the world's dangers can be had, thus the humor, yet the play may be quite serious and give us clues about those real dangers, especially those of spirit. Indeed humor is a way for the shaman as trickster to reveal new definitions and perceptions of the world. The speaker's happiness, resulting in the poem's jovial tone, opens him and thus the poem to both the dark and the light of the shamanic vision.

Bly's image of the car "plunging through the deep fields of night" seems to hint at the danger and dark. The car, the

body, the poem itself, like plays, protect and reveal at the same time. Each provides a construct or structure for addressing those mysterious realms of self and spirit, those "dark fields." The risk lies for the driver, the shaman, the playwright, the poet, who before the journey, play, or poem must venture out of ordinary perceptions (societal constructs) so as to see deeply or write deeply of ordinary things like this night drive. The shaman takes a risk each time he journeys to spiritual realms in search of healing for his tribe. Bly makes it clear that he thinks the shaman takes a greater risk than the poet: "The shaman has a very dangerous occupation: he visits the other world and there are a lot of dangerous beings there" (Letter).

Yet any exploration may involve danger, if not in real shaman's combat, then in the simple openness to new ways of seeing the ordinary. That openness is the poet's job, just as it is the shaman's. And "Lac Qui Parle," while it may be a bit playful and humorous, surely does journey into a deeper realm. Its very humor helps it to do so, just as humor or "crazy wisdom" is used by the trickster shaman. Its deep images, too, help, allowing the numinous, the spiritual essence of the ordinary landscape to "rise to the perceptual level" as Jerome Rothenberg describes the action of the deep image (in Piccione 25).

Employing this description of the deep image, one can see Bly's use of the moon and its light as a most appropriate

image in the poem, functioning, as Bly's images typically do, on three levels: mundane/ordinary, mystical/numinous, and poetic/structural content. Reviewing the image on the mundane level, one can say that the moon does indeed shine at night. The reader can recreate the picture in his mind. If that picture is passed on, the poet can now journey on the image, like a bridge, to do further work. On a mystical level, the moonlight image, as suggested, may be the shimmer of vision which the shaman brings back. The light rising over the landscape and finally covering the river at the poem's closing certainly provides the landscape with the shimmer of the numinous. Thereby, the moonlight is also a poetic device which allows Bly to reveal "the inner life" of things, their "Gott natur," letting it "rise to the perceptual level." By the end of "Lac Qui Parle," "the lake which speaks" has spoken. In the deep images of the poem, Bly works on the three levels, "speaking" in an interplay typical of the journeys in SILENCE and elsewhere.

THE LIGHT AROUND THE BODY

Bly's second major work to be published was THE LIGHT AROUND THE BODY in 1967. Winner of the National Book Award, it contains many of his more public poems, traditionally rhetorical in their public stance, yet the book also continues to use the shamanic journey and to reveal "the

inner life." Bly's calling to follow "the inward path" is indeed reflected by repeated envisionings of that path as journey images.

An investigation of three typical poems of this book should be helpful in further understanding Bly's use of the journey: "A Journey with Women" (56), "Moving Inward at Last" (57), and "Wanting to Experience All Things" (60). In these poems and in the book as a whole, Bly continues to employ the deep image, and he works with leaping, making quick associations which tie images from various terrains together. The unity of these poems is not derived simply by the unity of place, a single road in Minnesota, as it is in "Lac Qui Parle" and similar poems. These poems allow the poet to plunge into a variety of realms--using leaping and deep images. The journey itself is the unifying device, not where it takes place. In this type of poem, the places are varied and sometimes unusual, not just an American highway. The places are likely to be spiritual realms where space and time telescope. The journey may dance about in the three parts of the brain--which Bly suggests that a leaping poem explores. In his view, the brain has a spiritual dimension, as well as instinctual and animal dimensions. He suggests that recent "[biological and neurological] speculations belong in literary criticism as much as speculation about breath or images or meter" (LEAPING 59-67). In the years since he wrote that, literary criticism indeed has incorporated these

ideas. Looking at these poems in light of his suggestions, one can see how the images work shamanically, revealing unity and mythic visions.

These three poems are taken from the fifth and final section of *LIGHT*, entitled "A Body Not Yet Born." The title implies the idea of the shaman's imaginal body which he develops as he journeys. It also implies the vision of a possible future which he brings back from his journey, hoping his tribe will take to heart his message, assuring that future will arrive. But not only is the tribal future addressed, the individual's future also is addressed, for Bly does use the pronoun "I" amidst plentiful use of the first person plural in this section. As prologue, Bly uses a passage from Jacob Boehme:

But when this had given me many a hard blow, doubtless from the Spirit that had a desire for me, I finally fell into great sadness and melancholy, when I viewed the great depth of this world

So then I found in all things good and evil, love and wrath, in creatures of reason as well as in wood, in stone, in earth, in the elements, in men and animals. . . . I considered the little spark "man" and what it might be esteemed to be by God in comparison with this great work of heaven and earth (51).

The melancholy which Boehme feels at his comparative insignificance as a human being in the face of all creation is an important emotion to Bly. He speaks of it often as particularly relevant to his own (as well as to any poet's) work. In *SELECTED POEMS*, he indicates that depression or melancholia enables a poet to journey downward into the soul (12-13, 26). In *TALKING ALL MORNING*, he says that depression

is "connected with the unconscious opening" (131). In such a melancholy mood, the poet can discover and develop the deep image. The mood enables the poet to journey into realms of the soul and into "the great depth of the world."

In "A Journey with Women," as the title implies, Bly explores that depth by depicting a joining with feminine consciousness. He depicts the soul which depression can reveal as itself "feminine in tone," associated with tears and water (SELECTED audio). Therefore, the "journey with women" is a sea journey similar to that which the Eskimo shaman takes in search of sea mammals and fish for his tribe:

1

Floating in turtle blood, going backward and forward,
 We wake up like a mad sea-urchin
 On the bloody fields near the secret pass--
 There the dead sleep in jars . . .

2

Or we go at night slowly into the tunnels of the
 tortoise's claws,
 Carrying chunks of the moon
 To light the tunnels,
 Listening for the sound of rocks falling into the sea . . .

3

Waking, we find ourselves in the tortoise's beak,
 As he carries us high
 Over New Jersey--going swiftly
 Through the darkness between the constellations . . .

4

At dawn we are still transparent, pulling

In the starlight;
 We are still falling like a room
 Full of moonlight through the air . . . (56)

The turtle carries the world on its back in some American Indian myths and thus is associated with the earth mother. Relying on these myths, Bly uses the turtle as a symbol of feminine consciousness as he does the oyster (LOVING audio) in "Opening an Oyster" (61) of the same section. The turtle also reveals the spiritual power which resides in nature. By employing tribal myth and depicting nature's power, Bly enhances the shamanic quality of the poem.

In "Journey with Women" the image of the turtle is certainly a deep image, a doorway into other realms, for its claws are "tunnels." The turtle is a helping spirit, embodying the feminine energy, providing a mode of transport into the spirit world. Aiding the shaman in his flight is a typical function of the animal helping spirit. The "women" also are the shaman's helping spirits (or energies): called "ayamis." In the tortoise's beak, they travel with the shamanic speaker--thus Bly uses "we." Their presence enables a trip to the feminine.

The pronoun "we" also indicates that the shamanic persona is transmuting his journey into a performance for the tribe. The personal and mystical journey in the tortoise's beak becomes one in which the tribe or audience can partake. The shaman represents or, more precisely, embodies his tribe in the spirit realm (Hoppal 89-90).

The imagery of blood and water portray a birth into this spiritual realm which is feminine (in Bly's vision): "dark," "secret," and womb-like. The birth is a return to the spiritual realm from which "we," the tribe, were born, a realm with which women have natural, physical relationship. Because "we" have been through this birth in "turtle blood" and have journeyed into this realm "through the darkness between constellations," "at dawn we are still transparent." In other words, "we," the tribe, are transformed within the performance of the poem, as the shamanic speaker, accompanied by the "ayamis," is transformed by his journey.

Oddly, the speaker is transformed into a lighter being. While the imagery of the first three stanzas is full of darkness and blood, the imagery of the last stanza is of light: dawn, transparent, starlight, moonlight, and air. The passionate, wildly associative, leaping energy of the first stanzas brings "us" into the light of what Bly calls the new brain (LEAPING 62). Again, as in "Lac Qui Parle," the journey is the primary image of the poem and provides the structure and image development for the poem. Here, however, the image is not an ordinary or mundane one, but a much more clearly mythic or mystical one.

How are the first stanzas leaping? First of all, the pace is quite fast, and the swift association of images is one of Bly's criteria for leaping. The images are surprising, in odd combinations from line to line so that the

reader must complete the context in a mythic, imaginative way. The use of dashes, ellipses, and little other punctuation contributes with the images to increase the pace. Also, even though the lines are sometimes long, they sing and move in the Smart-Blake-Whitman way which Bly describes in *SELECTED POEMS (194-198)*. He says that this type of line is better for public debate than for private meditation (197). Although Bly's lines in "Journey With Women" are not debate, but private and mystical, they do take on a public aspect through the pronoun "we" and the language of tribal myth.

The seeming conflict between public and private can be resolved if one again looks at the poem as shamanic. In the shamanic approach, the mystical and private journey image ultimately derives power from a tribal application: for the shaman to be a shaman, he cannot remain a mystic; he must use his powerful, divine knowledge in service to his community. In that tradition, the shamanic poet often incorporates his audience into the poem, and thus "we" all may fly or leap, journeying in the poem.

In the main, this leaping imagery creates the swift pace of this poem. In some sense, Bly intends swiftness to mean intensity, for the leaping imagery adds to the emotion of the poem. In bodily terms, the greater emotion we feel, the faster our blood flows, the faster our hearts beat, the faster we speak. Bly's use of the verbal "floating" may seem to enhance a calm tone, but his immediate use of the tidal

ebb and flow intensifies the emotion: "we wake up like a mad sea urchin." On the journey with the speaker, "we" pass by the dead who sleep, oddly, in jars. This surprising image causes the reader to puzzle and make associations while the poem leaves off in an ellipsis, slowing the pace or pausing at the end of the first stanza. Bly appropriately leaves much space between each stanza and numbers each one, increasing the separation and to some degree, the time between each stanza. However, these devices of spatial separation also enhance the idea of the leap: a long leap is required to get the reader from place A to place B in this mythic terrain.

Even when the journey goes slowly, the experiences are intense as the images show in the poem. For example, the images of "the tunnels of the tortoise's claws" and the wary "listening" imply danger and intensity. This intensity is carried into stanza three, where it reaches its height in the "swift" trip "over New Jersey" and on to the stars. In this image, leaps of association are easily detected. From the dark realm in which the shaman journeys, where he asked that we accept this mythic realm and its non-ordinary rules, the poem shifts abruptly to a flight over New Jersey--seemingly the antithesis of such a realm. Bly does not say Minnesota or Oregon or even Maine, but New Jersey which most associate with oil refineries, big cities, the modern world, not with dreams, turtles, or the mythic world. It is by the very

oddity of this juxtaposition that a great leap can be taken or made. The shaman must see beyond expectations in order to journey, and he plays with our expectations as he reveals his journey in a non-ordinary realm. Leaping imagery depicts the journey into the mythic world and conveys the logic of that journey and world.

In stanza four, the journey leaps into another realm, out of wet, dark, and blood into air, dawn, and light. The movement of the poem slows due to the change in the line length. These lines are the shortest, on the average, of the poem. Although short lines can increase the pace of a poem, here they slow it due to the decrease in intensity, the increase in the number of L sounds which are lulling, and the use of the semi-colon--the strongest punctuation in the poem. Yet the images of light carry vestiges of the dark journey: "we are still transparent;" "We are still falling. . . / Full of moonlight." Even at the break of day, the shaman shimmers with that spiritual light of this "night sea journey."

Certainly the poem is akin to Bly's long poem "Sleepers Joining Hands," specifically the section called "The Night Journey in the Cooking Pot," that very shamanic poem where he says that he "was born during a night sea-journey" (SLEEPERS 59). "A Journey with Women" also resonates with the birth images of that later poem and may indicate, in less overt terms, Bly's initiating experience as a shamanic poet.

In "Moving Inward at Last" (57), Bly uses similar mythic imagery which leaps and creates unexpected associations, though none so "wild" as tortoises flying over New Jersey. Again, the journey is the primary image of the poem and structures it. Here, too, the image is not a mundane one in a contemporary western sense. It is, rather, primarily mystical. Yet it is grounded in mundane reality as "A Journey with Women" is not. That poem is a "dream journey," while this poem, which includes dream segments, focuses on an ordinary reality. But it is a shamanic, primitive reality, not contemporary, not New Jersey. Thus the poem itself makes the reader take a leap of association backwards in time. It is this leap in time that makes the poem mythic, yet the images are not the altered reality of "Journey." Even so, the journey is shamanic, for the shaman may journey anywhere, through any time to search for help or healing for his tribe. In the divine realms to which he goes, the shaman can "transcend time and space" (Eliade, SHAMANISM 171). The shaman takes us on that journey to a real, now mythologized past:

The dying bull is bleeding on the mountain!
 But inside the mountain, untouched
 By the blood,
 There are antlers, bits of oak bark,
 Fire, herbs are thrown down..

When the smoke touches the roof of the cave,
 The green leaves burst into flame,
 The air of night changes to dark water,
 The mountains alter and become the sea. (57)

In these ancient tribal memories of magic ceremonies, the

poem depicts a shamanic journey on the inward path. The poem's title lets us know this, itself functioning on both mundane and mystical levels of image: the idea of physical movement applied to meditation or mystical experience.

The motivation for the journey within the context of the poem is a traditionally shamanic one in that one of the tribe is in need of healing. The leap of imagery into a primitive, now mythic time is also a leap into a realm where human and animal communicate with and depend upon each other in a holistic way. In the paleo-hunter culture, there existed a "mystical solidarity between man and animal," harking back, their shamans told them, to a mythic time "when the divorce between man and animal had not yet occurred" (Eliade SHAMANISM 94 et al). The bull may be a sacrifice, but as such, he represents the tribe to the spirit world where the Master Spirit animal must be solicited to bring game for the tribe to hunt. The image is that of a primitive ritual directed by the shaman. Through it, Bly elicits a key shamanic element: the importance of the tribe and its cosmology (Grim 40, 194).

Yet the poem is also a journey, an inward movement as the title indicates. In this sense, how does the poem journey? The bull being sacrificed is on the outside. The shamanic ritual of fire, antlers, and herbs is on the inside. The images of the poem in the first stanza do "journey" from outside to inside. But what is the significance of that

movement? In shamanism, the sacrifice is made because there is some individual or tribal problem. In "Moving Inward," the problem is probably some lack of game; i.e., lack of food and the danger of starvation. In the mundane sense, the image works by this use of a primitive world view. However, how does it work today? What is the relevance to Bly? In the audiotaped version of his SELECTED POEMS, Bly says that mountains are associated with pure spirit, rather than with soul. They are masculine, associated with judgement and drought. However, the soul is associated with the feminine, with caves, wetness, and fertility. With Bly's ideas and the shamanic elements in hand, an answer can be found as to why the bull is dying and what it represents.

In shamanism, any illness or death on the physical plane reveals a problem or illness on the spiritual plane. Thus the poem's the image is a physical representation of some spiritual problem. Shamanistically, Bly's image of the bull dying is that of the tribe seeking renewal of their food source. This is the image on the physical plane. On the spiritual or mystical level, Bly's and his "tribe's" problem may be spiritual drought, starvation, lack of nourishment from the feminine. The bull on the mountain represents the masculine consciousness cut off from its feminine counterpart. This theme of imbalance is similar to that seen in SLEEPERS. The inside of the mountain, the cave image, represents the feminine. The scene there is one of shamanic

ritual, of creative healing. The journey from the mountain to its interior is one of discovery and of healing.

In stanza two, the healing is depicted full of shamanic ecstasy as "the green leaves burst into flame." A transformation takes place as it does in the shamanic ritual wherein the shaman begins his journey. Smoke and flames are often associated with shamanic journeying. The burst of flame here may mark the shaman's encounter with another order of being. In *ALTERNATIVE ALTARS*, Robert S. Ellwood, Jr. describes the convulsion when the shaman enters and leaves his journey-trance as indicative of this encounter (47). Bly says that "smoke" indicates that a leap (or journey) of association has taken place. Thus in shamanic and poetic terms the images work, deepened by multiple associations.

In the realms where shamans and poets journey, all is possible and further transformations occur--air changes to water, and mountain to sea. The journey structures the poem, first from mountain exterior to interior, then from cave floor to roof, leaves to flame, and finally further "inward" on a transforming journey to spirit realms where healing resolution is found. The poem closes with the transformation from the masculine imagery (in Bly's canon) of air and mountains to the feminine imagery of water and sea. The imagery rights the balance and represents the healing which the speaker's tribe needs. Beyond the context of the poem, Bly may intend a rhetorical and public message--a hope that

the images are healing, a hope clearly indicated in SLEEPERS.

In Bly's vision of man's prehistory, the shamanic healing ceremony and journey depict a methodology of healing for the modern tribe or individual. The ceremony takes place in the mountain's interior: healing takes place by journeying inward and working (performing rituals) on the inside. A transformation from the inside is needed to heal the wounds outside and to prevent spiritual starvation--to stop "the bull bleeding on the mountain." The wounds of worldly life are healed through the spirit. to prevent spiritual starvation. In the physical portrait of "Moving Inward," lies this mystical message. It is a message similar to that of the long poem "Sleepers Joining Hands."

"Moving Inward" works much like a Joseph Cornell collage box full of compacted images, "hermetic secrets of a silent and discreet Magus. . . hieratic talismans" (William C. Seitz in Read 264). The images journey inward like the picture they convey. They leap within the poem's own dynamic of energy, much as Coleridge described a poem should or could work, deriving beauty from a harmonizing multaeity (BIOGRAPHIA LITERARIA in Perkins 454-55).

The poem "Wanting to Experience All Things" (60) functions in a way very similar to "Moving Inward." The ecstatic experience which transforms is at the heart of this poem as well:

The blind horse among the cherry trees--
And bones, sticking from cool earth.

The heart leaps
 Almost up to the sky! But laments
 And filaments pull us back into the darkness.
 We cannot see--
 But a paw
 Comes out of the dark
 To light the road. Suddenly I am flying,
 I follow my own fiery traces through the night!

Although the imagery appears less primitive than that of "Moving Inward," the interplay between the natural and the supernatural is similar, as is the use of contrastive imagery, in this case light and dark. Again, a wound exists in the mundane realm--"the blind horse," "bones sticking from . . . earth"--representing some difficulty in the spiritual realm. Yet, from the title, one can see that there is a joy even in these apparently negative images: the shaman longs to embrace all things, providing a sense of expansion, of interconnection, of "Gott natur" perhaps. In chaos and death, he can discover new meanings, so his heart leaps as Wordsworth's did. Yet to Bly Wordsworth could not embrace all things, his heart could not "leap" far enough to bridge the gap between man and nature, masculine and feminine, light and dark, although he may have sensed that other side to things (NEWS 34). By the effort of his poems, Bly consciously tries to bridge that gap, like the shaman who journeys between the worlds. Thus the shamanic speaker of this poem not only leaps up to light, but also drops down into darkness. Akin to the cave image of "Moving Inward," the dark is also associated with the feminine in Bly's canon (SELECTED audio).

Lamentation and depression transport the shamanic speaker, "I," to the dark side. As stated earlier, Bly believes that depression opens us to other realms. For him it is a vehicle of shaman-like journeying. Thus, pulled into darkness, the speaker journeys into spiritual realms, aided by animal spirit helper, "a paw. . . to light the road." With the animal's assistance, the shamanic speaker gains his inner light, his ability to see in the dark, that paradoxical mystical ability. By this mysterious "paw's" action, the speaker flies, no longer merely "leaps."

The ecstatic moment is punctuated with an exclamation point. When the shamanic speaker moves into another realm, he exclaims that movement just as he did in "Moving Inward." He also exclaims in the first half of the poem making the first leap "almost to the sky!" That first exclamation initiates the response from the dark realm which comprises the second half of "Wanting to Experience." Represented by these exclamations, the journeying movements structure the poem. And the use of the first person plural incorporates the tribe in the telling of that journey. For Bly the shamanic imagery provides him with image, form, and voice.

The imagery here leaps as well, first because the world of this poem is a non-ordinary one. The first leap takes the reader from the blind horse to the image of bones rising from the earth. The platform for the leap is that the horse is blind. Despite the pastoral image of the "horse among the

cherry trees," all is not right with the world--he is blind. In the shaman's world, when all is not right, some crack may open in ordinary reality. In the poem, the adjective "blind" is that "crack." It provides a starting point for the associative leaps of metaphor. The unexpected in the expected pastoral scene opens up the possibilities for other non-ordinary imagery in the poem. The reader is readied for the more unusual quality of the bone image. Once the leaping or journeying in metaphor has begun, the image of the heart leaping also can be explained in shamanic terms. When conceptions of the world have been altered, the shaman can travel. Here the journey moves inside to the terrain of the heart. Thus the leap of image in the poem is akin to the leap or journey for the shaman. In the poem, the associative leap appears to be from image of event to image of emotion, yet in review, the first images may also be seen as metaphors to describe some interior realm--emotional, psychological, and spiritual.

This poem shows how the leaping or associations of imagery in a leaping poem is a forward and backward movement. A network is woven; a whole picture or body is being made image by image so that the poem's non-ordinary world becomes ordinary in context and so that the leaps of association are more easily made. The leaping movement in the poem may do what Coleridge suggests a poem may--provide pleasure in the movement and travel toward truth as well (in Perkins

454-455). Bly's purpose in much of his work seems not simply to give pleasure by the leaping, but to get at truth. That there can be contagious joy or pleasure derived from the organic form of Bly's poems is important, but more, his revelation of the shamanic moments of ecstasy, representing the journey and the moments of transition, are often also Bly's messages of truth brought back to the audience. He seems to say that "the world may seem ordered and rational, but it really works as my poem does--by odd, non-rational leaps." The journey image and structure is thus itself a message of truth about the world, so by the poem's close, the speaker "I" can fly through the night. And while the pronoun has shifted to the singular, it still includes the "we" of earlier lines, as the speaker becomes the tribe's representative in other worlds.

The poem provides the reader with a context for this metaphorical flight in the series of increasingly non-ordinary images which lead up to it. The poem constructs a non-ordinary reality of its own, akin to that which a shaman experiences. The leap from a dark realm where we cannot see to a flight lit by "fiery traces" becomes natural within the text. But more, what Bly may be showing is that the leaping imagery and the leaping poem depict the world as it is more truly than poems of more ordinary imagery. They reveal the nature of things and of mind more fully: the interconnecting unity of humans and nature (NEWS 214,

281,289) and way the mind works skipping among "three brains" (LEAPING 59-67). This sort of poem can show what it is to "experience all things": a more holistic engagement with the worlds both outside and inside of ourselves. Bly uses the shamanic mask as Tom Henighen suggests it should be used: "not to convince us that primitive life is better, but to force us to reflect on our own existence in a wider. . . context" (617). Or as critic Charles Altieri says of Gary Snyder, Bly connects "phenomena in ways that reveal Edenic possibilities," as an "architect of new mental space where imagination images earth as a temple, and poetic activity is a means of dwelling in Heidegger's 'house of being'" (19). For Bly, this "dwelling" is more accurately described as "journeying" to indicate the sense of ongoingness or process and the dynamism of being which his poems have.

THE MORNING GLORY AND
THIS BODY IS MADE OF CAMPHOR AND GOPHERWOOD

In SELECTED POEMS, Bly not only says that "poems are journeys," he also says that the poet "chooses the particular rhythm appropriate to the trance he wishes for the reader and for himself" (88). Once more, his terminology is specifically shamanic, taking on such terms as particularly appropriate for the poem and the poet. The shaman-like trance enhances the poem's rhythms and enables the poet to depict a journey to the reader.

In the mid-1970's, Bly became interested in the particular trance obtained in the prose poem. His next major works, *THE MORNING GLORY* (1975) and *THIS BODY IS MADE OF CAMPHOR AND GOPHERWOOD* (1977), consist of prose poems. In this section I examine a prose poem from these works to explore further the journey in light of Bly's statements in *SELECTED POEMS*. In the prose poem, the motif takes on further structural significance, for Bly also says that this form's "alert rhythm. . . prepares us to journey, to cross the border, either to the other world, or to that place where the animal lives" (*SELECTED* 88). This may be the same animal of the "paw" in "Wanting to Experience All Things" above.

While the rhythms induce the trance, the trance enables the shamanic speaker to take his journey. Within these "seeing poems," as Bly calls them, a journey is made into the objects, creatures, and events imaged, into the physical body also imaged, and through these into that mystical or numinous other world which energizes this world (Sharon 49, Larsen 159, Campbell *POWER* 71). In the prefatory passage to *THE MORNING GLORY*, Bly suggests this sort of journey into the numinous via the physical by citing an occult saying: "Whoever wants to see the invisible has to penetrate more deeply into the visible" (1). Clearly, in his poems, Bly works to depict the truth of the ordinary world, not simply to make fantastic images. This preface additionally provides another approach to defining the deep image. With such an

approach in mind, the deep image may be seen as a providing the poet access not only to the unconscious, but also to the deeps or recesses of the physical world.

The prose poems of THE MORNING GLORY, while occasionally lapsing into an almost journalistic prose, such as in "The Hockey Poem," for the most part do succeed in journeying into those deeps by way of rhythms and imagery. The explicit image of the speaker "going out" can be seen in a number of guises in various poems throughout. In these, the speaker, clearly Bly, walks out, discovers some object or creature and observes it closely. Some of the loveliest of these poems are in the "Point Reyes Poems" section of the book. Of these, "The Dead Seal near McClure's Beach" (52-54) is perhaps the best known and most often anthologized. It begins

Walking north toward the point, I came on a dead seal. From a few feet away, he looks like a brown log. The body is on its back, dead only a few hours. I stand and look at him. There's a quiver in the dead flesh. My God he is still alive. A shock goes through me, as if a wall of my room had fallen away. (52)

The walls of ordinary perception drop away to reveal a broader, more true vision of ordinary reality. While some might argue that this is no poem at all, and certainly the rhythms are not metrical in the usual sense, the image or story of the seal itself has an emotional intensity which can open the door to another realm of vision. The tense shift from past to present in this first paragraph is indicative of the poet Bly at work to intensify the effects of his telling

of journey and encounter. The shamanic speaker takes the tribe with him as he renders his journey "into" the seal's life and its dying. The transport into the other world comes at the moment of shocked realization that the seal is still alive.

What follows is a close description of the seal and its slow dying. The details work to intensify the reader's feeling for the seal, reenacting Bly's own intense feeling. The reader comes to know the seal, how it looks, acts, and sounds, and through these details, Bly slows the poem so that its form underscores the seal's slow death. In the intense feelings created by or arising from the close description of the object of feelings, Bly does manage to create a sort of trance state. Bly's detailed and dramatic (present tense and first person) approach to eliciting emotion works just as rhetorician Edward P. J. Corbett suggests such an approach will work in his discussion of the pathetic appeal (100-102). The poem carries such impact that one may have difficulty reading it without feeling great remorse at the seal's death; the living event is portrayed so well.

When Bly speaks of the rhythms of prose poetry inducing such a trance state, he apparently uses the term "rhythm" in a traditional lyric sense. However, others such as poet Russell Edson and critic Howard Nelson suggest that the prose poem uses the rhythms of natural speech (Nelson 130). How, then, does the rhythm work to enhance emotion and create

trance? In further explication of the form, Nelson quotes Baudelaire, "pioneer of the genre":

the miracle of a poetic prose, musical, without rhyme and without rhythm, supple enough and rugged enough to adapt itself to the lyrical impulses of the soul, the undulations of the psyche, the prickings of consciousness (131)

The prose poem's rhythms are those of the psyche or soul. In "Dead Seal," the shamanic speaker journeys into his own soul through his close observation of the seal. The effect of the seal's death on his soul and the reverberations in the numinous realm are depicted by the elaborate details which the prose poem allows. In the physical details of seal and scene, the poem allows shamanic "seeing" into the "deeps" of the physical world, where the spiritual filters through. In the rhythm and detail, the prose poem leaps, journeying into (depicting) the shamanic realm where nature and human are one.

Despite his idea that the prose poem is in "natural" speech, Nelson seems to agree that the associative imagery (leaping and deep) of Bly's other works is in his prose poetry, as what Baudelaire calls "lyrical impulses." Nelson goes on to suggest that Bly may be most successful in his use of associative imagery in some of the prose poems of *THE MORNING GLORY* (132). In such poems, especially "Dead Seal," through those "lyrical impulses" and details Bly depicts the speaker's discovery of the unifying spiritual realm where humans partake in the natural. In the soul's realm, the

speaker sees his own death in the seal's.

The cause of the death is mentioned almost as an aside, but even as an aside the mention is effective as a condemnation of man's damaging presence on the planet: "He is dying. This is the oil. Here on its back is the oil that heats our houses so efficiently" or fuels our automobiles. By journeying to and into the seal, the shamanic speaker comes back with healing messages. The speaker is healed through shame for and acknowledgement of the consequences of our "efficient" life-style. To depict the rueful tone of the speaker, Bly employs irony in using the word "efficient" in this context.

Another important aspect of "Dead Seal" is the depiction of the developing relationship between Bly and the seal. The implicit message not only in this poem but throughout these poems seems to be that in order to see one must slow down, stop, observe, take time. In a sense, one must stop time by close observation of the world. The shaman's journey goes out from "linear time" to a place where "all things happen at once." In part two of the poem, Bly returns "to say goodbye" thinking the seal must now be dead:

But he's not--he's a quarter mile farther up the shore.
Today he is thinner, squatting on his stomach, head out.
The ribs show more--each vertebra on the back under the
coat is now visible, shiny. He breaths in and out.

He raises himself up, and tucks his flippers under,
as if to keep them warm. . . .He turns and looks at
me--the eyes slanted, the crown of his head is like a
black leather jacket. He is taking a long time to die.
The whiskers white as porcupine quills, the forehead
slopes. . . goodbye brother, die in the sound of waves,

forgive us if we have killed you,. . . Be comfortable in death then, where the sand will be out of your nostrils, and you can swim in long loops through the pure death, ducking under as assassinations break above you. You don't want to be touched by me. I climb the cliff and go home the other way. (53-54)

In return journeys, the shaman learns more of the landscape. On the second visit to the seal, the speaker gains a greater understanding of what dying is--for the seal and thus for himself. The seal is dying with no drugs, no hospitals, no instant Hollywood finish. The death is slow and solitary and painful. By close observation and engagement with the seal, the speaker feels the interconnectedness, the brotherhood of all things which the shaman knows. Throughout the poem, Bly develops kinship, so at the close, the speaker's calling the seal "brother" is a natural culmination of the "journey."

Here too Bly uses the shamanic image of a person relating to an animal and that animal becoming a helping spirit. The seal helps the speaker (Bly) to see more clearly the animal world and the human world, including himself, and their inter-relationship. Based on that inter-relationship, he performs a funeral ceremony for the seal just as a shaman might perform such a ceremony for game killed by the hunters. Nelson calls this poem an elegy (147), and it is, an elegy for the seal. However, because in this case the seal has not been killed for food, but out of negligence, the poem becomes more than a mere elegy mourning a seal's death, it becomes a shamanic call working to heal the rift between man and nature and to sensitize us to the natural world of the seal. The

fate of man and seal are woven together in a brotherhood. The death of the seal may be the first sign of our own dying. For the shaman such a ceremony insures the game's renewal, thereby insuring the tribe's survival.

By the poem's end, the speaker returns from his journey carrying this new awareness of the seal and of the kinship of things. Yet he also leaves realizing the seal's separateness--"You don't want to be touched by me"--or, as Bly says in the preface, its "independence" (1). In both preface and poem, Bly implies that the seal does not need man. In the shamanic vision, one must always respect the power and mystery of nature, beyond the ken of humans.

In *THIS BODY IS MADE OF CAMPHOR AND GOPHERWOOD* (1977), the problem of anthropomorphism is often circumvented because the point or image of entry for many of the poems is the body of the speaker, rather than that of an animal. In these poems, too, the image of the speaker going out predominates. The body becomes a vehicle of the journey just as it does in the metaphor of the car in "Driving to Lac Qui Parle River." In addition, like the shaman's world tree, the body symbolizes for Bly the "place" where the inner and the outer worlds overlap. Also the body image relates to Don Juan's view of the twilight as an opening, a doorway through which the shaman may pass to journey into other realms (Castaneda 91).

In these prose poems, that the body is a metaphorical

yet real image of where worlds meet is made clear by the book's title, THIS BODY IS MADE OF CAMPHOR AND GOPHERWOOD. Camphor and gopherwood are the materials which Noah uses to build his ark, and thus the body is Bly's ark for his "voyage into the imagination" (SIXTIES 66-67). In a poem early in the book entitled "The Left Hand" (15), Bly adds, "My friend, the body is made of camphor and gopherwood. Where it goes, we follow, even into the Ark." This Biblical association brings a religious sense to the book. Indeed, Bly's use of Biblical imagery seems worthy of further investigation, although not within the confines of this study. In this book, the Biblical association brings a religious overlay to the body image itself, deepening its meaning. In the poetic tradition of Blake and Whitman, the body is holy. Similarly for the shaman, the body is a doorway to the numinous, yet at the same time contains the numinous within. Therefore, throughout the book, when the speaker walk, speaks, or flies, he does so with his body, into his body, and out of his body. All these various approaches are ways to investigate the mystery of the body which is a physical thing, yet is also a spiritual thing. As such, they are shamanic touchstones in the poems.

An interesting example of a journey into the body, a sort of "fantastic voyage," is the poem dedicated to the biologist and writer Lewis Thomas called "The Origin of the Praise of God" (35). The ecstasy of the poem is quite

evident the title and continues the religious sensibilities of the book's title. But in order to journey into the body, the shaman-like speaker claims "it is with my body that I love the fields" and asks the rhetorical question, "How do I know what I feel but what the body tells me?" In the statement, the speaker suggests that it is by the body that one may travel into the "deeps" of the physical world, the fields, and in the question, he suggests that the body may be the only vehicle. The answer to the question is provided, in a statement which reveals a new perspective. Even the greatest rational thinkers thought by virtue of the body: "Erasmus thinking in the snow, translators of Virgil . . . the man in furs reading the Arabic astrologer falls off his three-legged stool." Each is as strong or vulnerable--falling off the stool, cold in the snow--as his body. Once this new view is unveiled in the poem, the image of the body is brought back into the poem with close detail: "so beautifully carved inside with the curves of the inner ear, and the husk so rough, knuckle-brown." As in "Dead Seal," Bly elicits emotion through the especially dense details which the prose poem form allows.

As in "Dead Seal," the close detail of the deep image enables the journey into another order of being. Bly takes the reader into the deeps of physical reality, where the numinous can be detected:

As we walk we enter the magnetic fields of other bodies,
and every smell we take in the communities of protozoa

see, and a being inside leaps up toward it, as a horse rears at the starting gate. (35)

Thus the farm fields are playfully recollected in the magnetic fields of "other bodies." The outward journey where we may pass other people or beings is reflected in what occurs inside, and Bly shows us these inner effects in his lyrical exploration of the body's cosmology. Here the shamanic poet discovers "a being inside" which "leaps." This may be the desire-energy of which Bly speaks in NEWS, energy which connects us to all things (287-289). The journey into the body and what it feels becomes a venture into a numinous realm. The leaps of imagery which in Bly's canon represent the leaps or journeys among the three brains or realms of thought appear here as a new sort of leaping, not into the mind, but into the body which itself has a consciousness. This consciousness is that "being inside," physically represented by "the communities of protozoa" which reside with us. The image is both real and mystical at the same time--both realms are unified shamanistically in this poem.

The journey inside the body is also a journey "between" bodies, a discovery of unity and love:

When we come near each other we are drawn down into the sweetest pools of slowly circling energies, slowly circling smells. And the protozoa know there are odors the shape of oranges, of tornados, of octopuses
 The sunlight lays itself down before the protozoa,
 the night opens itself out behind it,
 and inside its own energy it lives! (35)

Bly focuses on the reverberations of contact which occur between body and protozoa, and then between two people. In

his detailed explorations of the body and these reverberations, the images appear more and more surreal, yet they are based in Thomas's LIVES OF A CELL. A tone of ecstatic enchantment and reverence builds in the last section of the poem in these images and by the increasing use of ellipsis, of fewer full stops, and of somewhat shorter sentences. All these techniques increase the pace and therefore the emotion in the poem, underscoring the movement of the poem toward a sort of mystical awakening, made possible by the vehicle of the body.

The use of sound is also important to the tone and thus to this movement toward awakening. The variety of sounds depicted by the letter "o" are important, (beginning with the title): "b/a/dy," "/a/f," "camph/ɔ /r," "g/o/pherw/U/d," "t/u/," "gr/o/ws," "n/o//w//U/n (one)." These sounds add to the ecstatic quality of the poem simply by being variants of ecstatic exclamations--"Oh!" Bly also uses /b/ and /d/ sounds to great effect in the poem: "/b/o/d/y," "/b/one," "/b/eautifully," "/b/rown," "/b/eings," "/d/oor," "/d/ance," and "/d/igest." This alliteration is effective in emphasizing the body, by reminding the reader of the sounds in the word itself. In the alveolar fricatives (/s/, /z/), palatal affricates (/tʃ/ [ch]), and velar stops (/k/) Bly achieves a nice effect of articulation. The /s/, /k/, /tʃ/, and /z/ sounds in "/s/ir/k/ling," "/k/louds of /s/ell/z/," and "/k/annot /tʃ/oo/z/" all sibilate and click, reminiscent

of electricity, reiterating the electrical pull of body to body. This passage demonstrates Bly's uses of sound:

So the space between two people diminishes, it grows less and less, no one to weep, they merge at last. The sound that pours from the fingertips awakens clouds of cells far inside the body, and beings unknown to us start out in a pilgrimage to their Saviour, to their holy place. Their holy place is a small black stone, that they remember from Protozoic times, when it was rolled away from a door . . . and it was after that they found their friends, who helped them to digest the hard grains of this world The cloud of cells awakens, intensifies, swarms . . . the cells dance inside beams of sunlight so thin we cannot see them To them each ray is a vast palace, with thousands of rooms. From the dance of the cells praise sentences rise to the throat of the man praying and singing alone in his room. He lets his arms climb above his head, and says, "Now do you still say you cannot choose the Road?" (35-36)

The poem may allude to Bly's own initiation as a poet of the inward journey. The techniques of structure and sound underscore that ecstatic experience, revealing not only his own spiritual awakening, but also perhaps the origins of the human spiritual experience--through, by, and within the body itself. Each cell is a microcosmic awakening.

Interestingly, in this journey of and into the body, there is a vision of the return. The shaman-like figure in the poem (recalling Bly himself) is in his mystic mode, praying and singing, but finally returns with what is on one level a personal message, but on another level is a communal message of chastisement, "Now do you still say you cannot choose the Road?" It is a call for spiritual journeying and investigation. Bly gives us this image of the shaman from the inside out. First the cells each individually praise,

then the focus shifts from individual cells, to the many cells, to the whole body--out of the many comes the one. That mystical idea is revealed in the passage's New Testament allusion to Jesus's "In my Father's house are many mansions." The body is the Father's house in a literal, physical way, while at the same time it is a symbol of that house. Here the shaman returns to the room, to the poem, through, as it were, his own cellular structure, rebuilding cell by cell, recreating heaven on earth through this process. In this recreated whole, he realizes the lives and worlds of each cell. The natural world takes on a deeper, mystical meaning by this journey.

Another poem in THIS BODY is perhaps more reminiscent of the earlier Bly in its imagery. Like many of the poems in this book, "Snowed In" works more with the outer world of cold Minnesota winters, just as the poems of SILENCE do, yet with the greater use of detail which the prose poem form allows:

It is the third day of snow. Power has been out since yesterday. The horses stay in the barn. At four I leave the house, sinking to my waist in snow, and push open the study door. Snow falls in. I sit down at the desk, there is a plant in blossom.

The upper petal is orange-red. The lower petal paler, as if the intensity had risen upward. Two smaller petals, like country boys' ears, poke out on either side.

The blossom faces the window where snow sweeps past at forty miles an hour So there are two tendernesses looking at each other, two oceans living at a level of instinct surer than mine yet in them both there is the same receiving, the longing to be blown, to be shaken, to circle slowly upward, or sink down toward roots . . . one cold, one warm, but neither

wants to go up geometrically floor after floor, even to hold up a wild-haired roof, with copper dragons, through whose tough nose rain water will pour

So the snow and the orangey blossoms are both the same flow, that starts out close to the soil, close to the floor, and needs no commandments, no civilization, no drawing rooms lifted on the labor of the claw hammer, but is at home when one or two are present, it is also inside the block of wood, and in the burnt bone that sketched the elk by smoky light.

A man and woman sit quietly near each other. In the snowstorm millions of years come close behind us, nothing is lost, nothing rejected, our bodies are equal to the snow in energy. The body is ready to sing all night, and be entered by whatever wishes to enter the human body singing (55-56)

The journey here is typical of Bly's speaker "going out" imagery. Here the physical journey is one where the speaker walks out through the silent, deep snow landscape to his writing shack. At his desk, the speaker goes on the journey of close observation; observation again is a journeying method which creates structure and content. The speaker explores the details of the "plant in blossom," so that the poem reconstructs the plant. In this description lies an example of the physicality Piccione defines as deep imagery. The shamanic speaker comes to know the natural world through this patient looking, for it is thereby that he "sees." Such looking and seeing is akin to one of the mystical aspects of shamanism--a close attunement with the natural world wherein the spiritual world communicates knowledge to the shaman.

By his close observation, the speaker first realizes the blossom and the snow as "fellow beings," so to speak; then he realizes that they are "surer" and thus that they have something to teach him. They reveal the surprising

connection between themselves: bit of spring blossom and great blanket of winter snow. In the unifying flow of "instinct" which seems similar to Lawrence's "blood consciousness," neither snow nor blossom "need commandments," "civilization," or "drawing rooms." They reside in the realm where the shaman journeys, outside of societal constructs (Hutchinson xxii). It is a realm with a beatific sense of order, a Christ consciousness--where "one or two are present" the spirit dwells. Bly's Biblical allusions are part of the associational leaping imagery and add mystical resonance to the poem.

The beatific realm is also reminiscent of the so-called World Myth "of a golden age of light, abundance, harmony . . ." of which shaman's tell (Houston ix). Indeed, Bly more directly evokes the shamanic in some images: "burnt bone that sketched the elk by smoky light." This portrait of some primitive scene seems an image of the shaman drawing the image of the tribe's game, as an aid for his journey to divine where that game might be and as a way to call that game to him and to the hunters" (Eliade SHAMANISM 104,435,503 et al). The tone of reverence for body, blossom, snow (the natural world) and the images themselves are deepened by this shamanic association, for "the relations between the shaman . . . and animals [indeed, all of nature] are spiritual in nature and of a mystical intensity that a modern desacralized mentality finds it difficult to imagine" (Eliade SHAMANISM

459). In these deep images, Bly evokes the shaman's world--a world which was and is not cut off from the spiritual realm of the World Myth. The shamanic world is in touch with spirit, nature, and body, not alienated as the technological world is. So Bly may use the shamanic mask, as Henighen suggests, as a way of reconnecting to land, society and self (606).

Therefore, when Bly closes his poem with the image of a man and a woman sitting together, he continues to evoke this shamanic-tribal, integrated world, primitive in the sense of being close to one's origins: "In the snowstorm millions of years come close." Here is the ecstatic revelation that the primal world is not the ancient shaman's alone, but also the modern poet's, the modern human's, for "nothing is lost . . . our bodies are equal to the snow in energy." The vision is one of complete integration and unity via this portrait of the two lovers and then via the ecstatic portrait of the human body: "The body is ready to sing all night, and be entered by whatever wishes to enter the human body singing . . ." Man, woman, snow, blossom--all are part of a flow of spiritual energy which enters and surrounds each, connecting each to all. The image of the man and woman can be seen as the "one or two . . . present" who enable the spirit to be present: the shaman gains insight into the ordinary world, seeing the spiritual possibilities which are held in simple things and events such a man and a woman sitting close to

each other. It is a portrait of "Gott natur," found on the shamanic journey deep into the ordinary.

Examining the poem's organization enhances this shamanic interpretation of the imagery. The journey that the speaker takes is from the physical reality of the snow and the blossom to an inner, mystical reality with which their forms shimmer. This journey into different levels of reality and realization organizes the movement of the poem. In turn, the idea of unifying energy "flow" unifies the poem in idea and determines its grammatical structures.

The poem begins with short, simple sentences telling of the snow walk and of the initial observation of the blossom. As the observation intensifies and becomes more reflective, journeying inward, as it were, in the third paragraph, Bly begins to use ellipsis. However, in paragraphs four and five, where the full realization of unity is found, he does not use ellipsis, except at the poem's close. The use of ellipsis implies exploration, tentativeness, search, so stopping its use implies that something has been found on the journey. Also, Bly uses only one long sentence for paragraph four which underscores the idea of unity. In paragraph five, he uses three sentences, which also enhance the content. The first sentence is "A man and a woman sit quietly near each other." It is short and fairly simple, focusing on the couple. It emphasizes the earlier Biblical allusion to the spiritual presence found "when one or two are

gathered." In the second sentence, there is the final vision of unity, at-one-ment of human and natural worlds via the vehicle of the body. Therefore, in the third and final sentence, the speaker experiences the ecstasy of the vision. Each sentence in paragraph five emphasizes a different point in the journey, while the last sentence, by closing in ellipsis, indicates that the journey begins again in the cyclic and eternal flow of energy which the poem depicts and the speaker realizes in his vision. The final image of the body being entered also reinforces the speaker's realization that the human body participates in this universal flow or "Gott natur."

In "Snowed In" the journey motif functions as it usually does in Bly's work: as physical and mystical image (content) and as structural device (form).

THIS TREE WILL BE HERE FOR A THOUSAND YEARS

Bly published his next major work THIS TREE WILL BE HERE FOR A THOUSAND YEARS with Harper and Row in 1979, incorporating the chapbook OLD MAN RUBBING HIS EYES, published by Unicorn Press in 1974. In THIS TREE, Bly says that the poems "form a volume added to SILENCE; the two books make one book" (11). Indeed, he wrote the type of poems seen in each work off and on through the sixties and seventies (SELECTED 27). He has enough of these to publish a third

group to be "published later" (27). While the poems do not always leap or make quick metaphorical associations, the use of the deep image remains as perhaps Bly's most consistent technique for journeying. In addition, he continues to explore the possibilities of sound.

In the prefatory essay of THIS TREE, "The Two Presences," Bly ties sound to the deep image and "Gott natur": "More and more I notice a sort of ground tone audible under the words of poems. The ground tone in these poems is the consciousness 'out there' among plants and animals" (9). He goes on to say that in the poems of THIS TREE he hopes for "a union of inner and outer," self and nature, through the use of sounds, rhythm, image, an impersonal mood, and simple syntax. In these, we see his list of shamanic tools for that poetic journey which will join inner and outer realms. In that re-union lies shamanic healing. Again, I use the shamanic terms as metaphors for Bly's poetic processes and vision--thus the healing is a poetic, imaginative one. Looking at one of the poems of THIS TREE, I hope to show again the three ways in which the journey motif functions: physical, mystical, and structural.

"Frost Still in the Ground" is typical of the poems in THIS TREE and in SILENCE. It begins with the image of the speaker (Bly himself) going out:

I walk out in the fields; the frost is still
 in the ground. [t/o]
 It's like someone just beginning to write,
 and nothing has been said! [t/o]

The shadows that come from another life
gather in folds around his head.

So I am, all at once. What I have
to say I have not said.

The snow water glances up at the new moon. It is
its own pond. In its lake the serpent is asleep.

The journey begins with his crossing the fields, and then the speaker makes a simple observation: "the frost is still in the ground." The description is simple in comparison to the detail of Bly's prose poems. Next is a reflection on what is observed. In this reflection, the movement is both inward and outward. By the act of reflection itself, the poem moves inward, into the psyche, where the speaker transforms the physical frost and fields by the power of the imagination. The poetic device of transformation is the simile: "like someone just beginning to write, and nothing has been said!" The landscape takes on the qualities of the speaker, specifically of a writer, certainly Bly, and thus the inward journey is begun, along with the physical journey outward across the winter fields. But the reflection also moves the poem in another outward direction, in this case in a mystical-shamanic sense, for by his reflection the speaker discovers a kinship with the frosted fields. This kinship is part of the unity of things which the shaman knows.

Once the simile is begun it continues its transforming "work" within the poem. The kinship is developed further, through details about the persona who is both the writer and

something more, some unifying energy or presence. "The shadows that come from another life" and "gather . . . around his head" are indicative of Bly's idea of the "two presences." These presences are of this life and "another life." They are of man and of nature, of man and his inner connection with nature through his own "Gott natur." They are the spiritually interconnecting realms of man and nature. In the simile, it is nature which is experiencing the influx of the other consciousness; however, the speaker who reflects on the scene is also experiencing this influx--by his very reflection. The simile comparing landscape and writer reinforces the unity of the two experiences. The third stanza continues this interplay: "So I am, all at once."

The poem depicts a shamanic writer, cognizant of this other numinous life, but not yet able to express it. Both writer and landscape are infused with silence. However, the silence itself paradoxically allows the poem to speak; that is, the shamanic poet-speaker is able to convey the intermingling of consciousness and the depth of the connections with this metaphorical silence. The poet "speaks" by saying "What I have to say, I have not said." This use of paradox is typically that of the mystic or the shaman bringing back messages from his mystical journey. It is a method for expressing the inexpressible.

The last stanza is a return from the mystical journey of the simile back to the physical journey of the speaker going

out across the fields. The return, however, portrays an important change in the speaker's perception; the shaman returns still shimmering from his encounter with the numinous. In this return, which structurally determines the poem's close, the landscape is no longer perceived by a simile; now it is seen by metaphor. It is no longer like a living being; it is a living being which "glances up at the new moon." With the shift from simile to metaphor, the idea of reflection is now explicit and central: snow water reflects the moon which is itself a body of water. The metaphor transforms the moon into water and water into moon. At journey's end, the shaman can perceive into the "deeps" of the physical world and therein the numinous is revealed to him.

Thus Bly closes with an image which reaches to a final depth and takes a leap at the same time: "In its lake the serpent is asleep." Like "Moving Inward at Last," "Frost Still on the Ground" resonates with the consciousness of another realm, here the modern farmlands of Minnesota, rather than a Paleolithic cave. Yet from the moon and water imagery to the serpent there is a leap of association which reveals a primal level of consciousness which may be contacted even on a modern farm. Bly might describe this level as the reptilian brain from which basic physical energy arises (LEAPING 59). The image is one of nascent power which infuses the landscape. The sexual associations present in

this serpent image add to the resonance in the poem and reveal the connection between these basic energies of survival and reproduction and the energy of the spirit. In kundalini yoga, spiritual power is sexual power transformed, just as in many religious disciplines, celibacy encourages the redirection of sexual energies towards spiritual pursuits. In this poem, metaphorically speaking, the power is still "asleep," still unused, still unspoken as it was in stanza one, but now it is perceived infusing all things including the moon. The landscape's sleeping power reflects the writer's struggle, which is like the shaman's, his ongoing work to name that which is unnamable, to bring back the message from the journey so that it is effective. This final metaphor of the serpent elaborates and deepens the poem's study of what the writing process does and is.

The poem is not solely this study of writing, but rather the study arises out of the journey's revelation. Again, the speaker walks out first, and then, as a result of observing the physical landscape, he "is given" the simile which connects writing and writer to nature. Of course, to say "is given" may seem a bit presumptuous. Most see the writer as shaping his own similes from his personal imagination. What Bly is getting at in his preface, however, is that the metaphor arises out of an interplay between the two realms--of man and nature. Man and nature reflect each other, in a way similar to the water/moon interplay of the

poem's last stanza. Thus, in such a shamanic approach to poetry, writer and subject act on each other. Such action may be relevant to Coleridge's idea that the imagination half perceives and half creates (BIOGRAPHIA LITERARIA in Perkins 452). The poem's imagery certainly creates associations with Coleridge's "Frost at Midnight."

In Bly's poem, the serpent image portrays not only nascent power, luminous energy, and the connection of man and nature, but it also portrays the creative energy of both man and nature. The writer creates a poem just as the frost creates a pattern on the ground. This creative force lies deep "in its lake." The "lake" is that place where shamans travel and find underlying unity. For the poet it may simply be the imagination.

While the "Frost Still on the Ground" is about the writing process and the reflective and creative processes of the imagination, it is also about a real, physical journey in two senses. First, it appears to tell of a real walk out into the winter landscape. Bly often reveals in interviews that circumstances portrayed in his poems are indeed real. In fact, the mystical and physical sensations, he often says are true to life. This approach to poetry is certainly influenced by the heritage of Wordsworth and Coleridge:

The second sense in which Bly renders the physical journey is by showing how the physical walk's transformation into a walk through a numinous realm is not merely

imaginative play, but is the stuff of real life. In his essay "The Dead World and the Live World," he says that to stay locked in the ego means one can only write dead poetry. Poetry which is alive goes "deeper than the ego and is aware of many other beings" (SIXTIES 8: 2-8). Thus the poet must be able to travel to that depth, in a real sense; only then can he bring back a living poem containing "news of the universe." Bly says such poems "provide a new point of view to allow the traveller to see deep into certain valleys" (SIXTIES 8: 2-8). A message or image which provides this "seeing" power is like what the shaman brings back. Like the shaman, the poet retells his journey, allowing all of his audience to travel "deep." The provision of such metaphorical seeing to the audience is a healing in itself: the audience identifies with the poet-speaker on his journey and can learn, by his experience, of that "news" to which Bly refers. Again, it is "news" which can be imaged in mythological symbols, yet never defined absolutely in words, as Bly suggests in this poem: "What I have / to say I have not said."

Bly's idea that such imagery is helpful to "travellers" suggests Hutchinson's notion, in his discussion of Whitman, that there is a "sense of communitas associated with the unstructured landscape(s)" of roads (xxiv). Bly as the speaker in this and other poems goes out onto the road or into a field which seems to have some structure, but rapidly

one can see that the apparent physical structure (its defining qualities) is simply a cloak for all sorts of "beings" and energies--mysteries which cannot be said. In "Frost" these are "the shadows that come from another life;" the things that have not been said; the mysterious sleeping serpent. This poem is typical of Bly's method of revealing what cannot be revealed. In NEWS, Bly speaks of the Greek Mysteries as opening "the human being to other worlds," particularly to the consciousness in nature (8-9). In "Frost Still," by depicting a walk out into the field and along with the mystery and presence of the scene, Bly reveals what it is to be opened to those other worlds.

The poem's structure paradoxically enhances the idea of "no structure", or at least of a structure which is always changing, ongoing, just coming into being, dissolving into the "unsaid" and mysterious, and being reborn out of that mystery in another image or metaphor. The poem, and for example this poem, is a journey toward what must be said, but never can be. There is no arrival, only travelling. "Frost Still" ends with the mysterious and myriad metaphorical and mythic associations of the sleeping serpent image. The imagery in the poem moves out from the known--a winter walk "out in the fields", the frost, the reassurance of simile--to the unknown, the unspeakable--where water and moon are animate, where mythic creatures dwell, where metaphor is truth without reassurance. As Bly contends in SELECTED

POETRY, the journey "structures" the poem, for the poem itself is a journey (88).

The journey gains resonance and acquires capability not only by the poem's organization or structure, but also by its sounds, rhythms, and rhymes. The alliteration of "fields" and "frost" ties these two important things together. It is the frost which shows that winter still is in charge and that the soil is not yet able to produce just as the writer is not yet able to produce.

The assonance of the first stanza is interesting to note, for it enhances the interconnection speaker and landscape. It is useful to transliterate the vowels into phonetic symbols to aid the discussion of assonance:

/ay/ w/ɔ /lk /aw/t /I/n th/a/ f/i/lds; th/a/ fr/ɔ /st
 /I/s st/I/ll /I/n th/a/ gr/aw/nd.
 /I/t's l/ay/ke s/U/m/ /ne j/U/st b/i/g/I/nn/I/ng to
 wr/ay/te, and n/a/th/I/ng h/a/s b/I/n s/E/d!

By frequency, the most important use of assonance is with the /I/ phoneme in the words "in," "is," "still," "It's," "beginning," "nothing," and "been." For the most part, these sounds are in words of time and state of being. In the poem, the journey begins in time, but moves out to a timeless realm where there is frost "still in the ground." The present tense verbs and the inter-relationship of sounds reinforce the idea of a timeless now, as well as the idea of stasis. The writer has said "nothing." He must first go deep, not far, before something can be said. The /I/ sound of "in" so frequent in the poem reinforces the necessity of journeying

"in".

In stanza two of "Frost Still," assonance continues to be important. A phonetic transliteration of the vowels should again prove helpful:

The sh/ae/d/o/ws th/ae/t c/a/me fr/a/m /a/n/a/th/ə/r
 l/ay/fe. [t/o]
 g/ae/th/ə/r /I/n f/o/lds /a/r/aw/nd h/I/s h/E/d.

The predominate vowel phoneme is /a/, with /ae/ and /o/ playing significant roles. /a/ ties all the stanzas together. Here the repetition of /a/ emphasizes the ideas of "come," "from," and "another," and thus emphasizes the second presence, the numinous energy. /a/ is a long vowel articulated low in the mouth (Traugott 55), and thus it resonates. The spoken vibration of the sound emphasizes the idea of energy, as the repetition of the sound on the page does.

The /a/ in stanza four in "water" and "pond" continues the emphasis and ties that realm of spiritual energy to the natural landscape of the snow-water pond. The interconnections of sounds and meanings weave a shamanic unity in the poem and portray that unity as alive in the world. The sound and repetition of /a/ reinforces the image of the pond reflecting the moon, depicting how this world shimmers with the spirit. Indeed, the sounds become the "shimmer" for the poem's images.

The /ae/ of "shadow," "gather," "am," and "glances" also serves as "shimmer" for the images. The "shadows" of the

other life are "gathered" in the speaker ("I am") and reflected ("glances") in nature. The /o/ of "shadows," "folds," "snow," and "own" further tighten the poem's sound and meaning patterns. The /o/ makes a clear connection between the spiritual energy which enfolds the speaker and the natural world of snowy fields. "Shad/o/ws" ties to "sn/o/w," and the tie of "/f/o/lds" and "/o/wn" strengthens the connection. Then too, the /o/ is that of ecstasy ("Oh!") which carries the shaman to the world where sounds and meanings arise.

In the final sentence, the repetition of the consonant phoneme /s/ (consonance) emphasizes the important image of "the serpent...asleep." Culminating in the final line, the /s/ weaves through the poem: in "frost," "still," "someone," "said," "once," and "glances.", The /s/ hisses, onomatopoeically reinforcing the snake image. The snake's sleeping power is felt throughout the journey of the poem. The snake's nascent (sleeping) energy permeates not only the imagery, but the sounds, doubling the force of the final clause. While the snake image may be a natural and necessary choice due to its mythic associations with creative power, his choice the word "asleep" as the subject complement was optional: unless Bly indeed intends to emphasize the /s/ of the serpent, even if not for a onomatopoeic purpose.

All in all, sound is crucial to the structure of "Frost Still" as it is to many of Bly's poems. It creates rhythms

and connections which add depth and resonance to images. To Bly, it works on the body of the listener (FOR THE STOMACH audiotape), so the poem journeys by sound as well as by image, just as the shaman journeys on the sound of his drum. The sound reinforces the structure of the poem, and it reinforces the physical and mystical images or the content of the poem. Thus "Frost" works with both eye and ear to make its journey.

THE MAN IN THE BLACK COAT TURNS

With his next book, THE MAN IN THE BLACK COAT TURNS (1981), Bly writes of his interest in father consciousness after long focusing on the imagery and ideas of the Great Mother (see Chapter Three and SLEEPERS). Nelson suggests that Bly's recognition of the Great Father can be attributed to the poet's turning fifty and his exploration of his own personal background, especially his relationship with his father and thereby with his son Noah, to whom the book is dedicated. Through Bly's own family relationships, Howard Nelson says, Bly now explores "the ground of human relationship" (193). It must be noted, however, that this journey into human relationships via the father and masculine consciousness can be seen in a number of earlier poems, such as "Meeting the Man Who Warns Me" in SLEEPERS, "Driving My Parents Home at Christmas" in TREE, and "Walking to the Next

Farm" (about his brother) and "Coming In For Supper" (about his children) in THIS BODY. But certainly more of the poems of BLACK COAT have an "autobiographical impulse" as both Sugg and Nelson suggest. Bly defines this impulse in the prose poem-essay on his boyhood, "Being a Lutheran Boy-god in Minnesota" (BLACK COAT 124).

In his 1982 analysis of BLACK COAT, critic William V. Davis also agrees that the book is especially autobiographical:

[BLACK COAT and SILENCE] speak of the same journey in essentially the same way. [But with a crucial difference:] BLACK COAT describes the end of the journey which SILENCE began. As such BLACK COAT is Bly's symbolic turn toward home, the self-referential elegy so many writers come to, whether they are aware of it or not. Bly is, I think, clearly aware of it and, as is his way, moves toward it directly. Just as typically, his turning back here . . . is more than a simple return. It is not an end but another new beginning--'still the place where creation does some work on itself,' as Bly has translated a line from Tranströmer. (in Peseroff 237)

To illuminate what Bly's journey into self may mean Davis cites the first prose poem in the central second section of the book where Bly writes, "Many times in poems I have escaped" (18). Here is the personal revelation where the speaker goes in, rather than out in order explore the "deeps." Because of this very personal journey into self, Davis calls these poems "some of the most authentic poems Bly has written" (in Peseroff 238). The authenticity is probably there in most of Bly's poems, yet the approach of these poems helps to corroborate the authenticity or living truth of the

others. That the poet is willing to bare his everyday, very human and personal life and thought allows him more effectively to make a rhetorical identification with his readers, including Davis (Burke, MOTIVES 55-56).

Paul Tillich examines the relationship of the individual to the deeper life in way which may further illuminate Bly's shamanic approach in BLACK COAT:

Whenever man has looked at his world, he has found himself in it as a part of it. But he also has realized that he is a stranger in the world of objects, unable to penetrate it beyond a certain level of scientific analysis. And then he has become aware of the fact that he himself is the door to the deeper levels of reality, that in his own existence he has the only possible approach to existence itself. (from SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY 62, qtd. by Davis in Peseroff 238)

Tillich's idea not only illuminates Bly's approach, it also reveals the close connection which the "door" of self has to the "door" of natural images. Both Tillich's and Davis's ideas help us see how the journey is an important element in Bly's work and how it is shamanic. The images of self and of nature are doors by which the poem is able to travel into other realms, those "deeper levels of reality" to which Tillich refers. Thus, while male energy, fathers (Bly himself, his father, historical and mythic fathers), personal family, and the family of humanity are the central images in these poems, the journey, begun in SILENCE, continues as the major motif, as Davis also suggests (in Peseroff 237).

A poem in BLACK COAT which shows Bly's progressive use of the journey motif is "The Grief of Men" (33-34). The poem

begins with a Zen story (a device Bly often uses) and derives its journey from this Zen lesson. The poem leaps by association from the Buddhist story to the speaker, then moves out into the natural world as the speaker walks outside. From the natural world it leaps again associating the natural world with another realm. Whereas, most often in earlier work, Bly associates the natural world with feminine imagery and women, in this case, he makes a leap into the realm of men, associating men with the natural world:

The Buddhist ordered his boy to bring him, New
 Year's
 morning, a message. He
 woke; answered;
 tore open the message
 he himself had written, and signed, "Buddha."

"Busyness has caught you, you have slowed and
 stopped.
 If you start toward me, I
 will surely come
 to meet you." He wept.
 Exhausted by work and travel, I walk.

I hear the coot call his darkening call,
 and the dog's doubt far back in his throat.
 A porcupine walks
 by the water at dusk;
 no one sees him, under the low bushes. (33)

The natural images are male, providing an indication of the new direction of Bly's poetic journey.

In stanza four, Bly makes even clearer the new terrain being covered. Here the speaker leaps from a mountain image associated, in Bly's view, with male consciousness (SELECTED audio) back to sea level in Bly's familiar use of feminine water image (SELECTED audio). However, in "Grief," Bly does

not use feminine imagery as he does in his earlier works. In earlier works, for the most part, nature is feminine, and the feminine is an important part of the speaker's identity. Here Bly depicts the speaker's apparent separation from the feminine--at least as it is embodied in women. The speaker's masculinity is emphasized through the male creatures: the coot, the dog, and the porcupine.

In *BLACK COAT*, where Bly reveals very personal family history in some poems, he explores the separation, even alienation, of masculine and feminine. As he journeys into his family history, he finds the story of men, the community first known via father, brother, uncle. These associations of imagery are real and historically represent a community of men. In Bly's view, this real community is typical of most male communities. First reflected by the Buddhist monk who weeps at his "busyness," the melancholy speaker, "exhausted by work and travel," is now not "left" to Eastern philosophy alone as he might have been in *SLEEPERS*. Now Bly uses images from his own midwestern life and heritage. The personal references in the book's other poems show this, as do the midwestern wildlife images in this poem.

"Grief" reflects a number of Bly's varied explorations: his work with Chinese and Japanese poetry, his meditations, his observations of nature, his interest in the feminine, and now his interest in masculine consciousness. In *BLACK COAT*, Bly depicts the masculine consciousness as more mundane and

pragmatic, cognizant of limitations, while he depicts the feminine to be more of the soul, more emotional, expansive, intuitive. Here both male Buddhist and male speaker are portrayed as men busy with the tasks of surviving in this world. Yet they are not simply earth-bound; they have spiritual needs and awareness: the monk writes a message to himself as a reminder of that need, while the speaker journeys out into nature. Both men approach the spiritual need in a pragmatic manner. Each answers it with concrete actions.

The comparison between monk and writer, made in the associative leap in stanza two, can be elaborated further. Both writer and monk need solitude to function properly in their work. Thus even their spiritual journeying performs a pragmatic function, just as it does for the shaman, from whose role both mystic monk's and poet's roles originate (Froiland 35). The alliteration of the verbs "wept" and "walk" hints at the association between the methods each use to approach the spiritual. The speaker's walk is the midwestern answer to the monk's tears. The melancholia not released in tears is projected onto nature. In fact, the real journey in this poem may be into the depths of the speaker's own self-doubts.

In the third stanza, Bly depicts the natural world as dark and doubtful. Nature takes on the speaker's tears in the coot's "darkening call," "the dog's doubts," and the

porcupine's lonely walk. The alliteration of the first two images serves to emphasize the downward or melancholic movement of the imagery. The stanza ends with the porcupine "under the low bushes." But it is Bly's overworked male consciousness which is down there under the bushes, weary and sad. The porcupine walks; Bly walks. The leap is made with the verb, associating man and beast. The association enriches the poem: the protective quills of the porcupine become the protective armor of the busy man in the world.

This idea of protection is mirrored in another poem which comes later in this last section of BLACK COAT. In "My Father's Wedding" (48-50), sadness also pervades the poem in the longing for the father and in the regret for what the relationship never had been. It also depicts Bly's sadness for how his father and many men try to hide their vulnerability:

Today, lonely for my father, I saw
 a log, or branch,
 long, bent, ragged, bark gone.
 I felt lonely for my father when I saw it.
 It was the log
 that lay near my uncle's old milk wagon.

Some men live with an invisible limp,
 stagger, or drag
 a leg. Their sons are often angry.
 Only recently I thought:
 Doing what you want...
 Is that like limping? Tracks of it show in sand. (48)

In addition, Bly shows some of the results of hiding that vulnerable, feeling side of the self, that "limp":

. . . If a man, cautious
 hides his limp,

Somebody has to limp it! Things
 do it; the surroundings limp.
 House walls get scars,
 the car breaks down; matter, in drudgery, takes it up.
 (49)

Like his father in this poem, Bly in "Grief" walks alone, and the natural world and/or the world of things takes up his sadness, his "limp," his unanswerable questions, his aloneness.

Stanza four of "Grief" begins with a leap from Bly's observations of a natural world which reflects his feeling self, from those "low bushes" where the porcupine walks to an image of the mountains where "men have died" (34). Here too a link is made between the solitude of the porcupine and his own solitude or separateness as a man. However, this stanza further defines that isolation. Men, protecting their "limp," put themselves, not in the nurturing security of the low bushes (a feminine image according to Bly), but on the mountaintops (a masculine image of spiritual depletion for Bly), so that in their hour of need, they are alone: "They look around and do not see / those they love most" (34). This is "the grief of men" in western culture--hidden in its lack of expression. When they finally call out, expressing that vulnerability, they make a "sound the porcupine does not make" (34). Western males self-protective separateness is not a simple physical attribute like the porcupine's quills; it is isolating and alienating. The porcupine's solitude is natural, while men's is self-imposed and damaging. The dog's

doubt and the dark in the coot's call are really the man's.

Bly's nature imagery is shamanic for it reveals the unity of man and nature. In the shaman's world sickness of soul may be seen in sickness of body or in the auguries of nature. When man or nature are out of balance, each reflects the other.

The leap of association to the imagery in stanza five is traced less easily than the leap from stanza three to four. The image of the men's cry in stanza four leaps to the imagery of "fresh waters wash past the tidal sands." In the context of Bly's work, water usually implies the feminine, as it seems to in the earlier stanzas of this poem, yet Bly does say in *SELECTED POEMS* that for this book, he fished in male waters (142). Yet the rest of stanza five clearly shows that while he may have found his subject matter in the male, as far as imagery goes, he continues with the same associations. The latter part of the stanza speaks of women in childbirth. At first the "fresh waters" imply some solace in answer to the call of stanza four. In some senses the waters are solace. However, the tone shifts to one of envy, not a petty, but a mythic, fatalistic envy. Men can not, by the fate of being male, ever bear children, nor have the test of that bearing. Bly writes, "Women can die / in childbirth, Bertha, inwardly near me, died" (34). The statement reflects the speaker's longing "if only," yet also it reveals his fate as a man. Men will never have women's "ability" (can)

to die in childbirth. In death from childbirth, women paradoxically can be connected to the human life and community, connected to some sense of the future, to a modicum of immortality. Men must "die on high slopes" without "those they love most." With this acknowledge of fate, the speaker journeys even deeper into his melancholia and its causes. Through these leaps of association, the shamanic poet's journey goes in search of the healing for the spiritual illness or weariness he feels.

Stanza five also provides an example of Bly's searching his family history. BLACK COAT's journeys into family history are akin to the journeys the shaman takes in search of deceased family or tribesmen. He asks the dead's help in healing current problems. In "Grief," Bly as speaker "seeks" his aunt Bertha and her husband to find reasons for Bly's melancholia and for all men's. It is clear in this poem that Bly is using his personal family history in BLACK COAT not merely for self understanding, but for tribal understanding (Sugg 130-131). The book explores Bly's relationships with his father, his son, his family to clarify them for himself, but more, to see how we all connect with each other in the human family (Sugg 130-131). The book's depiction of (and concern for) the deep connection of the individual to tribe is an important shamanic touchstone. The circumstance of his aunt Bertha's death is an example of all human death and grief:

. . . Bertha, inwardly near me, died,
 my father's sister. "No more children, that's it,"
 the doctor said. They wanted a child.
 The doctor stands
 by the bed, but Bertha
 dies, her breath ends, her knees quiver and are
 still.

Her husband will not lie quiet.
 He throws himself against the wall.
 Men come to hold him down.
 My father is there,
 sits by the bed long night after night. (34)

She dies out of choice for a child, despite western medical advice, asserting the creative drive over the fear of death. Or perhaps she is asserting something more than the regeneration of the species; perhaps it is the human need to recreate oneself, to touch the eternal in this way. And, although she dies, she dies participating in life.

Ironically, Bly's uncle, Bertha's husband, who may have been participated in the choice to have a child, cannot die in its culmination: "Women can die / in childbirth," but men cannot. Men are (can be) left behind, isolated on the mountaintop, isolated from this life process. Bly seems to say this by emphasizing his uncle's grief and by closing the poem with it.

Yet, while mourning and grief close the poem by continuance, elaboration, and deepening of the original images of melancholia, Bly implies some hope in the final image. In "the grief of men" image, all the men--father, uncle, and the men who "hold him down"--are united, not isolated. They are full of feeling for each other and here

they show it. They form a caring community of men. Bly's father and the others come to provide solace, or at least to try, and to provide company to Bly's uncle. Even though men may appear to be isolated from soul, emotion, and the life force, they can come together. They can "walk out" and find some solace: write a letter, weep and "not lie quiet," or write a poem. In the journey of this poem, Bly finds the depths of men's grief, but also some solace in the final image. This solace at the conclusion reiterates in a personal way the letter the monk sends to himself. Bly's poem is his own letter to himself. In his journey through personal terrain, he finds a reminder of Buddha, some healing message to bring back.

In "Grief" Bly creates a stanza form to hold this message and journey. Despite being Bly's creation, this form is closer to traditional free verse. He does not use the free-flowing Whitman line (SELECTED 197) nor the prose poem form. Although he does use the prose poem form in the second section of BLACK COAT, the poems are much more in traditional free verse forms there too. In SELECTED POEMS, he says of the BLACK COAT poems:

The more limits we set in the poem, the more resistance we have set up, and the more energy the poem produces to push against those limits. When the Anglo-Saxon poets decided on two main consonants only in a line, they were laying rocks in the stream, and language develops tremendous rhythmical strength to object to that decision.

I aim in these poems, then, for a form that would please the old sober and spontaneous ancestor males. I have tried to knit the stanzas together in sound, and

have set myself the task of creating stanzas that each have the same number of beats Such a poem . . . begins to take on the darkness and engendered quality of matter. (144)

In the book and in this poem, he hopes to underscore the "sober-spontaneous" mood and help to create that mood with a more limiting approach to form. With stricter poetic structures, the journey is marked with more obstacles, and the stages are marked more clearly. At each stage or level (in deep imagery) of exploration, there is a marker which is the new stanza. The stanzas signal the deeper level, that a leap has been made, large or small. The more structure the poem has the more it may be akin to the performance of the journey, rather than the actual journey. Although the process or stages of movement are the journey itself, the line breaks, sounds, and stanza breaks are devices to reveal what the journey was like to others. Bly's idea that increased limits create increased energy provides a way for the performance of the journey to have increased impact and thus to be more like the journey itself. Comparing this poem to the apparent freedoms of the prose poem form in THIS BODY, one can see how the extensive use of ellipsis and the free addition of details and comments which the prose poem form allows certainly seem more akin to a journey into an unstructured, even chaotic numinous realm.

In "Grief" and most of the other poems in BLACK COAT, the lines are generally much shorter than those of Bly's other works. The shorter lines and increased "play" with

various stanza forms mark an increased interest in how this sort of shaping, beyond sound shaping, can affect content. In "Grief" Bly uses a stanza of five lines where the first line is five or six stresses, usually in about ten syllables, but not in iambic pentameter, although it is occasionally. The rhythm is much more related to those "Anglo Saxon ancestors" and to that of natural speech.

The second line in each stanza varies in length and is shorter as printed on the page than the previous line, and generally has three to four stresses. The third line is also shorter than the previous line; typically almost every syllable is accented so that there are two to three, sometimes four, stresses in the line. The shorter and shorter lines seem to emphasize an inward movement, working toward some discovery. The fourth line is once again shorter in length, keeping the eye toward the left margin, continuing to enhance the inward exploration of the poem. But while the fourth is shorter than the third line, the stresses also appear to be two to three, sometimes four, based in the sound figures and the meaning. Sometimes alliteration indicates the words emphasized; e.g., "by the bed, but Bertha." Sometimes the emphasis is clear from the meaning or from the rhythms.

The fifth and final line of each stanza is always as long, longer, or almost as long as the first line of the stanza--on the page and in the number of stresses. Generally

the last line carries some insight or image which is the resolution of the stanza's inward movement. The stanza's inward movement is reflected in the shortening of the lines on the page. The image also provides a platform for leaping to the images of the next stanza and to the next stage of the journey, the process of investigation. Thus the pattern of extending this last line reinforces the mental movement which extends into the next stanza. The line is generally pentameter, as is the first line.

The poem's journey is performed in this well-defined structure. As Bly suggests such structures may, the form of this poem carries the darkness of mood. The stanzas rein in the "grief," the strong emotion of the poem, just as the wall and the men hold Bly's uncle--form again enhances content. In SELECTED POEMS (cited above), in this poem and elsewhere, Bly says that this sort of limiting action, this sort of discipline and reservation is particularly masculine in nature. The form of most of the poems in BLACK COAT is part of their content.

Yet even with this emphasis on traditional formula, even though the manner in which the journey is rendered is altered in BLACK COAT, the image of the speaker going out on a journey to discover, to heal, to explore, to find answers continues as the predominant image. In fact, in BLACK COAT and his other works, Bly uses this journey image to help his poems be like Lorca's and Jiminez's--"open door[s]" through

which "the poet and the reader could go down" (Bly, "Hermetic" 19). Perhaps in the formalized work of BLACK COAT, this discovery process of journeying speaker is not altered, but rather, enhanced. The cues of form, of more traditional stanza forms and line breaks, are "energized" vehicles by which both shamanic speaker and the reader can keep travelling in rough terrain. As Bly moves closer to home, so to speak, the journey becomes more difficult, strewn with emotional obstacles. Form can assist by offering structural reassurance, as well as containing the energy of strong emotions. Just as the shaman is a "technician" of ecstasy, so the poet must be a technician of emotion. Both too, depict the journey, in performance or poem, in a structured way, relying on traditional forms as well as on their own improvisations.

Of course, with its prehistoric shamanic origins, the journey motif offers reassurance in itself (Campbell, POWER 37-39). Its mythological depth can give both reader and poet "a line to connect with that mystery which [they] are" (POWER 57). Bly's journey imagery is particularly shamanic because it depicts not only the process of his own healing, but tribal healing as well. The very personal subject matter in BLACK COAT is consistently connected to a larger community, reaching back to primitive roots (Sugg 122-123, 141). In this primal reaching, too, Bly's journeys may be seen as shaman-like. The shaman goes to realms whence the roots of

tribal constructs arise. Often, Bly's images, such as those of "Moving Inward at Last" in LIGHT, journey back to the cave, to the basic differences of men and women, to the hunter-gatherer culture of the shaman. The final line of "My Father's Wedding" in BLACK COAT journeys back to such a time:

His two story house he turned
 into a forest;
 where both he and I are the hunters. (50)

The veneer of civilization quickly is peeled off, and the primitive relationships between parent-child, man-woman, man-man, man-self, man-tribe, and man-nature are revealed. This primary level of being is what interests Bly. Time and again his poems are of a spiritual journey to "an invisible world" (Bly, "Hermetic" 18)" to find the "holy correspondences" (21) of these relationships.

Conclusion

In the ancient and natural images of the journey which he finds as he "goes out," Bly's shamanic speaker does bring "into the profane world the transformational powers of sacred time and space" (Houston vii). The images of both nature and tribal life become sacred as the speaker journeys deep into them. By his detailed observations the poem journeys: in deep imagery, in the prose poem, and in the rapid associations of leaping. By "going down" as Bly calls it, the poem can reveal timeless and interconnecting roots, and

at the roots, nourishment:

Poetry I think is a healing process, and when a person tries to write poetry with depth, he will find himself guided along paths that will heal him; and his presence on those paths is more important actually than any of the poetry that he writes. If our society were strong and spiritually healthy, it would heal us. But our society is not like that, so each person has to do most of the spiritual work himself. (TALKING 233)

In its process, the shamanic journey provides Bly with poetic form and content. The movements of the journey provide both structures and images. For example, in the realms where the shaman journeys, spirits of nature, of the dead, of all kinds leap about. Some of Bly's poetic images leap about in this way--giving a particular structure to his poems. Other aspects of the journey provide other structuring devices--especially in the emphasis on sound and sound patterns. At the same time, the images "found" along the journey are themselves typically shamanic--nature resonates with the spiritual, humans are connected to both nature and spirit, ancient times envisioned, and tribal concerns addressed.

In both form and content, the journey of the shamanic poem depicts healing. Its processes and images are of healing. As the Siberian shaman Semyonov Semyon said, "When I began to sing, my sickness usually disappeared" (qtd. in Campbell, MASKS 265). In "Grief" the speaker sings. The song is that of his journey, his walk. He begins to walk exhausted, but by the poem's end, he knows the root causes and finds an image of male community. The image is a healing

talisman which he brings back. But the healing was also in the journey and in the singing of that journey.

CHAPTER V

BLY'S LOVING A WOMAN IN TWO WORLDS:

THE SHAMAN AS LOVER

"We will only observe that, just as the Great Mother of the Animals grants men--and particularly shamans--the right to hunt and to sustain themselves on the flesh of beasts, the 'feminine' tutelary spirits [ayamis or celestial wives] give shamans the helping spirits that are in some sort indispensable to them in their ecstatic journeys."--Mircea Eliade, SHAMANISM 81.

Is Bly's most recent full-length book of poems, LOVING A WOMAN IN TWO WORLDS (1985), a shamanic work? Does it have both tribal and mystical aspects? Is there a journey which structures the book? Does it depict (perform) healing? Even though some may argue that LOVING A WOMAN is merely personal, containing none of the overtly public material of LIGHT and SLEEPERS, and that, as such, it has little relevance to the community at large as shamanic material should, I suggest that it does continue to participate in the life of tribe as it continues to journey and to depict healing.

Performance attributes and portrayal of healing are essential to shamanic works. The use of mythic and historical elements are the exponents of performance which reflect the tribal life and which can be traced in the poems to determine if they are shamanic. Symbols of unity, disease, and healing are exponents of the healing process

of the shamanic work and is also essential to determining whether or not a work is shamanic. Its exponents are images of the journey itself and of journeying techniques, including ecstasy. Some of the images and techniques of the journey are also sometimes those of performance because the public performance re-enacts the mystical journey. Thus, as I have shown in the previous chapters, in determining a work to be shamanic, there are three essential elements: performance elements, journeying elements, and healing elements. For the shaman, healing is the purpose which unifies his two-fold role of mystical journeyer and public performer. For the shamanic poet, the depiction of healing unites mystic journeying elements and performance elements. In the performance of the poem, in its subject matter and approach, the poet may demonstrate a concern for the tribe. This demonstration brings a public or communal aspect to the poem, even when it may also have mystical elements. Healing is often depicted in images of unity and balancing. The poet may depict the shaman's interconnecting worlds--natural, human, and spiritual. While a particular poem may not have all three elements, *LOVING A WOMAN* does have all three.

Certainly, the number of clearly public poems in Bly's work has become less over the years, but his concerns continue to be political as well as personal, communal as well as individual. If nothing else, his editing of *NEWS OF THE UNIVERSE: POEMS OF THE TWO-FOLD CONSCIOUSNESS* in 1980

shows that his ultimate political or communal concern is that poetry (and society) not remain ego-bound and simply personal, but that it journey out into nature, into spirit, into the family of man. As the discussion of the shamanic journey shows, Bly looks for a broadened view of the term "communal." Sugg corroborates this view, in his discussion of *THE MAN IN THE BLACK COAT TURNS* (1982), where he sees Bly as exploring the family of man, using real and personal details as starting points for the journey (122-141):

Bly has found, and now affirms, a new use for his poetry. For Bly poetry is not separate from and greater than ordinary life, not a way to escape nature's destiny; rather it is a human way to enter into the stream of nature's energies. . . . In *BLACK COAT* the more immediate process is that of sons acknowledging, assimilating, and going beyond their fathers in the evolving generations of the family of man. (141)

In *LOVING A WOMAN*, Bly continues the journey, exploring human relationships he began in *BLACK COAT*. In this book, the shamanic speaker (again Bly himself) unites with the tribe, not through his relationship with his father, but through his relationship with a woman. As he did in *BLACK COAT*, Bly includes personal references to his own relationship and again uses these personal details and revelations as vehicles by which the speaker journeys to find underlying unity. After all, social concerns begin in the society of the family, and the society of the family begins in the relationship between a man and a woman.

Paradoxically, in writing about this core relationship, Bly may be writing the most political of his poems. The

poems are political because they recognize and examine universal human concerns and needs. Wrestling with the difficulty and power of love is the original social and political act. Learning to compromise yet not lose individuality, to respect the other, and to be honest--all are political arts which enable love. All enable one to make connections with the world and, as Bly shows, with oneself. The intimate political arts facilitate poems which are kinder and gentler than the roaring of the "The Teeth Mother Naked at Last," yet nonetheless tribal and healing.

If *LOVING A WOMAN* is shamanic in its communal participation, is it also shamanic in its structure? Richard Sugg says that the book has a "selected poems quality about [it]" (19), but when seen as a shamanic journey, like *SLEEPERS*, *LOVING A WOMAN* has unity. Like so many of Bly's other books, this book is in three parts: twelve poems in the first section, twenty-six in the second, and twelve in the last. The themes of Part I progress and evolve through the book, to culminate in Part III. The journey in love is from suffering to healing. The journey structures and shapes the book's movement.

The movement is tidal. The shamanic themes move forward, then backward, then forward. The journey embodies the way the shamanic lover moves toward his beloved. Interestingly, some of the poems originally appeared in a chapbook called *OUT OF THE ROLLING OCEAN*, and water is an

important image in LOVING A WOMAN. The tidal movement of the journey enhances this imagery. In turn, both movement and imagery emphasize the beloved and all she means. As we have seen, Bly associates the feminine consciousness with water images and the soul (SELECTED audio). LOVING A WOMAN is a journey toward and with the beloved woman, who embodies that consciousness for Bly. The beloved is transformed into the speaker's "ayami," his feminine tutelary spirit (ELIADÉ, SHAMANISM 71-75, 79-81). She "calls" her lover to a shamanic "initiation" and "trains" him in what it means to be a "shaman." She brings him in contact with the mysterious waters of nature and spirit. The journey in those waters is difficult, requiring much; thus the shamanic persona of the poems does not travel straight ahead. He moves forward, then back, then forward--slowly making progress.

In LOVING A WOMAN, the ayami-beloved enables Bly not only to depict the shamanic journey, healing, and connection with the tribe, but to develop and deepen many other shamanic themes: attuning with and investigating nature and spirit, using myth and mythic energies, using sound, being called and trained, being initiated, and especially, experiencing ecstasy and the unifying vision. Ecstasy and union are essential elements to both the shaman and the lover. But to attain ecstasy and union, balance becomes important. In SLEEPERS, Bly portrays the difficulties of balance through the tribal psyche. In LOVING A WOMAN he reveals its

importance through the loving relationship.

The balancing process is a particularly shamanic one. In some shamanic cultures, the creation myth is the story of how the conflict and resolution of masculine and feminine polarities formed the world (Eliade, "Cosmology" 34). One of the shaman's most important tasks is to transform the dualities of not only human and natural worlds, but also masculine and feminine worlds. He must bring them into reconciliation or balance (Andrews, Letter). The ayami, sometimes called the celestial wife, guides him in this process. She will bring him spirit helpers, from nature and other realms, to assist him (Eliade, SHAMANISM 71-73). The shaman himself may practice tranvestism or live as a member of the opposite sex to balance the masculine and feminine energies within (Metzner 247). The balancing process is crucial because the shaman must control these energies to heal.

In LOVING A WOMAN, balance is a process engendered by love. That process begins with the shamanic persona's solitude, separation, and need for release through grief and love. Motivated by instinct and the desire for relationship, he seeks the beloved. Yet in turn, desire leads to the necessary grief and the awareness of the mystery and difficulty of relationship. Through grief and awareness, the shamanic lover is humbled. He realizes the inviolate separateness or "firmness" of things upon which he has no

claim. Paradoxically, in this new understanding of separate-ness, he is brought closer to underlying unity. In humility, he is made more honest, for he has no need to protect his ego. He can revere all nature, even the smallest things, for they are part of the same unifying force to which his instinct connects him. Recognizing himself as part of nature and the spiritual force underlying it, he can attain union with the beloved in both the world of flesh and the world of spirit. Thus the shamanic lover loves in "two worlds," not one. Out of balanced union come joy and ecstasy, which further fuel desire. And movement towards balance begins again, evolved, deepened, but continuing.

Bly depicts healing through the persona's humbling realizations and the lovers' unions. Through the honing of love, the speaker realizes the attributes of the divine, and through sexual desire and union, he discovers the numinous power underlying physical nature. Out of the process of balance arise the images and themes of *LOVING A WOMAN*. Looking at each of the book's three parts and examining these themes in particular poems will show how *LOVING A WOMAN* is an integrated work which performs a shamanic journey.

Part I

In Part I, Bly sets up the themes in the first five poems: "Fifty Males Sitting Together," "The Indigo Bunting,"

"Out of the Rolling Ocean, the Crowd . . . ," "The Whole Moisty Night," and "Secrets." In these poems the journey is begun. In "Letter to Her" and "Winter Poem," Bly develops the meanings of grief and of honesty for the lover. "A Third Body" is important for its depiction of spiritual union.

Bly begins *LOVING A WOMAN* with a revision of "Fifty Males Sitting Together," which appears in *BLACK COAT* in its earlier version. The new version is much changed in all but the first stanza. These changes emphasize the shamanic persona's insights--gained from the fight to understand and survive described in "Kneeling Down in a Culvert" at the end of *BLACK COAT* (Sugg 140-141). The death and resurrection themes of that book, which include fighting and being torn to pieces, suggest the shamanic dismemberment that precedes rebirth (Eliade, *SHAMANISM* 34, 66; Campbell, *MASKS I* 266-67; Jung, *COLLECTED* 70). Fighting and being torn asunder involve both masculine consciousness, as they do in *BLACK COAT*, and feminine, as they do in "Teeth Mother."

Why does Bly use this poem to open his book of love poems, poems of the supposedly gentler side of man and woman? He uses "Fifty Males" because it reveals an increased understanding of the requirements of an involved life. In *BLACK COAT* Bly examines the masculine consciousness of men, but there is no final resolution or resurrection. The book closes with the fight and the shamanic dismemberment. In

LOVING A WOMAN, the shamanic speaker is ready to be
resurrected and reborn:

How far he is from working men when he ascends!
From all men! The males singing
chant far out
on the water grounded in downward shadow.
He cannot go there because
he has not grieved
as humans grieve. If someone
died, whose
head was cut off?
The father's? Or the mother's? Or his?
The dark comes down slowly, the way
snow falls, or herds pass a cave mouth.
I look up at the other shore; it is night. (4-5)

The poem makes a good transition from the earlier book because it shows the shamanic speaker's readiness for love. Both the original and the revision show the speaker's isolation--a necessary impetus in seeking love. However, the revision emphasizes this isolation. The speaker is isolated from the tribe, his past, other men, and himself. And he is far from the other shore, isolated from the feminine. The revision also depicts the speaker's realization that he is isolated because "he has not grieved." This realization is not in the original poem. Grief is a necessary requirement in the movement toward balance, and it is an essential element of love. Although in BLACK COAT Bly depicts male grief in "The Grief of Men," he shows it to be incomplete. The speaker himself does not fully experience it. Thus in "Fifty Males" the speaker says that he has not grieved. The realization indicates that he is ready to grieve. Depicting that readiness, the poem is an appropriate beginning for this

journey toward the shamanic vision.

In "Fifty Males," Bly develops his persona's masculine identity and its limits by using some details from his own life. In stanza three, he refers to his alcoholic father and to the silences of his childhood home. Yet he also depicts the universal masculine image of the "fifty males" so that the story is not the shamanic poet's alone but the tribe's. The very longing to join the "fifty males sitting together . . . lifting something indistinct / up into the resonating night" (3) represents the universal longing of any man to join with his fellow hunters or tribe.

The "indistinct" shadow made by the men is an image of twilight, a universal image of a time of change, of mystery, and of possibility. As I argued in Chapter Four, Bly thinks of the twilight as a doorway to other realms (TALKING 131), as it is for Castaneda's Don Juan (91). It is a time when one can gain knowledge. In the poem's earlier version that knowledge is not fully realized; the "son" "does not know / what he should give" (BLACK COAT 56). But in this new version he does know--he knows that he needs to grieve to join the tribe of men. Grief itself is like depression which Bly believes opens one to the soul. Like the shadow-time of twilight, grief functions as a doorway between two worlds. In being ready for grief, the speaker is ready to journey between the two worlds.

In addition to the speaker's readiness to journey and

the tribal image of the fifty males, the poem brings out other aspects of the book's shamanic context. The ritual the fifty men are performing is mythic--"lifting something indistinct / up into the resonating night." This image and the image of "herds pass[ing] a cave mouth" elicit associations with prehistoric or mythic times. These are dark and unrecorded shamanic times to which Bly's words bring light. Speaking of BLACK COAT, Sugg suggests this relation of poet to past and community:

Bly increasingly links the family of man, imagined with the creative labor of the poet . . . [and] presents the impulse to make poetry as the natural, human means of asserting the community's [tribe's] and the individual's consciousness against the threatening oblivion of time.
(135)

This task is clearly shamanic in nature. Through the poem, the poet carries on the unfolding story of the tribe. Within the poem, the speaker moves in a shamanic realm where time telescopes from modern Minnesota to ancient caves.

"Fifty Males" itself begins with a journey: "After a long walk in the woods . . . I turn home" (3). That turning home is part of the speaker's readiness. In turning here, he finds a new perspective as he will in the first poem of Part III, "The Minnow Turning." In both BLACK COAT and LOVING A WOMAN, this turning is significant. The shamanic journey moves toward "home" and all that the idea of home implies. In this poem, home is associated with water, and thereby with nature, with spirit (as the water of baptism is), with the physical and the spiritual attributes of the male, and with

the family. Bly's own mother and father, along with a younger Bly, become an archetypal family. The personal family takes on mythic qualities in the poem. As the basic component of the tribe, the family represents the essential tribal concerns. The problems of leaving the parental "camp" or home, of finding a mate, and of establishing one's own home are universal.

From this family, the speaker looks to "the other shore," which is the feminine, the union with his own wife, and in essence the beginning of his own family. Through that union he will find his connection to the family of man. After turning toward one home, he turns toward another. He looks from an incomplete and flawed masculine consciousness to the feminine, to where he may find the grief he has not known, and thereby find union and joy. The speaker is like the shaman who "acquires mastery over the [techniques of ecstasy]" when "he achieves a stable relationship with one or more spirits--a relationship frequently represented as sexual union, marriage, or direct kinship" (Hutchinson xv). That new, stabilized relationship continues to aid the shaman in his healing work (Hutchinson xv).

In the second poem of the book, "The Indigo Bunting" (6-7), Bly depicts the shamanic persona using details from Bly's own domestic life. Here he begins to portray the lover's relationship to the beloved--to the ayami. Persona and poet are inextricably mixed. The sense of presence which

the personal details give to the book works as another form of rhetorical identification. Through these details, Bly works to involve the audience and works to involve the poem in the life of the tribe.

As he did in "Fifty Males," Bly uses details from the history of the tribe, continuing to develop the connections between the loving relationship and the ongoing life of the tribe. The image of ancient history in stanza five is particularly important: "There were women in Egypt who / supported with their firmness the stars" In this image, Bly first introduces the idea of "firmness" which is in his wife and in all women, a quality which is in nature as well: "not swerving / clear as the indigo / bunting in her flight" For Bly, this firmness is the inviolability of nature which resides in the woman, seemingly more than in the man, and no less resides in the tiny bird.

Through his love for the woman, the speaker realizes the strength that resides even in the smallest creatures. In images of ants, wrens, turtles, and other small creatures, Bly depicts this realization throughout the book. While here the bunting's strength is the woman's alone, later the strength of small creatures comes to him as part of humility. While the speaker also compares himself to a bear, a horse, and a Viking ship, he often compares himself to the minute. This emphasis on firmness and on small creatures helps to reveal, of course, the interconnection between man and

nature, important to the shaman and the shamanic speaker. In this book, such emphasis especially reveals the shamanic speaker's recognition and understanding of his own smallness within the scheme of nature. From this sort of understanding humility arrives and the sensitivity necessary for the shaman to make his journeys and to attend to the needs of his tribe. He cannot go cocksure and foolish into realms where dangerous spirits dwell . Nor can he help his fellow tribesmen if he is not sensitive, not only to what ails them, but also to what cures they will accept.

That smallness--of himself and other bits of nature--is not insignificant, for in it may reside that great strength which moves through all nature. The bunting's firmness is not its alone, but indeed all nature's, all connected like the reeds are in "Fifty Men," "rooted in the black mud," rooted in "darkness," the mysterious force of nature which is in Bly and which he sees on the far shore and now sees in the woman, his wife. So this bunting's strength, which Bly sees in his wife is what attracts him to her:

I love a firmness in you
that disdains the trivial
and regains the difficult.
You become part then
of the firmness of night,
the granite holding up the walls. (7)

Here the shamanic speaker can find strength for his own explorations and journeys. Here is some solidity. His wife partakes in that complex mystery to which he must journey. By the poem's end, she is not only like the indigo bunting,

she is transformed into a bird herself, traveling "through the night, not swerving." She is transformed into the ayami or celestial wife who will help him on his journey.

As in SLEEPERS, the tutelary spirit is introduced in the second poem of the book, enabling the journey of both speaker and book. The beloved is both physical woman and spiritual guide. She brings him into contact with the "other" that is both natural (the "indigo bunting") and spiritual. She can help him achieve a healing balance and connection between "the two worlds"--a balance and connection which the shaman has (Eliade, "Cosmology" 33-34).

While the two worlds of the book's title are in part the worlds of masculine and feminine, seen in the image of two shores in "Fifty Men," they are also the sacred and profane worlds. For the male shaman, the female spirit is the one who can help him explore and understand the divine (Eliade SHAMANISM 75-81). Through the physical union and the relationship of love, the shamanic speaker can more fully understand himself. He can heal some of the childhood wounds he was afraid to heal in "Fifty Men"--when he just looked longingly to the far shore. The woman and his relationship with her enable him to see the wound in himself, his limits. She initiates him into a new order of perception. The honing of love teaches him the attributes of the divine.

Love reveals to him that he has "no claim" on this woman; he is but "one star." His realization of the solitary

integrity of the other begins here and is developed in poems such as "In Rainy September" (17-18). Just as he has "no claim" on her, he has no claim on anything of this world. At the same time that the shaman is pragmatic, concerned with healing in this world, he is mystical, concerned with spiritual truth: all possessions are illusory. In the profane world, one's claims are limited by change and mortality. Making claims and desiring leads to grief. Yet ironically, it is this grief which the shamanic speaker needs to become whole. This difficult paradox is one which Bly explores until he comes to a sort of joyful resolution in the book's closing poem, "In the Month of May."

In "Indigo Bunting," the speaker may recognize that he has "no claim," yet his worry--seen in the image "I go often to the door," and in the pathetic fallacy of the "crickets [who] / lift their cries"--believes that recognition. His feelings are not yet aligned with his thoughts. In "Indigo Bunting" he seems to think that thoughts and feelings should be aligned, but by the book's close, he almost stubbornly concludes that the feelings of attachment may be more useful, instructive, and ultimately attuned with divine truth, than this first poem's Buddhist-like proclamation of non-attachment--"I have no claim on you."

In addition to teaching the integrity of the other, the speaker's love for his wife hones him by teaching limitation. As he waits for her to come home in "Indigo Bunting," he

realizes that he does "not know what will happen." He is vulnerable, fallible, limited. This idea of limitation is reiterated in later poems where he compares himself to small animals and in his developing understanding of the spiritual necessity of earthly limits. Limits make one reach out to seek the other:

. . . I feel you
 in this lamp lit
 so late. As I reach for it
 I feel myself
 driving through the night. (7)

In reaching out for her, "driving through the night" with her, he journeys into the spiritual realm. Through her, he partakes in that "difficult" "firmness" which weaves the worlds together.

The lovely interplay of light and dark imagery helps to structure the poem and underscore the speaker's journey between "two worlds"--known and unknown, male and female, earthly and divine. The imagery depicts how these worlds "mingle" as Bly says in "The Hawk" (76). In the light the lover finds the dark, and vice versa. In his love he finds illumination and mystery. In his love and longing for her, he is not isolated, looking across to the other shore as he was in "Fifty Men;" rather, he is on his way there.

From the start of *LOVING A WOMAN*, the instinctual longing for and the identification with the beloved are portrayed so honestly that they hold a positive message. It is a message which non-attachment does not acknowledge. The lover's longing enables him to journey.

In "Out of the Rolling Ocean, the Crowd . . ." (8-9), the speaker journeys into nature, with increased sensitivity for the humble things of life and an acknowledgement of all life's interminglings:

It is not only the ant that walks on the carpenter's
board alone,
nor the March turtle on his boulder surrounded by
March water . . .
I know there are whitecaps that are born and
die alone,
and a rocky pasture, and a new one nearby, with a
path between.
There are branchy stalks, dropped to the ground
last summer,
and tires, half worn-down, lifted to the gas-station-
owner's rack.
All of them I saw today, and all of them were dear
to me,
and the rough-barked young cottonwood alone on the
windy shore. (8)

Among others included in this book, this poem first appeared in a small chapbook entitled OUT OF THE ROLLING OCEAN. Revised, these poems are dispersed throughout LOVING A WOMAN. Reminiscent of Whitman's "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking," this poem depicts the fecundity of nature. The ocean is a kind of womb from which all life originates, as science suggests.

In this poem, each creature or thing is portrayed as sad and alone. Bly often writes of this sadness in the nature of things, an idea he takes from Lucretius (NEWS 286). The ant is alone, the turtle, the waves, the half-worn tires, the fallen stalks, the cottonwood; and by implication, the lover is also alone. There is grief inherent in the nature of

things. It is noteworthy that the turtle is male, and the some of the other images appear masculine. For example, the cottonwood is "rough-barked." While this is an accurate description, it reflects the rough-hewn qualities of the young male lover. The lover-speaker of the poem sees how he is part of nature, and nature part of him. Each is isolated, yet part of something larger.

The sense of separateness, both real and imagined, which Bly first portrays in "Indigo Bunting," now is shown to infuse all things, not just human beings. Bly seems dangerously close to pathetic fallacy, but he acknowledges this in the last four lines of the poem where he offers an explanation:

Behind matter there is some kind of heat, around and
 behind things,
 so that what we experience is not the turtle nor
 the night
 only, nor the rising whirlwind, nor the certainty, nor
 the steady gaze,
 nor the meeting by the altar, nor the rising sun only.
(9)

This "kind of heat, around and / behind things" is the "Gott natur" discussed in Chapter Four, the numinous energy which infuses all things. Therefore, what man experiences cannot be his alone, for he is surrounded and supported by the same "heat" as the ant or the turtle. The persona speaks in the oblique language of the mystic which is the shaman's language when speaking of his journey. The experience of that spirit which moves behind matter can only be addressed in allusive terms, in negatives or images, never directly. It is the

mystery which binds together man, woman, and all nature. Therefore, in depicting this mystery, Bly employs not so much pathetic fallacy, but shamanic truth. For Bly metaphor and imagery are not simply poetic devices, but truths. Metaphor reveals connections between things of different orders. Associative or "leaping" imagery and deep imagery also unveil connections between things of different orders and between different times, places, and experiences. By revealing underlying unities, metaphor and such imagery depict the shamanic vision of all worlds as one.

The grief which pervades the poem is alleviated by the sense of this mysterious interconnection of things, despite their isolation. Thus the lover says, "All of them were dear to me." From his sensitive and humble statement of caring, the poem shifts to the explanation of stanza two. The poem also shifts to an increased pace through the use of repetition and the more shortly phrased parallelism ("nor . . . nor"). The increased pace and the mystical explanation create a mood of ecstasy that is almost joyful in its use of the negatives. In this poem's odd mix of melancholy and joy, Bly indicates how the journey in love, the process of balance, paradoxically brings ecstasy out of grief. Ecstasy comes from the speaker's attunement with nature and spirit.

"Out of the Rolling Ocean" portrays the two worlds as mysteriously joined as one: from the mundane world that we experience each day through our senses emanates the divine

world that we experience by some other sense. For Bly, this sense for the divine may be called love. Just as marriage mystically joins two into one, so may love in a larger way. Although it is not named love here, the speaker's feeling for "all of them" seems akin to the love which Coleridge's Ancient Mariner experiences for the sea snakes, a love which restores him to harmony with the universe and frees him of the albatross. This sort of realization, of love and kinship, is one which the shaman must have in order to be effective. He must know that all things come from that "ocean" of spirit, that fecund "heat."

In "The Whole Moisty Night," the poem which follows "Out of the Rolling Ocean," Bly again alludes to the fecund ocean where all things are unified and from which all arise. There again he associates fecundity and spirit with images of water. But in "Moisty Night," Bly begins to develop the specifically sexual themes of *LOVING A WOMAN*. The image is not of isolation but of a meeting out at sea. Through metaphor Bly depicts the sexual act as a way to join the fecund sea and to be in both worlds:

The Viking ship sails into the full harbor.
 The body meets its wife far out at sea.
 Its lamp remains lit the whole moisty night.
 Water pours down, faint flute notes in the sound
 of the water. (10)

Here the Viking ship refers obviously to Bly's own Norwegian ancestry and elicits associations with human history in the sexual act. Thus the metaphor for the genitalia and for the

sexual act serves to make the leap from the mundane and individual instance to the divine and communal source.

While, as Bly admits, the images are metaphors for sexual organs (LOVING A WOMAN audio), they also elaborate on the idea of a divine source, a place where man, woman, and all of nature derive energy and are united. Desire is the "heat" from that source and also the longing for that source. The sexual act is the connection or return to the source. Both desire and sex are ultimately spiritual expressions. The very physicality of sex, the fecund life force, reveals the numinous power which underlies nature and self. Depicted in these images and metaphors, sexual union is revealed as not merely a metaphor for divine union, but indeed a divine union, an actual expression of divinity. The metaphors of sexual union and organs communicate the paradox of the mysterious truth in plain sight, there for those who have the eyes to see it.

The lover discovers that the body may be better able to "see" than the mind. It is not divided from nature as the mind is. Unfortunately the west is not so attuned to listening to what the body has to say about what it sees or senses. Like THIS BODY IS MADE OF CAMPHOR AND GOPHERWOOD, LOVING A WOMAN implies the idea that the body has its own wisdom. But in LOVING A WOMAN, Bly depicts the body's consciousness awakened to sexual desire. It is an idea very much in line with Bly's thoughts about post-Cartesian western

culture. In being overly rational and lacking reverence for the non-rational intelligence of nature (NEWS 290-292), modern western man denies his own body as part of that intelligence. The shaman, however, recognizes the wisdom of the body. He must in order to heal. Like THIS BODY, LOVING A WOMAN seems very much a typically shamanic attempt to heal through recognition of the body. Such recognition is part of the process of finding and maintaining balance.

One of the most interesting ideas in "Moisty Night" is this idea that the body has its own consciousness. It is the body which goes to meet "its wife far out at sea." The body leads the speaker to the ocean, that place of mystery out of which forms arise. The body's sexual instinct leads the speaker on a journey into the mysterious realms of the "other," of "the wife." In LOVING A WOMAN, the body is the vehicle of love and of the shamanic journey.

Mysteriously, the body enables the shamanic speaker to see in the dark. "Lit" by instinct, the body sees "the whole moisty night." It sees into the nature of things in its joining with that watery mystery. Of course, the poem's joy and energy come not only from its mystical overtones, but also from its metaphorical portrait of the sexual act. When Bly reads it, the poem itself "lights up" as listeners assess what the images may mean (LOVING audio). In reading this short poem and others like it, Bly jokes and laughs about the risque nature of the metaphors (LOVING audio). The high

energy in these poems is like that of the shaman who, in balancing masculine and feminine and drawing on the power of the numinous, gains great physical energy (Sharon 50,152). The joyful union described in "Moisty Night" is the union of not only man and woman, but of body and spirit, man (ship) and nature (sea). Through such union there is ecstasy. At the poem's close this union is blessed with baptism: "Water pours down, faint flute notes in the sound of the water." Sexual consummation becomes spiritual baptism: the ecstasy initiates, furthers, and concludes the shamanic journey.

As Bly explores the joy and confirming power of sexual union, he examines the mystery. In the poem "Secrets" (11), Bly begins the examination. After the union of "Moisty Night," new questions arise about union. Bly depicts the difficulty in attunement with nature. While our bodies connect us to nature, our minds question and want to understand. Reminiscent of Robert Frost's "Birches" in its image of the "over-bending" birches, this poem likewise alludes to the word-less resonating mystery of nature:

I walk below the over-bending birches,
 birches that arch together in the air.
 It is an omen of an open door,
 a fear no longer found in the wind.
 Are there unions only the earth sees?
 The birches live where no one else comes,
 deep in the unworried woods . . .
 These sandgrains looked at by deer bellies. (11)

The birches arch together to form a doorway. The shamanic speaker journeys through, into a realm which he must assess in a new way. Again, it is a realm which the body's

instincts perceive more easily than the mind's reasoning. He walks in the "unworried woods" beyond the worries of the mind. Yet rationally, as well as physically, he must come to terms with this natural realm: "Are there unions only the earth sees?" In this poem the mind must ask, whereas in "Moisty Night" the body could act without questions. In fact, one of the unions which "only the earth sees" may be the sexual union of man and woman. Human sexual union perhaps is seen truly only by the earthly light of the body, by its natural instinctual perceptions.

The answer to the paradoxical mystery is in plain sight if the speaker can but see it: the "omen of an open door, / a fear no longer found in the wind." The door is open. The message is in plain sight, or at least there is a door through which the shamanic speaker may travel to find the message. But for the mind, the message is difficult to read. That very openness causes fear. The wind cannot blow down the door. The traditional Biblical association of the wind with the spirit may be implied here. If so, by association the mystery lies not in the spirit realm per se, but in how it relates to, undergirds, infuses, and resides in the earthly realm. The spirit lies "deep" within the natural realm, "the unworried woods."

Thus when the speaker asks, "Are there unions only the earth sees?" he is asking a shamanic question. The speaker takes on the attributes of the shaman in his mystic,

journeying aspect. The image of the "birches that arch together" depicts union, but to what does that union lead? The question is perhaps a play on the old philosophical one: "If a tree falls in a forest and there is no one there to hear it, does it make a sound?" Does man create the world through his mind or his senses, or both or neither? These are questions the mind worries with. In part, the difficulty of balance arises from the lover's questioning. Yet, the questions play a necessary part in the journey's forward movement. As part of earth, the body already knows union, but the mind must know it too.

In the leaping metaphor of the last line in "Secrets," the speaker comments on the unions of worlds and consciousnesses which go on hidden despite the "open door." In this leap, the birches are metaphorically the sandgrains hidden in deer bellies. The sandgrains are, however, contained within the life of the deer. Birches, deer, sandgrains are one. The image continues the theme of underlying unity. Despite being hidden, the sandgrains are "looked at": they are part of life. They are the instincts which reside in the "gut." Another way in which this riddle-like last line may be read is to see the sandgrains again as a metaphor for the birch trees. The deer, as earth's creatures, enclose the sandgrains. Sandgrains, deer, and birches represent unions that humans do not see. These are the secrets of the poem's title. This problem of human

understanding is depicted in one of Frost's poems, "The Secret Sits":

We dance 'round in a ring and suppose.
The Secret sits in the middle and knows.

In "Secrets," Bly's speaker believes man cannot ultimately know, except through non-verbal earthy (or bodily) instinct, which the deer and birch images portray. Thus it is our instinct--sexual and bodily--which connects us to nature, but which will not answer questions except in imagery, the traditional language of the poet and the shaman. In "Indigo Bunting," the speaker realizes his rational inability to know the beloved. In "Secrets," he realizes his rational inability to know nature.

From the "secrets" of nature, the speaker next examines the secrets between lovers. To attain a balanced union, lovers must be honest. While the speaker is honed and healed by the process, he also must hone himself in order to love and heal in turn. "Letter to Her" (12-13) and "Winter Poem" (16) show the speaker examining his lies and his hiding. The problem of courageously facing the truth is first depicted in "Fifty Males" where the son lacks the courage to heal his wounds. In these poems, the speaker has made progress, for he now faces his lies. His relation with the "ayami" enables this first recognition. It enables the examination, although it does not make the study any easier. The speaker feels shame and sadness at his falsehoods. Just as the shaman must heal himself before he can help others, lovers must be honest

about what needs to be healed before love can grow further.

In "Letter" the speaker reveals his lies and his sense of idealism, "peaked castles." It is the idealism which he sees as creating the need in humans to lie. Through lying, human beings may maintain a vision of perfection, but lying is like a "hurricane" which carries us off, farther and farther away from that perfection. The speaker now recognizes that lies give us a false image of ourselves; we are like the "opossum [who] sees the golden / lion upside / down" Seeing the lion acting as we do and vice versa, we cannot see ourselves as we are. The speaker now knows that such falsity does not bring joy, nor love, even though he thought that somehow it would: "I lied to you / often so you would love me."

The dangers of falsehood to our true nature and the necessity of the authentic life are ideas which Blake investigates throughout his work. For instance, in "The Proverbs of Hell" in *THE MARRIAGE OF HEAVEN AND HELL*, Blake writes, "No bird soars too high, if he soars with his own wings," and "The eagle never lost so much time as when he submitted to learn of the crow" (in Johnson 89-90). Both these proverbs speak to the authentic life and its enabling power. Bly's speaker discovers that to love fully, one must live an authentic life, an honest life. Yet he also acknowledges that love can exist even when lies and hidden wounds, hidden parts of each lover are not yet revealed.

Indeed he acknowledges the power of love to heal, reveal, and therefore to aid us in living the honest, authentic life. Love opens the door and allows light in. Love allows one to grow, and by that growth, love grows. Love has a healing power akin and natural to that of the shaman. What the lovers bring to each other, the shaman brings to his tribe.

In "Winter Poem" the speaker, in his love for his wife, further acknowledges his imperfections, his failures to be honest. But in this poem, he also acknowledges that on an instinctual level, "hardly speaking," there is some basic truth-telling--a paradoxically "wordless" truth-"telling." In acknowledging that the imperfect, "helpless way" is nonetheless true loving, the speaker displays his developing sensitivity to his beloved, to himself, and to all life. True love accepts imperfection--"not whole and not healed"--at the same time that it urges the speaker towards balance and perfection. Sensitivity enables acceptance, and at the same time, it allows one to recognize the truth. Lies cannot be faced courageously if one does not see them, if one falls "back / from a human to a shelled life."

The speaker displays his uncertain vulnerability: "the quivering wings of the winter ant." In "Winter Poem," the speaker now humbly identifies himself with small things--here the ant. In this poem he begins to recognize his own unity with nature, where in "Indigo Bunting" he saw his beloved's. Bly's speaker sympathetically explores what causes "us each

to live hidden" (16). Using the pronoun "us," the speaker comes to terms with his own and his tribe's negative tendencies. He must know and recognize these faults "so that he may see more clearly and so that he may heal" (Metzner 247).

Love provides a way out of the "shelled life." Indeed, love is that "open door" of "Secrets" which is an omen, a signal that the speaker must address "fear[s] no longer found in the wind" (11)--fears now found in himself. He is made aware of these fears and wounds by the openness which love requires. Therefore, love between man and woman is like and is in truth that empowering union of contraries which the shaman orchestrates (Lewis, CONTEXT 151). In the relationship with his "ayami," his spiritual wife, the shamanic speaker is aided and protected in his journey. Through their union, he is empowered (Eliade, SHAMANISM 72-84). Bly believes that the soul includes these contraries and that the contraries are involved in male-female relationships (SELECTED audio). Thus perhaps what love questions and reveals are these contraries within oneself. Again, the task of lover and of shaman are kindred tasks.

The mystical tone which weaves through LOVING A WOMAN can be seen especially in "A Third Body" (19). The poem clearly depicts the lovers' union in the spiritual realm, where "Moisty Night" depicts it in the earthly realm:

A man and a woman sit near each other, and they do
not long
at this moment to be older, or younger, nor born
in any other nation, or time, or place.

They are content to be where they are, talking or
 not-talking.
 Their breaths together feed someone whom we do
 not know.
 The man sees the way his fingers move;
 he sees her hands close around a book she hands
 to him.
 They obey a third body that they share in common.
 They have made a promise to love that body.
 Age may come, parting may come, death will come.
 A man and a woman sit near each other;
 as they breathe they feed someone we do not know,
 someone we know of, whom we have never seen. (19-20)

In its depiction of spiritual joining, the poem displays similarities to John Donne's "Ecstasy." Like Donne, Bly shows the lovers quiet and content in a time of Platonic mingling. While elsewhere, such as in "Winter Poem," Bly emphasizes the instinctual world where love exists and communicates "in slow, dim-witted ways" (16), here he depicts a delicate, airy being, full of mystery--"someone we do not know." Desire to claim the other is absent. Each is content. However, the poem is not denying the more earthly delights here. This poem simply illuminates, with reverence, what it is to build a long-term, loving relationship.

The metaphor of feeding and obeying the "third body," which is the relationship, is not only a metaphor, but a truth. Even in this overtly non-sexual poem, where the man and woman only sit near each other, their physical desire is evident in the idea of "feeding." The spiritual aspect of love is intricately linked to the physical by the image of this third body. The metaphor reveals that the spiritual is expressed in physical being. Spirit and body are two worlds,

as the book's title suggests, yet they are mystically one through loving. Man and woman are two worlds as well, yet also made one by their loving. They "obey a third body they share in common."

In this poem near the end of Part I, the speaker attains a certain balance. But the speaker still questions and desires--bringing more difficulties and grief--so that his journey continues.

Part II

In the poems of Part II of *LOVING A WOMAN*, the speaker continues to evolve as he journeys in love. This middle section is the longest, consisting of twenty-four poems, and develops the book's themes in all their complexity. The shamanic lover learns how to love more deeply from the process of balance. Guided and taught by his "ayami," he more fully realizes the attributes of the divine, e.g., honesty and openness. Through the physicality of sex, he is brought more fully into contact with the numinous power underlying all physical nature. A selection of poems representative of the lover's progress reveals the unity and wholeness of the book.

In the first poem of this section, "The Roots" (25), the speaker grieves and faces his grief courageously. The poem clearly depicts an evolved, more courageous and honest man.

In "Fifty Males," he had not grieved, had not looked at his wounds, his fears, or his lies. In "Out of the Rolling Ocean," he recognizes sadness in nature and begins to connect it with himself. In "Letter to Her" and "The Winter Poem," he feels shame and lacks joy, but he is "shelled" and cannot grieve. "In Rainy September" the lovers weep together, balanced, "without shame and without honor," but "not planted," not grounded in nature. In "Roots," the speaker is "planted" firmly in the earth, "rooted" as the title suggests:

Finally in the bear's cabin I come to earth.
 There are limits. Among all the limits
 we 'know' so few things. How is it that I know
 only one river--its turns--and one woman?
 The love of woman is the knowing of grief.
 There are no limits to grief. The loving man
 simmers his porcupine stew. Among the tim-
 ber growing on earth grief finds roots. (25)

"Roots" depicts a shamanic return from a journey. Upon the return from spiritual realms, the shaman is struck by earthly limits, the scandal of particularity, to know "only one river . . . and one woman."

In the attempt to join completely with another, the speaker is taught the difficulty of joining. His evolved sensitivity and humility enable him to see this paradox more clearly. The closer one gets to oneness, the more one recognizes separation. Coming down to earth "in the bear's cabin," painfully, but clearly, the lover sees the limits of earthly perception and knowledge. The bear's cabin is a metaphor of the physical body--like the image of Delmore

Schwartz's "The Heavy Bear Who Goes With Me." Bly's speaker recognizes the limits of physical love and the fallibility of human knowledge: "we 'know" so few things." Yet paradoxically, the grief which arises from such limits is itself limitless. This paradox seems a joke of a trickster shaman, and like his jokes it conveys a mystical truth.

This limitless grief is part of the honing power of love, leading toward some divine truth. Love in this poem allows openness, necessitates it, yet as a result causes grief. In a line which poet-critic Fred Chappell calls cliché, the lover says, "The love of woman is the knowing of grief." Even though the superficial meaning of the line may be laughable and clichéd, the deeper meaning is not that woman are troublesome, but that when one loves, one realizes one's own limits and mortality. The poem alone and within the book's context reveals this deeper meaning. Yet Bly no doubt intends both humorous cliché and serious statement, for his tone when reading the poem aloud suggests both moods (LOVING audio). The humor is an important part of the poem. The trickster shaman always jokes and uses ironies and paradoxes, for these disclose the truth.

To combat this grief, the "loving man / simmers his porcupine stew." The lover performs this domestic act; what else can he do, Bly implies, since he has only limited knowledge. The act is a playful metaphor--the frustrated lover is angry, so he "stews" and "simmers." He's got the

quills of a porcupine. Thus, with its limits and grief, the poem conveys a playful tone, hinting at the joy to come. The humor helps to emphasize the speaker's new humility and courage. Through love he can laugh at himself, even in his frustration.

As he did in "The Grief of Men" in BLACK COAT, Bly uses the porcupine image to portray what he sees as masculine attributes. The image reveals the self-protective, sometimes "macho" facade which men use to approach the world--the quills of the porcupine. Yet here the man is loving and works to change this facade, the ant-like carapace, the quills. He must cook it in order to change it just as the shamanic speaker did who took a "night journey in the cooking pot" (SLEEPERS 59). The lover must "cook" to transform himself as the shaman does (Eliade SHAMANISM 41, 66, 154). The process of balance in love engenders transformation.

For Bly, grief is an emotion of downward movement (SELECTED audio); it moves downward to "find roots." Thus the shaman-like lover's return from the journey, there "in the bear's cabin" of body and natural instinct, is caused by the downward force of grief. Only through the very human love of one woman and the ensuing grief does one find some stability or "grounding." Earthly love can provide the "roots" or solace for the limitless grief one discovers in the limits love elucidates. This basic nourishment is necessary for any human who would journey in divine realms.

In fact, as the title implies, without roots little growth can be achieved. Again love teaches one how one may begin to attain the divine: the real journey begins below ground.

Limits are necessary in learning the attributes of the divine. At first, the lover tries to deny his limitations and his wound. He tries to achieve perfection by lying. The lover must "come down to [the] earth" of "the bear's cabin" and recognize its (and his own) limits. The poem plays with the time-honored parental admonishment to "come down to earth," get one's head out of the clouds, see reality. It is in the long-term relation of love that one can really come down to earth, "finally." Yet these limits, ultimately, are only apparent--through love one also finds the eternal. This, like the limitlessness of grief, is the mystical paradox of love.

In the earthiness of sexual union the lover finds further paradox. Later in the book, in "Words Barely Heard" (53) and "The Horse of Desire" (65), Bly associates the bear image directly with the persona's sexuality. In "The Hummingbird Valley" (39), he associates the house image with his wife's sexuality. Thus "the bear's cabin" may also be a metaphor for sexual union or, as suggested earlier, for the natural instincts of sexuality. While the love of a woman brings grief, it also brings the lover "to earth," to some kind of earthy transcendence of self--the forge of life's and love's tests. Bly's thought of earth here is not unlike that

of Keats writing to his brother and sister of this earth as a "vale of Soul-making" (in Perkins 1225). Earthly love is frustrating and difficult, but through the trials the "ayami" teaches discipline and learning. The shamanic lover must learn to control himself to journey and to return (Eliade, SHAMANISM 71-74).

After forthrightly facing limits, the lover journeys downward through grief to find nourishment, "roots." This first poem of Part II conveys the vigorous energy of the initiated shaman with his "direct experiential link to the earth" (Grim 205-06). From this "grounding," the shamanic lover is better able to balance and to join with his beloved. Thus the second poem of Part II, "What Frightened Us," depicts a deeper joining than has been possible before. As "Roots" reveals the lover's progress in grieving since Part I's "Fifty Males," "What Frightened Us" reveals his progress in relationship. Through the lovers' union, Bly depicts healing and balance by showing the new depth of their joining:

Drops of rain fall into black fields.
Leaves fallen on the highway remain
Where they fall, and resist the wind.
A power neither of us knows has spoken to us.

All night rain came in. We had descended
yesterday to some inner, or innermost cave,
and this--as we woke today with faces wet
from overnight rain--frightens us a little.

Smoke of rain lifts from gravel roads.
Rain water gathers below the barns.
Other waters slowly join in woods.
Silent in the moonlight, no beginning or end. (26)

In the images of water and earth, Bly shows that through the physical (earth and body) the lovers reach the realm of soul (water) (SELECTED audio). The lover no longer must go far out to sea to meet his wife as he did in "The Whole Moisty Night" (10) in Part I. Now "rooted," he goes together with her on a journey. As the place to where the couple descends in their journey, the cave is typically shamanic. The cave is often where a shaman is initiated (Eliade, SHAMANISM 46). In that mystic cave, the couple join bodies to spirit and are initiated together. In the earth, a balancing fulcrum is found.

In the earth, the shamanic lovers discover that "power neither of [them] knows." In that "innermost cave" of balanced and earthy love, they find the spiritual force underlying all, and it is frightening. The shaman on his journey encounters the power of the numinous realm--he must face that power and use it to heal (Grim 206-07). With his ayami-beloved, the shamanic lover "[identifies] with primordial earth processes" (Grim 207), with the power of the "innermost cave," and finds healing: "Silent in the moonlight, no beginning or end."

From a vigorous sexual balance and joining, the lovers find a deeper spiritual balance. They enter the shamanic realm outside of ordinary time (Eliade, SHAMANISM 103). In "A Third Body" (19) the lovers fed "someone whom [they did] not know." Now that "someone" "has spoken" to them. They

make contact with the power of the numinous, "moonlight," realm that was there all along in their lovemaking. In sexual union the shamanic lover now clearly recognizes that he makes love in "two worlds" which are one. As the dualities of masculine and feminine (self), male and female (relationship) are balanced, the lover, like the shaman, journeys beyond dualities.

In "The Two Rivers" (28) the shamanic lover examines those inner dualities which he must balance as he journeys in love. Bly depicts the duality, the two worlds, in the imagery of the two rivers. In a reading of this poem, he explains that it refers to the choice which a religious man always faces, a choice which was examined continually by the fourth century Indian poet Bhatra Hari. Bly delights in this poet's work, for Bhatra Hari himself never did make the choice. While Bhatra Hari faced it over and over, he never made a decision, preferring to live in the state of indecision--to live in two worlds at the same time. Bly revels in this betwixt and between status of that poet and dedicates "The Two Rivers" to him (LOVING audio).

What is the choice a religious man must contemplate? It is the choice between the full earthy life of sexuality and family and the full spiritual life of celibacy and prayers. The latter choice is that of "the river born in the good cold / that longs to give itself to the Gulf of light," and the former choice is that of "another river more like the

Missouri / that carries earth, and earth joys, and the earthly." In Bhatra Hari's work the choice is between living "on the slope of a hermit mountain" or "sitting at the slopes of an ardent woman" (LOVING audio). In discussing the poem, Bly makes it clear that he, like Hari, does not believe the choice should be made.

Thus, opening with the idea that both rivers are "inside us," the speaker in the poem indicates that the so-called choice should not be made. To choose one "river" over the other would be to deny half of ourselves. This is the shamanic approach to the traditional religious choice. The shaman is both ascetic mystic and pragmatic healer. To make a choice between "heaven" and "earth" would be to deny their underlying unity. The shaman could not heal without both worlds. As John A. Grim says of the shaman:

The shaman's cosmology does not have the same dualistic emphasis as that of the yogi. Rather, the shamanic world view arises from a particular tribal cosmology that stresses the interpenetration of transphenomenal power into the temporal world. The shaman does not aspire to an isolated state within the transphenomenal realm. (194)

Likewise, the shamanic lover continues to participate in "earth joys, and the earthly." To love, he must learn to balance the dualities of light and dark, male and female, cold and warm, not to weight one aspect to the detriment of the other. In fact, the shaman himself enjoys all aspects of the "earthly" life. He often marries and has children: some of his progeny may go on to become shamans themselves.

Thereby he is tied to the everyday life of the tribe at the same time that he is tied to the spiritual world. He has both earthly wife and "ayami" (Eliade, SHAMANISM 16-18, 73). For the shamanic lover, both rivers are important.

Bly's choice of river images is interesting. Bly remembers seeing the Missouri first when he was twelve (LOVING audio). The other river, unnamed, is most probably the Mississippi which has its headwaters in Bly's cold home state of Minnesota. The Indian word Mississippi means "father of waters," and by not naming it outright, Bly underscores that meaning--aligning the cold and light not only with his personal history and with the "father" masculine image of cold reasoning, but also with man's longing to join with a woman, the waters. The "river born in the good cold" longs to become a father, join the family of man, "the Gulf." Yet it is a gulf of light, implying also a longing to join with the spirit or light. Thus the image which might only be associated with the choice for the cold, hermit life, also becomes associated with the choice for the earthy life of desire. In the lovely interplay of imagery, Bly deepens the book's portrait of spirit and body intermingling.

Facing limits, finding "roots," entering the "cave," being initiated, balancing the "two rivers"--all part of being honed by love--the shamanic lover continues to evolve on his journey. "Night Frogs" (32-33) shows that the journey

is not always straight ahead but winds both back and forth, while gradually progressing. The poem focuses on the problems of honesty and facing one's wounds as one works to balance the "two rivers." While the speaker has made progress since "Fifty Males" and has been initiated in the cave with his beloved, he still must hone his truth-telling ability.

In his use of leaping imagery, Bly emphasizes the indirect movements of the lover's journey. In "Night Frogs" (32-33) leaps abound--the pun on frogs leaping may well be intended. Again, an underlying humor helps to deepen the poem's meaning, to reveal new perspectives in the way of the trickster shaman. The poem relies more on the tradition of Spanish surrealism than on the "almost invisible" Chinese poems in *LOVING A WOMAN*, which Fred Chappell suggests are merely "easy orientalism." Saying the Chinese-like poems are "easy" or imitative may be overly harsh, since many of Bly's poems--good and bad--naturally have a quietude akin to the Chinese approach. His poems of the Minnesota landscape are often quiet, full of "silence." But "Night Frogs" certainly does not suffer from any taint of oriental "dullness." In this poem, Bly uses the leap and his recent study of fairy tales (e.g. *THE PILLOW AND THE KEY*, 1987) to discuss the development of the balanced self which love engenders:

I wake and find myself in the woods, far from
the castle.
The train hurtles through lonely Louisiana at night.
The sleeper turns to the wall, delicate

aircraft dive toward earth.

A woman whispers to me, urges me to speak truths.
 "I am afraid that you won't be honest with me."
 Half or more of the moon rolls on in shadow.
 Owls talk at night, loons wheel cries through
 lower waters. (32)

The poem begins with the shaman-like persona awakening already on his journey. This time the journey is in the language of fairy tales: he is "in the woods, far from the castle." The poem then leaps to show the reader that the speaker is physically on a train, asleep, and it is his dream or spirit-self which is journeying. By the mechanism of the dream-journey, the leaps of imagery are made explicable: they are a natural part of the non-linear movement of dreams. They are "night frogs." The title image works as a reader's guide to the poem, as well as working as an image in the poem.

Stanza two provides the focus and impetus for the poem. Because the woman "urges [him] to speak truths," "is afraid [he] won't be honest," he finds himself in the woods, journeying. Like the shaman with his "ayami" from another world, the lover's relationship with this woman enables the journey of self-examination. How can the lover be honest with the beloved if he does not know himself? The lover seems to have regressed, become more akin to the hesitant, unformed "son" of "Fifty Males," more akin to the lying lover of "Letter to Her" (12-13) than akin to the forthright lover of Part II's "Roots."

The images in "Night Frogs" include hesitant attempts to communicate, in signs, sounds, hints, shadows, what that truth may be: "owls talk," "loons wheel cries," "hoof marks turn up." The speaker follows these signs on his leaping, winding journey. Nature, the "darker world which feeds many" ("Peony Blossoming" 31), signals his search. The auguries of nature lead him toward parts of himself still covered with lies or fear.

While there are signs along the way, the search remains clouded in mystery. It is unclear what or who is being sought and who is seeking: "A shape flat and four feet long slips under the door / and lies exhausted on the floor in the morning." The shape is a mysterious figure, a shadow, difficult for the everyday mind to comprehend. This is the soul which journeys. The shaman-like soul, like the shadow, may be the part of the speaker which remains unseen, "a blind spot in the car." The speaker is driven then to ask,

What is it in my father I keep not noticing?
 I cannot remember years of my childhood.
 Some parts of me I cannot find now. (33)

This pondering in uncertainty, with a sort of Keatsian negative capability, is an attribute which the closeness of love hones.

The willingness to examine is not the only attribute developed by love. Honesty involves more than looking; it involves recognizing:

I intended that; I threw some parts of me away
 at ten; others at twenty; a lot at twenty-eight.

I wanted to thin myself out
 Is there enough left of me now to be honest? (33)

In this deeper recognition of limits--a recognition of his own limitations--the lover understands that what he is and is not, and what he cannot find, all are his own choices. In recognizing that his own volition, not the beloved's demands, shape his life and the way he loves, the lover has an important revelation and makes a crucial step forward in developing the self-honesty necessary in love. Honesty in love is more than simple truth-telling. It is a difficult journey into and recognition of the self.

With beautiful imagery, the final stanza of the poem underscores the complexity of the issue of honesty. It is imagery which leaps or makes associations from this issue:

The lizard moves stiffly over November roads.
 How much I am drawn towards my parents!
 I walk back
 and forth, looking toward the old landing.
 Night frogs give out the croak of the planet turning. (33)

As seen in the previous stanza, the exploration takes the shamanic lover into his own past. The exploration also leaps into the realm of nature, reiterating another aspect of the love relationship which reveals the interconnectedness of man and nature. The small lizard, like the ant and other small creatures in the book, becomes a kindred spirit, an emblem for the shamanic journeyer, representing his own "stiffness," his own inability to join fluidly in love. The lizard image also reveals the speaker's inability or his difficulty in examining his past for clues to what he was and is, his

difficulty in moving forward, forming his own bonds, beyond his parents' "old landing." As described at the close of "Fifty Men," he must go toward the far shore, out from the landing of his parental family. The night frogs herald the necessity of such forward movement: as "the planet [is] turning, so must the speaker. He looks "toward the old landing," but he must go to the far shore. The poem allows the internal feelings of the speaker to reverberate in the landscape so that inner and outer worlds join, just as dream and waking worlds are joined in the dreamer, the shamanic sojourner (Sharon 140). And this joining of worlds is all engendered by the woman who "urges [him] to speak truths."

While it has been the woman who urges the man to be honest, in "Such Different Wants" (36-37) it is the man who asks the woman for honesty. Now that he is more honest with himself, the speaker is able to ask his beloved to express her "wants" or desires. In part, the reference is to her sexual desires and seems a more simple approach to honesty than depicted in "Night Frogs." Despite this simple approach, the lover has made progress. His request is indicative of his evolved strength: he can now ask her. His request also reveals a deep concern for the partner. The clearer he is within himself, the more able he is to address the desires of his partner. In addressing her desires, he escapes the grief which arises from selfish desire. And he demonstrates his faith in his partner, a faith which love

entails and requires.

This poem is in four stanzas of four short lines each, each stanza a haiku-like poem in itself. The constrictions of the stanza form provide a restraint, a discipline to the poem itself, and emphasize the necessity of discipline in love. Bly enhances content with form.

The first three stanzas are in parallel sentences, highlighting some of the various types of "wants" which exist. The last stanza of the poem, in which the speaker addresses his beloved directly, is in simple syntax which gives the speaker's words a child-like awkwardness. The form emphasizes the difficulty human beings have in naturally being themselves. The restraint of the form, which hints at the restraints and disciplines of love, also may be seen as counterbalancing the expansiveness which the subject of desire implies. The formal restrictions convey the idea of limits, which is another essential lesson of love. There are limits on desire in this earthly plane, limits due to our personal identity and background, our mortality, and our separateness: all limits suggested by "Roots," appropriately the first poem of this long central section of the book.

In the first stanza, the speaker examines the wants of "the board":

The board floats on the river.
 The board wants nothing
 but is pulled from beneath
 on into deeper waters. (36)

The board is not living; therefore, it has no desires. The

board is in contrast to the living creatures--elephant, heron, and man--of the other stanzas. Yet it too is part of the interconnecting worlds which the lover explores. Thus the board "is pulled . . . into deeper waters." The imagery is akin to that in "Out of the Rolling Ocean,"--the fecund waters, mysterious source and force which generate and motivate all things. But in this poem the speaker looks to the board and to this force in order to better understand his relationship with the beloved, rather than his relationship with nature.

The board's identity as a board means that it must float with the current and will not "want" anything, have any force of direction of its own, but despite this "identity" which is, in a sense, destiny, the board also is drawn into the unifying source of all things. The image also may be seen as a metaphor for the speaker--male, board-like, stiff, unbending, yet still "pulled from beneath," still taken "into deeper waters" despite himself.

While they are "different" in their wants, the animals of the next two stanzas are seen more easily as akin to the lovers in stanza four:

The elephant dwelling
on the mountain wants
a trumpet so its dying cry
can be heard by the stars.

The wakeful heron striding
through the reeds at dawn wants
the god of sun and moon
to see his long skinny neck. (36)

Bly uses a Chinese approach in his images of the male genitalia (LOVING audio): the elephant's trunk and the heron's neck. He thereby deepens the associations between nature and man through the idea of desire or "wants." However, the images are not simply sexual. The elephant image alludes to the limits which mortality places on us and how those limits give rise to a great, sad desire to assert something in the face of death. The sexual act is the primary assertion, but so is the artistic act: both seem depicted in the elephant's trumpet cry. Both are creative, god-like acts. The heron image alludes to the speaker's desire to be recognized for his own individuality--to be recognized by his beloved and by the divine. Despite his desire to please his beloved, he may be overbearing in his self-assertion. His self-concern may be a step backward in his journey. However, his need to be recognized may also be a forward movement--for it not full of doubt, but bold, "striding." Bly may intend that recognition to be, in itself, a sign that the divine realm exists. But, more likely, he intends that both partners, male and female, "sun and moon," must recognize each other as unique, beautiful, desirable. Each must recognize the other for balanced union to continue.

The fourth and final stanza conveys the importance of this mutual recognition. The lover makes demands of his beloved and gives his caring "recognition" of her as grounds

for his demands:

You must say what you want.
 I want to be the man
 and I am who will love you
 when your hair is white.

Unlike board, elephant, or heron, the woman (or the man) has words and thus a vast variety of ways to express who she (he) is and what she (he) wants. Herein lies another source of difficulty for humans trying to be honest with one another: the difficulty of words and communication. Yes, humans have necks, bodies, cries, a way of drifting, physical attributes to be recognized, but they also have the option of expressing how they want to be recognized. They can give voice to their own "deeper waters." Such words themselves become creative acts, forming self out of those unformed regions. By his request to "spirits" in divine regions, the shaman both discovers and creates the geography there. So too the lover who asks discovers and thereby creates something as he asks. The answer too will be a creative act. To express one's "wants" is an assertion and an act.

Desire itself encompasses both a present state of sensation and a movement toward the future. Bly reveals this future aspect in the last two lines where the lover makes a commitment for the future: "I want to be the man." The statement of desire is a commitment to an identity and a particular future, and as such, it is an act of sacrifice, for "to be the man" involves knowing and serving his beloved's desires. The sacrifice is part of the sacrament of

love and sexual union. When the lover is ready to sacrifice, he can journey farther into spirit and love. In this, the lover is like the shaman who sacrifices to tribe and spirit, embodied in the "ayami," to gain journeying power and to develop his "spiritual personality" (Grim 175-76). Through sacrifice, both shaman and lover are transformed:

In "Poem on Sleep," the lover, transformed, and his "ayami" take a shamanic journey in sleep. But although learned in "sleep," the lessons are no less true. Love continues to transform the shamanic lover: his evolution is an ongoing journey. Happening before the poem begins and alluded to in stanza one, the sexual act results in the lover journeying into the numinous realm in sleep. According to Hutchinson, sexual transport or union with a spiritual lover is often a crucial element in gaining illumination or precipitating the shaman's journey into the numinous (xvi-xvii):

"Then the bright being disguised as a seal dove
 into the deep billows."
 I go on loving you after we are asleep.
 I know the ledges where we sit all night looking
 over the briny sea,
 and the open places where we coast in sleekness
 through the sea. (51)

This is a typical Eskimo shaman journey where the shaman transforms himself and seeks the master animal spirit of the seal, so he can petition it for help or to send game (Eliade, SHAMANISM 90, 294-296; Campbell, POWER 71-73). The images are also metaphors for the physical attributes of each lover. Spiritual and physical journeys become the same journey in

this imagery, further illustrating the mystical light which infuses sex and love--"the bright being" which takes on a physical body. The quality of eternality is reinforced by the line, "I go on loving you after we are asleep." In the timeless and uncharted realms of sleep, where shamans journey, love reels out.

However, to follow his path, the shaman must separate himself from ordinary hunters (Campbell, MASKS 249). While this separation may be difficult for the shaman, Bly shows it to be otherwise for the shamanic lover:

And where is the hunter who is cunning? The
 practical part of me?
 Oh he is long since gone, dispersed among the
 bold grasses.
 The one he does not know of remains afloat and
 awake all night;
 he lies on luminous boulders, dives, his coat sleek, his
 eyes open. (51)

With seeming ease, the lover loses the heroic or hunter attributes. Only after they are "long since gone" does he realize the loss. Love distracts the shamanic lover from that loss and rewards him with a vision of "the bright being," "the one [the hunter] does not know of."

In this second stanza, Bly reveals that "the bright being disguised as a seal" is the speaker or lover of the poem. Love awakens the shamanic lover to the numinous realm--a realm which is "bright," "deep," "awake" in the dark, "sleek," and "luminous." But more, through love, he is transformed to become a being of that realm. As part of his becoming a shaman, the initiate often "finds a new identity

in an animal form, taking possession of the animal to acquire its natural strength and rhythms," its "numinous strength" (Grim 204-205). The lover's strength goes beyond the ordinary hunter's. The lover is further transformed, into a new awareness, "eyes open," he takes on more of the numinous energies which undergird the physical world. The shaman does not usually hunt with his tribe. Rather than hunt one or two animals like the hunter, the shaman perceives the location of entire herds of animals. In addition, through his animal powers he works to renew the herds when game is scarce. The lover's new powers of perception will help him to know ("see") his beloved and to renew his love in difficult times.

The poem after "Sleep," "The Artist at Fifty" addresses the issue of the lover as an individual--separate from the beloved. The process of balance unfolds as the lover not only joins with the numinous, but recognizes his separate identity within it, indeed within both worlds. In Part I, his recognition of the inviolate separateness of things brought more grief than joy. In Part II, it still brings grief, but there is some joy. The images of transformation increase, as the lover evolves. In "Alone a Few Hours" (46-47), the speaker finds "the simple / joy of the field mouse." The speaker's identity is transformed. In "The Artist at Fifty" (52), the speaker shows how the transformation manifests itself in his work, for work is a crucial part of identity.

In "The Artist at Fifty" the persona reviews his life's work. As any shaman must examine himself in order to continue journeying and healing, so any artist must examine himself in order to continue to create. The lover, too, must examine himself in order to continue loving. The poem begins with images not of the interior of the self, but of the outer world of nature. The shamanic journey to interior realms or other worlds is often sparked by an encounter with the exterior realm. Images of crows, smaller birds, and mice elicit a response in the artist, elicit the crucial self-examination. Therefore the images make a leap of association from the external world of stanza one to the internal world of stanza two:

The crow nests high in the fir.
 Birds leap through the snowy branches
 uttering small cries. Clumps fall.
 Mice run dragging their tails in the new-fallen snow.

Year after year the artist works,
 early and late, studying the old.
 What does he gain? Finally he dreams
 one night of deer antlers abandoned in the snow. (52)

"What does he gain?" Perhaps the simple "beingness" of these small creatures, their "firmness," their ease and strength in naturally being what they are--the idea which Bly has developed in the book--are what elicit the artist's questioning, providing the platform for the leap in the poem. The artist-lover seeks to know what his natural identity is. He questions like the shaman struggles: both seek to have some initiatory vision.

The persona's struggle most certainly parallels Bly's: Bly was fifty when the poem was written. Yet Bly has had "the vision" in his experience of the "inward road" in his early years in New York City. What sort of dream vision, then, does this poem describe? The poem's title and the vision itself provide answers. The deer antlers shed in the snow are an image of change, of the shedding of one identity for another. The identity, the role of the shamanic poet taken on in his twenties must needs be changed or evolved when the poet reaches fifty. This poem and this book continue to mark a turning point for Bly, a change in perspective. It is a change to a more personalized and human poetry, noted by both Nelson (193) and Sugg (122) as having begun in BLACK COAT. In LOVING A WOMAN, the poet reveals the personal details of his love. He depicts a lover, like himself, humbled by a love relationship. Humbled, the persona, like Bly, questions not only his identity as a lover, but also as an artist. Thus through the persona, we see Bly questioning his motives and achievements as a poet. Poet and persona seek a new transforming vision of artistic identity. Bly depicts a deepening awareness of the "small" concerns--natural and human--and how they emanate with spiritual and creative power, and how they are of crucial importance to creative activity of art and of love. While in "Poem on Sleep" he is transformed as part of his relationship with the beloved, here the transformation ("antlers shed")

occurs as part of his relationship with his work. The lover's relationship may engender further transformations in all areas of his life, just as the shaman's relationship with his "ayami" engenders continual evolution.

Just as the artist's labor and questioning enable the artist to contact the spiritual realm, achieving a vision of transformation, so the poem which follows portrays sexual desire as connecting the lover to that realm. "Words Barely Heard" (53) is another of Bly's short, imagistic love poems, but is not Chinese-like in its approach. It has the quality of a German fairy tale to it, full of the romantic "shimmer" of the divine:

The bear in his heavy fur rises from the bed.
The extravagant one he has left behind murmurs
or is murmured . . . Words barely heard.
Her face shines; and he turns back toward her.

Here the lover is not transformed into a prince after being a bear; rather, he is the bear. Now the lover is a bear in the bear's cabin. He is secure in his transformed identity. Whereas in "Roots" he was not necessarily the bear, here he partakes in that earthy reality with joy.

Thus Bly's images enhance the idea of two worlds meeting through the act of love--the earthy bear and the shining beloved. The luminous image of the woman's face is akin to that of the seal in "Poem on Sleep" (51). Bly interweaves the imagery from poem to poem, so that his readers see that both man and woman shimmer with the divine. Desire brings both in touch with that realm within themselves and within

the other. Love performs an act of mediation between the two worlds of self, and more importantly between the two worlds of body and spirit. This is like the mediation which the shaman must perform (Hutchinson xix).

The "words barely heard" are the voice of instinct, of desire. Instinct acts as an artist, a poet forming a language, but this is a silent, non-verbal language which speaks, paradoxically, as forcefully as any spoken, verbal one. The force of desire brings the lovers to the divine. The mature, transformed lovers find the divine in each other, and they experience the happy joy of love without "secrets" (11) or fear ("What Frightened Us" 25). The man is a lusty, joyous "bear," and the woman joyfully revels in her power, "her face shines."

In "The Conditions," the lover continues to joyfully revel in love. Grief is at least temporarily gone. Balance is achieved and ecstasy entered. The poem is representative of the lover's progress in Part II. In Part I, only the beloved was linked with the eternal; for example, the "women of Egypt" in "Indigo Bunting." But in Part II, the lover himself increasingly is in contact with the eternal realms and the eternal life of the tribe:

What we have loved is with us ever,
 ever, ever!
 So you are with me far into the past,
 the oats of Egypt . . .
 I was a black hen!
 You were the grain of wheat
 I insisted on
 before I agreed to be born. (54)

The poem's images of history, of reincarnation, and of the different forms one's life may take all imply the eternal aspect of love which the exposition exclaims. As do poems such as "Hummingbird Valley" (39) in its allusions to Babylon, this poem also shows how love ties the lovers to all times and thus to an eternal realm. Love is a shamanic doorway, like the shaman's World Tree, which opens from time into the timeless, linking lovers to the past and/or the future. In his ecstasy the lover sees his life opening into an immortal world where "what we have loved is with us ever, / ever, ever!"

This poem also conveys the joy of love in the somewhat humorous image of the black hen, pecking at grains of wheat. Yet in the tiny hen is the essence of "firmness," the motivating strength which love elicits. Both joy and strength are attributes of the divine which are developed through love. They are essential to balance.

The hen's greed for "the oats of Egypt" and "the grain of wheat" (the beloved) is humorous, yet truthful. This greed is what desire is all about. It is a yearning, a demand for the particular. As a metaphor for the beloved, the image of the wheat works on a number of levels. First, it is part of the image of reincarnation, along with the lover as the Egyptian hen. Reincarnation deepens the meaning of the lover's exclamation: "ever" becomes applicable to more than one mortal life. It is the nature of love to transport

lovers to the immortal. Second, this image of the wheat depicts the beloved as "food" for the lover. On an emotional and spiritual level, the beloved is indeed nurturing or feeding the lover (and vice versa).

Third, in depicting the hen's greed for this "food," the image elucidates the essential meaning of instinctual desire: it is the will to survive. Sexual desire is simply the will or the "firmness," even in the small hen, for the species to survive. Bly may or may not believe in reincarnation, but the essence of desire is that any human may "survive" his own death by having a child. In "The Conditions," the lover rejoices over the beauty of the regenerating instinct, and he rejoices over the particular "conditions" or choices it "makes" in the selection of partners.

In the final poem of Part II, the shamanic lover sums up the journey thus far and reveals that, although he is more joyful than he was, grief is still a part of love. Indeed, it is a necessary part of the balancing process. The poem is ultimately an affirmation of that process. "A Man and a Woman and a Blackbird" takes its title from stanza four of the Wallace Stevens poem "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird":

A man and a woman
are one.
A man and a woman and a blackbird
are one.

Stevens' stanza emphasizes the beauty of balance and unity. Man, woman, bird are each separate, balanced, yet joined.

The ideas are a perfect statement of the concerns Bly develops in *LOVING A WOMAN*.

Bly's poem illustrates that the shamanic lover-journeyer has found an equilibrium between himself and beloved, between himself and nature. In fact, poem depicts the harmony among all three. The union and balance of the love relationship may engender union and harmony with the natural world. First the "man and the woman are one," unified and balanced, then they are one with the blackbird. The addition of the bird is highlighted by the repetition of the initial clause. After the lovers "are one," transformed, they then are unified with the bird. The image seems archetypal. The man and the woman represent all lovers. The bird represents all nature. The lover finds unity through his relationship. Through his relationship with his "ayami," the shaman is assisted in his journeying in and his understanding of other realms, including the natural realm as it is controlled by the spiritual realm:

When the two rivers
 join in the cloudy chamber,
 so many alien nights
 in our twenties, alone
 on interior mountains,
 forgotten. Blackbirds
 walk around our feet
 as if they shared
 in what we know.
 We know and we don't know
 what the heron feels (55-56)

The poem begins with a natural image of joining, a metaphor for the sexual act and for the relationship: "When the two

rivers / join in the cloudy chamber." In using the metaphor, Bly depicts the unity the lovers have not only with each other, but with nature. The joining allows the lovers to forget their separateness, isolation, even alienation. Then, by such allowance, the lovers are free to experience themselves as part of a larger whole: "Blackbirds / walk around our feet / as if they shared / in what we know." Here the blackbirds are like the spirit allies of the shaman, his "familiar." The allies help the shaman to participate in non-human and non-ordinary realities. They also help the shaman to heal both himself and others. In the poem, the blackbirds help to heal the lovers, enabling the lovers to participate in something mysterious and magical. The lovers have journeyed to the place of mature love where love is a sacrament of communion, dispelling alienation.

The poem turns on the words "as if." It "seems" as though the blackbirds know what the lovers are feeling; the lovers can not be sure. While the shaman must have some rational and pragmatic understanding of healing knowledge for him to apply that knowledge, in some ways the lovers do not need to be sure, nor are they. Their knowledge is of feelings, and feelings are difficult to understand rationally. Developing the ideas of Part I's "Secrets," the poem further examines the difficulty of rationally knowing either the natural or the spiritual world. In this later poem, the speaker finds resolution. Despite the separateness

or individuality of each entity, in fact, because of that individuality, balance and thus unity is found:

And yet
 for one or two
 moments,
 in our shared grief
 and exile
 we hang our harps
 on the willows,
 and the willows
 join us,
 and the man
 and the woman
 and the blackbird are one. (56-57)

The speaker asserts truth in the face of chance and uncertainty. Such assertion is like the shaman's performance for the tribe. He brings the tribe contact with other realms by using metaphors and similes "as if" their images were truth, and in fact, they are truth.

In Bly's view, humans may enter, albeit not easily, into the consciousness of animals, trees, and birds (NEWS 281 et al). In this poem the difficulty is shown, yet also the peace of resolution. Union takes place at the conclusion. The honing of love and the work of balance have made the lover humble and not so egotistical as to claim unbounded knowledge. In the realization of the difficulty in knowing another of one's own species comes the realization of the difficulty in knowing a creature of another species.

What love does provide is an instinctual, feeling-knowledge of nature. Love connects the lovers to "Gott natur" . . . divine instinctuality . . . non-human nature . . . [which] senses the inter-dependence of all

things alive" (NEWS 281). "Gott natur" is the underlying spiritual force which moves in and through all life. It is this force or power which the shaman taps into. Through it, he sees how all worlds are one. Through it, he participates in all worlds as one. In this poem, when "a man and a woman / sit near each other," through that divine force, which in the mundane world is desire, the man realizes not only his love for the woman, but also for "ice," for dead Sumerians, for "the vultures celebrating," for "the soldiers / and the poor." Before, he loved nothing. Now through through this union, the man contacts "Gott natur" and communes with all things, albeit only for a brief "one or two / moments, / in our shared grief / and exile."

Bly suggests in NEWS that the "tone of nature . . . [is] grief" (286). This poem seems to say that through the grief experienced in love, lovers may participate in nature's grief--those "tears in the nature of things." But more importantly, Bly implies that the "sharing" of grief is the crucial factor in enabling communion with nature's grief and with the grief in humanity at large. Grief alone may leave us to look at the "far shore" of "Fifty Males" and remain at a distance, isolated. Love carries us to that shore so that we may join in grief. Love does enable union, if only in common feelings of exile and grief, so the poem can say at its close that "The man / and the woman / and the blackbird are one."

This last poem of Part II acts as a touchstone or end-frame for the ideas introduced in the first poem of the book, "Fifty Men," and in the first poem of this part, "Roots." Man, woman, nature, in grief and in love are united. This is the knowledge of inter-connectedness which the shaman possesses.

Part III

The third and final part of LOVING A WOMAN consists of twelve poems, balancing with the first part, which also contained twelve poems. Once again, investigating certain representative poems illustrates the progress of the lover on his shamanic journey and the development of the themes of love and the balancing process. "The Minnow Turning," "Conversation," "Shame," "The Horse of Desire," "Listening to the Köln Concert," "The Good Silence," "The Hawk," and "The Month of May" all are representative of the developing themes and will show how the shaman-like lover has evolved and how his journey reaches a culmination at the book's close. He becomes more balanced and whole. Through the honing power of love, he is healed.

The first poem, "The Minnow Turning" (61) speaks to the idea of change portrayed in "The Artist at Fifty" (52). But in this poem, the transformation occurs, not through the solitary examination, but through the love relationship

itself. In the maturing and deepening of the relationship, the lover is more and more aware of "Gott natur" or the interconnectedness of all life, which is the shaman's vision:

Once I loved you only a few minutes a day.
 Now it is smoke rising, the mushroom left by
 the birch,
 and the horse's forefoot, the way the minnow
 stirs silver
 as he turns, carrying his world with him. (61)

Again using the four-line poem, Bly depicts the lover surrounded by love. The lover becomes the minnow, and love the surrounding water in this beautiful deep image. Once again Bly uses water for its associations with soul and with the feminine (SELECTED audio). Love brings the lover in contact with his soul, his spirit, as developed in Part II, e.g., in "What We Provide" (50). Love brings the man/lover in contact with his own feminine aspect (NEWS 288). It is the shamanic vehicle transporting him into other realms. Whereas in "Fifty Males" he looked across the water to the other shore, now he is surrounded by that feminine water, and has reached the other shore as well. The longing of the book's first poem is fulfilled in this poem.

As we have seen, in poems such as "A Third Body" (19), the union of love itself is a metaphor for union with spirit, and in a mystical sense it really is that spiritual union. For the shamanic poet, metaphor reveals a higher truth, the underlying unity of things. For the shamanic lover, love reveals that truth because love is that "realm" in which he flows as the minnow, with the minnow. He is part of the

minnow, and the minnow part of him. In NEWS, Bly suggests this "shared consciousness" (8).

The image of "smoke rising" also provides this sense of the spiritual life where consciousness is shared. It is a realm of mystery, "smoke signals," a shamanic realm--love, smoke "rising" takes the lovers on a journey to another realm, to another way of looking at things. Thus the change for the "artist at fifty" or for the older and wiser lover is a change in his perception of the world. The images resonate with other worlds which the lover is now able to perceive. Through the associations which the images contain, Bly adds depth to the poem. Through the leaps from image to image, the poem itself moves among worlds: the worlds of the lovers, the human; of the shamanic, the spirit; and of the minnow, nature.

The smoke rising hints at a shamanic ritual begun. Also, the other images in the poem are like the shaman's auguries--information from another order of being and perceiving: "the mushroom left by / the birch," the "horse's forefoot," "the way the minnow stirs silver." In the shaman's world where all is interwoven, nature leaves messages for the wise man to read. This shaman's way of seeing nature may be the source for the early Church's seeing the hand of God traced in the "book" of nature. The messages for the shamanic lover arrive through his loving, and his seal-like "open eyes" of love ("Sleep" 51) enable him to read

these messages. Again, the change is one of vision. The shamanic "inner light" brightens (Eliade, SHAMANISM 61-61), and the minnow stirring silver water becomes an emanation of the divine.

In addition, the poem shows that as the love becomes more constant, more than "only a few minutes a day," it widens the scope of the vision and increases the sense of unity that the lover experiences. The "hunter who is cunning" in "Sleep" (50) is gone, as are most of his worries. Now that he loves more constantly, the lover is energized constantly by the worlds to which his love connects him. In his increased commitment, energy, and attunement with nature and spirit, he is more shaman-like. He increasingly feels a sense of peace and order and identity with himself and the world, as the image of the minnow "carrying his world with him" conveys.

In "Conversation" (63) the speaker reflects on the more physical aspects of his mature love. By its very nature, because it is more than heat alone, love continues to fan and to renew the flames--the heat would die out if it were heat alone. In reading this poem, Bly takes great delight in telling his audience that the incident in the poem which sparks the reflection "really happened" (LOVING audio), as if to let them know that real truth can be poetic truth (metaphor):

I sat beneath maples, reading,
a book in my lap, alone all morning.

You walked past--whom I have loved
for ten years--walked by and were gone.

That was all. When I returned
to reading, not all of me returned.
My sex, or rosy man,
reached on its own and touched the book. (63)

The bawdy joy Bly depicts here is a further development of the personal approach he uses in BLACK COAT. He is employing the real incidents of his own life to develop the themes of LOVING A WOMAN, emphasizing the idea of honesty.

Through the lover-persona, Bly depicts a seeming puzzlement over simple things, a naïveté which Chappell criticizes as calculated. Yet such puzzlement may arise genuinely from a man raised in the twenties and thirties, in a conservative Norwegian Lutheran home, in the "murky tiden" land of Minnesota where the lighter side, the joy and naturalness of sex would be foreign. Of course, at more than fifty, at sixty-plus, Bly is no "naif." Despite the boldness of his Vietnam era persona, he maintains a sense of privacy in presenting sexual topics. For example, he always uses metaphors for the sexual act and the genitalia.

This somewhat protective sensibility in depicting private matters may be what Chappell asserts to be calculated naïveté. Bly's explication of this poem and his deference to the "young ones in the crowd" when reading it aloud (LOVING audio) seem to indicate not calculation but care. Yet the protectiveness and the metaphors may be calculated in the sense that any poetic choice may be calculated. In the book

and in this poem, Bly's choices are to provide his readers with a feeling for the youthful energy which love carries, for the naïveté the lover keeps rediscovering in himself as he continues to change and uncover or discover new terrain--in himself, in the beloved, and in nature. Through love, the world is perceived anew: in new terrain, the lover is also made new:

It must be some words have fur.
Or mute things exchange thought.
Or perhaps I am no longer
weary, grieving, and alone.

We know it's true: the bee's foot
knows the anther and its dwarves,
as the castle of women knows
of the rider lost outside in the trees. (63)

The poem does have a child-like, naive quality to it, but this is the quality which the primordial language of myths and fairy tales has. The puzzlings, the negative capability of the poem, the mysterious knowledge of the "castle of women" all work to express the inexpressible realm of "divine instinctuality" or "Gott natur" where desire carries the lovers. In this realm "some words have fur." The "rosy man" reads, not the book in the lover's lap, but the book of instinctual nature--the communication or message his beloved speaks without speaking.

The language of the body becomes a vehicle to explore the numinous which emanates from that body. The "firmness," the strength of desire is just as strong in the small bee as it is in man or woman. Through desire the lover connects to

the bee and all things. The lover travels in a mythic realm as the shaman does, and so the poem ends with a mythic image taken from the quest for the Holy Grail. Bly says that the image refers to the mysterious ability of the women to know that Galahad was coming before he arrived (LOVING audio). In the poem, the image reflects the "ayami's" ability to arouse the lover, through this same mysterious communication. In the poem, the ordinary event in Bly's yard is transported to the mythic realm by its association with the Grail legend. Yet the lover also connects the event to the small world of the bee; thereby he does not take his sexual desire too seriously. The images reflect attunement to nature and attunement to the "tribal" myth.

The lover's humorous self-effacement reveals his progress on the journey. Humor is a necessity of balance in relationship. While he still may grieve out of separateness and too much desire, the lover has fully developed his sense of humor. He is made stronger in his realization that he is small as the bee, for in that realization comes the "firmness" of small things. Thus humor is part of the divine attribute of humility.

In depicting the self-effacement of the matured lover, Bly's poem itself becomes a sacrament, an attempt to show what is beyond the ego and "the cunning hunter." It is a shaman-like approach. Like the energetic sacraments or performances of a shamanic poet (Campbell MASKS 253), the

poems of LOVING A WOMAN have the creative, energetic, and exploratory vision seen in "Conversation." "Conversation" depicts the naturalness, the beauty, and the innocent joys of sexuality. Bly believes that our culture has repressed this view of sexuality:

People in secular and Puritanical cultures tend to push sexual desire into the shape under our feet, and also fear of death; usually much ecstasy goes with them. (in Nelson 100)

Bly's more public or political shamanic purpose in writing love poems may be to help in healing his tribe of its sexual problems. Shaman-like, Bly may be trying to "bring back" healing ecstasy to his tribe. Thus the sacrament may be as much in the making of the poem as it is in the content.

In "Shame" (64) Bly is clearly referring to the complexes about sex which the Puritan ethic has given Americans. The poem itself portrays the sacrament of the union, even when the sexual act does not occur. In contrast, the poem which follows, "The Horse of Desire" (65-66) speaks of sex more directly; and the sacrament is in the "making" or rather in the process of thought delineated in the poem. "The Horse of Desire" elaborates on the mysteries of instinctual communication discussed in "Conversation." Thus the journey of the poems in Part III weaves back and forth in a wave-like movement.

"The Horse of Desire" begins with the image of a writer looking at lines he wrote twenty years before: "Yesterday I saw a face / that gave off light." This is the shimmer of

the seal in "Poem on Sleep" (51) or in the beloved whose "face shines" in "Words Barely Heard" (53). When reason tries to understand this luminescence or "Gott natur," puzzlement results:

I wrote that the first time
I saw you; now the lines
written that morning
are twenty years old.
What is it that
we see and don't see? (65)

In depicting this scene of his own writing process, Bly achieves a mirroring effect in the poem. In depicting his review of the lines, he makes a new poem. The persona in the poem makes a poem. The process of the poem being made is expressed in both form and content. The shamanic poet takes his readers on his writing journey. Thereby as he reflects on what he has done and is doing, what he has written and is writing, his readers may reflect too, mirroring his reflection, so to speak. Through this sort of rhetorical identification, Bly works continuously to involve his audience. They are involved with the process of the writing as well as with the images: "What is it that / we see and don't see?" The question is asked not only by the persona (who asks himself and his "ayami"), but by Bly (who asks himself and his tribe).

Just as Bly asked his tribe to judge themselves in SLEEPERS, to identify with and take responsibility for the actions of the American soldier or of the President, by using the first person plural pronoun, here too Bly uses it to ask

his tribe to journey with the lover, exploring what vision or knowledge the tribe has. While the question in the poem applies to love, sexuality, and identity, it is also applicable to any tribal perspective on the world: what is it indeed that we see, and what do we miss? The meaning of "don't see," however, is not simply "miss;" in context, the phrase implies other modes of perception--instinctual and spiritual--which we may not be able to acknowledge or be ready to.

In the twenty years between writing the first lines and reviewing them, the persona (embodying Bly) has matured in love. His love is of a more steady and gentle light. It softens his journey, as he says here: "The road covered with stones / turns to a soft river / moving among reeds." The ease of "seeing" by instinct provides the answer to the question of what we are able to see or not see. Trying to reason things out leads to certain difficulties on the journey. To solve problems and avoid dangers on his spiritual journey, the shaman must elicit the aid of his animal helping spirits. For the shamanic lover, such aid comes from his own animal instincts:

When a horse swings
 his head, how easily
 his shoulders follow.
 When the right thing happens,
 the whole body knows.
 The road covered with stones
 turns to a soft river
 moving among the reeds. (65)

Bly makes an associative leap from the question of "what is

it that we see" to an imagistic answer in stanza two. In the shimmer of the beloved's face, the lover may detect this instinctual level of being, "Gott natur", which touches on the divine and is divine. The "horse" of instinct knows how to do the right thing. The "right thing" is instinctual action. Instinct changes the road of rational questions and problems, "stones," into a "soft river." The lover sees that such transformation can occur, yet for him the "right thing" may not always happen, or at some points he may not be ready, honed, or humbled enough to do the right thing. So sometimes he may not. If he is not ready, he may only glance at what instinct can do, or he may love "only a few minutes a day" ("Minnow Turning" 61).

The third stanza of "Horse" indicates that it is love which is the "right thing" or animal instinct and also love which is spiritual:

I love you in those reeds,
and in the bass
quickenings there.
My love is in the demons
gobbling in the waters. (66)

The instinctual, physical aspect of love--"quickenings" and "gobbling"--mysteriously reveals the "shining" spirit which underlies all. This spirit draws the lover out of himself. Once out of himself, "the right thing happens," a quickening of flesh that is not only enlivening, but also inspiriting: "The road covered with stones / turns to a soft river." The images of underwater and demons suggest, too, that Bly is

working to release the beauty and joy of sexual energy suppressed in the American Puritan psyche. The demons of desire are not evil, but essential in their gobbling.

The instinct represented in the horse, the bass, and the demon images enables the lover to release, to realize or to see what may be suppressed, unacknowledged, or unseen. The seeing by instinct is paradoxically a blind seeing as Bly conveys in his metaphorical description of the persona's sexual organs in stanza four:

The bear between my legs
has one eye only,
which he offers
to God to see with.
The two beings below with no
eyes at all love you
with the slow persistent
intensity of the blind. (66)

The "the eye of God" is a common phallic metaphor which Bly thinks important. In its common use, he sees a message which language gives us about ourselves (LOVING audio). This is the mysterious message hidden in plain sight which "we see and don't see." This phallic metaphor shows that sexual desire and the sexual act have spiritual resonance. Through the "eye" of instinct, the lover may truly approach the divine; indeed, that "eye" is divine. Here too Bly reveals sex as not only metaphor for mystical journey and union, but as the true spiritual journey and union. Sex and love are one when sex is humbly approached as sacrament, as it is in the final stanza. The lines are both bawdy and reverent. In shamanic sacrament, sex and love are inextricably woven

together. This is Bly's shamanic message for the tribe: sex partakes in and reveals divinity, and love can teach divinity's attributes, such as humility, eternal desire, strength of purpose, "firmness," and honesty. As one incorporates these attributes into oneself, one is healed. If the members of the tribe no longer suppress their natural instincts, if they learn to love in a balanced way, the entire tribe will be healed. A new vision of sexuality will help the balance and help to reveal the divine in a non-Puritanical aspect.

The sense of rightness when instinct is at work is part of the theme of honesty in the book. Instinct will not lie; it is clear and truthful--"When the right thing happens / the whole body knows." The body senses truth more easily than the mind, Bly seems to say. Yet the mind can get at truth, if it honestly explores all facets of experience. This mental honesty underlies the exploratory approach Bly employs in poems such as "Horse." As in the first two parts of the book, honesty of mind and of instinct--in the form of the poems, the exposition and in the content, the images--help to shape the poems of Part III. The shaman must relentlessly seek truth, for truth heals; that is, in order to heal, the shaman must know the truth of how disease of spirit causes disease of body, how both spiritual and physical worlds are one. But first, of course, the shaman must find the truth of himself, to heal himself first, before he can heal his tribe.

The shamanic lover seeks the same self-healing truth.

In the earlier poem "Shame" (64), the lover experiences the honesty of pure instinct, that sense of rightness seen in "Horse." As suggested earlier, this poem is more spiritual in its approach to love; it shows how clearly instinct connects the lovers to the spiritual realm:

A man and a woman sit
among firs, looking eastward.
Sun is rising. Wind
from behind them lifts
them and carries them
over the fir needles.
They whirl, and the motion
carries them
down through the narrow
opening at the center.
Through it each must
pass, with toes curled out,
arms thrown back,
all shame gone. (64)

By connecting the lovers to the spiritual realm, sexual instinct proves its rightness, its honest truth-telling.

The images of this poem are shamanic. The shaman-like lover travels to that spiritual realm "enabled" by his relationship to his spiritual wife, his "ayami." He journeys "down through the narrow / opening at the center" which is the world axis, the opening to other realms. The result of his journey is that energizing, that ecstatic "quickenning" of the body and spirit recognized here in the image of "arms thrown back, / all shame gone." Bly shows how, even when lovers merely sit together, and are not in a sexual joining, their relationship provides an ecstasy which is like the shaman's ecstasy, his vehicle for spiritual journey. The

lovers are energized, and the burdensome "stones" of shame are thrown off.

Thus Bly depicts an image of shamanic joy and ecstasy, showing that sexual union is a spiritual act. A shamanic ethic of love, where body and spirit are truly one, is Bly's answer to the Puritan ethic which he feels has hobbled his tribe. His shamanic lover has thrown off the burdens he held at the start of the journey.

In the final poems, through the lover-persona, Bly depicts how the tribe too may heal wounds like those of the speaker at the journey's start in "Fifty Males" and "Winter Poem." As the poem "Shame" portrays, healing comes by losing shame--by being honest, true to oneself. The lover can be honest not only by following his instinct, but by following his thoughts--journeying, exploring perspectives.

Despite the difficulties which thinking and reason cause, the lover must examine mystery. This is the next step in the lover's journey, the next step in his evolution. He now is stronger, unashamed in his love, and better able to handle the difficulties love must entail if it is to continue growing and deepening. In "Listening to the Köln Concert" (67-68) the lover exclaims that "When men and women come together, / how much they have to abandon." This is the difficulty of the love, its task, its honing. Honest instinct brings lovers together, but then it requires the mental honesty to deepen love. The lover explores the

paradoxical difficulty and ease for this process. As he finds in "A Man and a Woman and a Blackbird," it is easy to see and it is difficult: "We know and we don't know / what the heron feels." We know and we don't know what we ourselves feel, what we are, what instinct and spirit are and how they intermingle.

In "Köln Concert" the mental honing process is "harder than wren's doing, they have / to abandon their longing for the perfect" (68). In "Indigo Bunting" the lover and the beloved were apart, involved in separate activities. She alone was identified with the "firmness" of life as she drove alone through the night. The lover was alone at home. In this poem, the lovers are united, both involved in the domesticity of love, both involved in this honing process. The poem leaps to an image of domesticity where humans become the small wrens:

The inner nest not made by instinct
will never be quite round,
and each has to enter the nest
made by the other imperfect bird. (68)

In this beautiful image, where human problems are made humble in the small wren imagery, the lovers are birds with "inner nests" not made as other birds make nests. In this image, Bly suggest that humans do not or can not build nests by instinct, but by reason. Herein lies the human paradox: our connection to "Gott natur" is not the same as other creatures'. While we may have instincts, in our power of making, in our reasoning, in some essential aspect of being

human ("the inner nest") we are separated and distinguished from God and nature. Our powers of reason, our minds enable us to create. This ability makes us unlike nature's creatures who cannot improvise their own "nests." However, our ability, while god-like, is not God's. Our creations are not perfect as His are. While the wren does not invent its own nest, it uses the template of instinct--which is divine and perfect.

Bly points again to the problem alluded to in "The Artist at Fifty." The artist works "year after year," studying in order to create, but only when he "dreams" does the artistic vision occur. When he tries to create through reasoning ("studying"), he gains little except questions. Yet the efforts and questions of the reasoning mind are essentially human and necessary.

In "Köln Concert" the puzzle of reason versus instinct is addressed through the relationship of the lovers, not through the lover or artist alone. Now, together, the couple must work at the nest, yet wait for "the right thing to happen." In this human making, the lovers must accept imperfection. Being "lesser gods," they must make the creative choices and risk failing. It is their nest-making that makes them God-like, yet it also separates them from the "soft river" of divine instinctuality. Thus again, "we see and we don't see." The lovers must face paradox.

This is the poet's conundrum too: as poet he makes a

poem which is never perfect because it is a seeming, elusive as language--existing, yet imaginary. Plato denigrated poetry for this imperfection, yet Bly seems to take joy in the idea that the "nest" which poet, or lover, or any human, makes will never be perfect. The process of making, the journey itself, or the exploration depicted in the poems is important for the shamanic poet. Bly almost always uses the persona of himself, in part, to enhance the sense that the poem is being written as it is read. Throughout *LOVING A WOMAN*, Bly uses the personal details of his love relationship to enable his readers to participate in the creative process. The persona, the details, and the present tense give the poems the sense of a dramatic shamanic performance. Through the performance of his personal journey in love, he may hope to heal his tribe with a new vision of love.

In "Köln Concert," while the process of making may provide some joy, it also provides difficulty and grief as the earlier poems of the book show. That grief is depicted in "Köln Concert," as it is elicited by the notes of Keith Jarrett's beautiful improvisations on the piano, notes which "abandon so much," and which are equivalent to the honing process of human love. The notes are shameless as lovers should be. Yet the notes are disciplined, as lovers must be, meeting the humbling requirements of self-denial which balance asks: "food not taken," "comfort not taken," "lies not spoken." The shaman puts his tribe's needs before his

own. His profession requires sacrifice.

The music is a metaphor for the lover's "attention" to the beloved. Such difficult discipline, the beauty of form and its strictures, brings "tears in [his love's] eyes." Loving indeed brings a knowledge of grief as well as of joy. The lover must give up selfishness and the desire for perfection. Paradoxically, by giving these up, the lover gains access to the divine realm. By letting go his need for perfection, he can enjoy the process, and may enter the nest of the other. In joy and joining, he touches the divine.

In Bly's view, both love and grief are part of the spiritual force which moves through and in all things (NEWS 281-286). Thus the more deeply the lover partakes in this underlying unity to which his "ayami" brings him, the more he will feel both grief and love. "The Hawk" (75-76) beautifully depicts the complex mingling of feelings while it also reveals the lover's deepening connection with nature:

Land and sea mingle, so we
mingle with sky and wind. A mole
told me that his mother
had gone to the sky,
and his father lay curled
in a horsechestnut shell.
And my brother is part of the ocean. (76)

In this mingling with the non-human, a sadness is encountered. The images of death convey this sadness. Love makes the speaker acknowledge the mortality of the beloved, of himself, of all things: "sic transit gloria mundi." Love brings the lover face to face with death.

In "The Hawk" the shaman-like lover, in this mingling, encounters an animal spirit who speaks to him and gives him information about the dead. This is typical information which the shaman might seek on his journey. By gathering messages about dead souls, departed relatives, the shaman provides the tribe with a sense of unity and continuity with its past. Love reaches out into the immortal realms in a kindred way, attuning the shamanic lover with past and future:

Our great-uncles, grandfathers,
 great-grandfathers, remain.
 While we lie asleep, they see
 the grasshopper resting

And they come near. Whenever
 we talk with a small
 child, the dead help us
 to choose words. . . . (76)

In the mature love relationship, the lover and his beloved find their connection with the tribe. They discover a new aspect of the process of balance as they seek their place in the tribe's story. The couple journeys to or makes contact with the past tribe ("grandfathers" et al) and with the future ("talk with a small / child"). The shaman may encounter or seek ancestor spirits who will help him to find healing knowledge. Through love, the shamanic lovers are able to speak with the dead. Indeed, the spirits of the dead help them to speak. In turn, communication facilitates healing by providing common ground. The heritage of the tribe continues through language, as it does through marriage and family.

Thus here too is the important idea that after love, language enables the journey, the contact. Lover and poet take on some shamanic functions. Bly is interested in this shamanic power of language to assert the tribe's being "against the threatening oblivion of time" (Sugg 135). In this creative and evolutionary endeavor, both the poet and the lover-persona are shamanic. They are like the shaman who journeys to bring back something new. He may find something new by asking the dead. The shaman is creative and encourages evolution as necessary for his tribe's survival. He keeps the tribe in contact with its history and its future, and thus he connects the present tribe to the eternal tribe. This act of connection is an act of healing in itself. Thus as the lover and his beloved recognize their connection to the eternal story of the tribe, they are healed, despite the grief they may encounter.

Therefore, in this poem, the speaker finds courage in "choosing words," he is shaman-like, for the courage enables him to journey: he "goes / where he wishes to go":

then he sees the long tongue
of water on which the whale
rides on his journey.
When he finds the way
long intended for him,
he tastes through glacial water
the Labrador ferns and snows. (76)

In his portrayal of the lover's discovery of "the way," the shamanic poet, Bly, provides a healing message of language

for the tribe. Through love, the speaker heals himself, and with his beloved, he establishes a life of his own which is nourished by the tribal life as his parents' lives were. He has left his parents' home and found his own "way" on the far shore. Through love, he unites not only with the beloved and with the tribe, but also with nature. Thus "he tastes through glacial water / the Labrador ferns and snows." He takes a shamanic journey, meeting the whale spirit. He "goes where he wishes to go," natural and free from much of the burden he carried in "Fifty Males."

"The Good Silence" develops the lover's connection in the tribe's evolution and history. The poem begins with the speaker "reading an Anglo-Saxon love poem in its extravagance." In this scenic image, Bly links poet to persona, and both to tribal history. The poem and its depiction of love are bound together in the image. Love enables mingling in divine realms, just as the poem enables mingling through its performance.

By the poem's end, the lover-persona has unraveled these complex relations, for by the end, he is not just reading the ancient poem, he takes part in it. The ancient poem becomes part of his present lovemaking. Through his reading, the dead speak anew, not merely again. Thus the love relationship and language both help in the evolutionary process of the tribe. The language of the love poem ties generations together, and evolves with each generation. Binding old to

Through the beautiful language of the Anglo-Saxon poem and of his love, he experiences ecstasy, an overflowing of feeling. The ship image of the old poem perfectly conveys the shamanic action in love and language: it is the metaphor for the sexual act. In both metaphor and act, the lover is transported. Ironically, it is out of the "silence" of love that the poem "speaks" to the lover. Love enlivens the vision of the old poem. The old "myths" are made new by the shamanic energy of love.

The title of the closing poem of the book, "In the Month of May" (77-78), continues to elicit associations with Anglo-Saxon love poetry. The poem itself emphasizes the joy of ecstatic transport, rather than the grief or "tears" which may also come from that journey of love. When compared to the melancholy tone of many of the poems of Part I, the happy mood of the poem affirms the lover's progress in *LOVING A WOMAN*. Although, there are "tears" in Part III and the theme of grief in love continues, overall the poems portray more joy, contentment and resolution in the love relationship. The lover's transformations depicted in "The Artist at Fifty" (52) and "The Minnow Turning" (61) are played out in the concluding section of the book.

However, as stated, the joy is not without some grief still. In fact, the more balanced and attuned lover now accepts both the joy and the grief more easily. His acceptance itself is a kind of balance. Images of joy and

grief, light and dark, certainty and doubt intermingle. The paradoxical nature of language and of love does not result in pure states or stasis. The back and forth play of opposites--two worlds, two beings--is the regenerative process of both language and love. "The Good Silence" revealed the negative capability of both: "I do not love you in a little way." The shaman must wrestle with the opposing forces of the universe, working toward balance.

Yet this "little way" is the humble way of "small things" developed in the book's imagery and is paradoxically a "big way," for there is great strength or "firmness" in such small things. The lover loves in the "small" and humble ways which are "not . . . little." The shifting play of mind and heart or body, at once serious and humorous, continues and reaches culmination in this closing poem of *LOVING A WOMAN*. Here, in image and in exposition or reflection, Bly gives a kind of weather report: it is "The Month of May;" it is spring; the weather is delightful, yet still changeable.

The poem begins and ends with the journey image, the speaker "going out." The opening journey image is of a real, specific, and mundane walk which, typically, leads to the spiritual journey. Along that walk, the pleasant weather of spring images all "lean on each other":

In the month of May when all leaves open,
 I see when I walk how well all things
 lean on each other, how the bees work,
 the fish make their living the first day.
 Monarchs fly high; then I understand
 I love you with what in me is unfinished. (77)

Lover and "all things" lean on each other, intricately weaving a spring tapestry. The image conveys "Gott natur," the interconnecting spiritual force, and it conveys a sense of the eternal. The lilting alliteration of the /w/ sounds and the soothing /l/ sounds of this first stanza help to convey the speaker's feelings of unity and calm joy.

However, in the associative leap from his reflection on the spring day to his reflection on love, the lover shows his realization that mutability is at the heart of things. Paradoxically, mutability stands alongside the eternal. Love, once again, reveals both. The lover finds himself incomplete and longs to complete himself through the beloved. This longing is instinctual desire, "the miraculous, / caught on this earth." It is the spirit manifesting through the body. The miraculous is the shimmer seen in the face of the beloved in "The Horse of Desire" (65) or that of the seal in "Poem on Sleep" (51). This is the emanation of the divine in the awakened lover.

The tentative quality of the miraculous visit is represented through the speaker's use of rhetorical questions in stanzas two and three: "And why shouldn't Gabriel, who loves honey, / be fed with our own radishes and walnuts?" As in the "indigo bunting" and in the wrens, the greatness of divinity may be expressed in small things, even small, odd things like radishes and walnuts. Those small things not only express the divine, but here they also nourish the

divine. Heaven and earth are again shown to be inextricably mixed, "leaning" on each other. Tentatively, the speaker realizes and suggests that each realm feeds the other, that Gabriel needs the radishes as much as they "need" the angel. The lover-speaker's realization shamanically breaks through preconceived notions (Grim 14) of the divine's relationship to the mundane.

In this poem and in the whole of *LOVING A WOMAN*, Bly shows us that love can be a source of shamanic realization. Love is constantly providing new insights into the world. Love itself changes, as each lover changes, by those insights. In this constant mutability, the love portrayed in the book is complex, paradoxical, and difficult as the lover suggests when he says, "And lovers, tough ones, how many there are / whose bodies are not yet born." Thus Bly closes the book on an empathetic note for all those who struggle in love, yet still have not "broken through the planes," in a shamanic sense, to have that "third body" or "holy body" where the divine and the eternal, there all along, are realized. The love in the book is shamanic because the lover is both healed and transformed by love. He is reconnected with long-suppressed parts of himself, with the tribe, and with nature. Like the shaman, the lover is no longer "dis-membered," he is transformed to a new more energized life. The struggles of the journey continue, but the lover is resurrected.

The final image of lover and beloved journeying is an appropriate close for both poem and book. The image reinforces both the joy and the ongoing struggle of love: "Along the roads, I see so many places / I would like us to spend the night." The journey must go on. The image embodies that evolutionary movement and honing work of love, fueled by sexual-spiritual instinct. It is the work of the lover and is like the work of the shaman: journeying to the divine, partaking in the mundane, and working to heal. Love moves the lovers forward to continue creating the world anew by balancing the polarities and contraries, just as the poet and the shaman do. In *LOVING A WOMAN IN TWO WORLDS*, Bly portrays how the language of love shamanically mediates between two worlds and heals by revealing the two worlds are one.

Conclusion

Thus the final poem culminates the journey of the lover and of the book. The lover is now resurrected, no longer the "boy" who looked longingly back at his parents. He is reborn into his own life, an adult member of the tribe. In its spiritual and instinctual aspects, love reveals how both aspects are one. Love reveals the unifying shamanic vision to the lover. He is healed, made whole by that vision.

Through the honing power of love, the process of balance, and the "instruction" of the "ayami," the lover evolves. He is developing some of the attributes of the divine: honesty, humility, and strength. Healed and more humble, the lover is better able to see and understand his beloved and the world around him. He can attune with nature and with the tribe. While he continues to evolve, he may still find limitations and grief, but he is no longer alienated. He can tap the energizing resources of tribe, nature, love, and the spiritual force which moves through all. The the final poem shows that the lover is still journeying, but it also reveals his new sense of energetic joy.

The last poem is the book's final depiction of healing. Bly has conveyed healing images throughout, as well as images of journeying and tribe. In many poems, by using the pronoun "we," he asks the audience to participate in the questions or processes of various poems. But in "The Month of May," through the persona, Bly very clearly shows his concern is not merely to portray a private love, but that his concern is for all the tribe. The speaker has made progress. He is no longer only self-concerned. He looks ahead to the continuing journey, yet he wonders about all the lovers who are "not yet born." Bly displays the hope that others will be resurrected and find the healing vision. In depicting healing through love, the hope for healing, and the journey towards healing, *LOVING A WOMAN* is shamanic.

CONCLUSION

Whether in the quiet meditations of SILENCE, the public rhetoric of SLEEPERS, or the intimate love letters of LOVING A WOMAN, Bly's work exhibits the unity and energy of the shamanic journey and performance. Taken as a whole, his work is a journey, changing and evolving, yet unified by one vision--the shamanic vision. That the shaman's way provides metaphors for Bly's poetry is not surprising, for in the images and sounds, contents and forms of his poetry, Bly speaks with the shamanic voice.

In using the voice of the shaman, consciously or not, Bly clearly defines the poet's place as naturally outside society's normative vision. The periphery is the proper place for the poet and the shaman. From the periphery both can see society more clearly and completely. In realizing the necessity of this position for the poet, Bly finds an answer for the Angst the Romantics felt with the rise of industrialism, that Lawrence felt with twentieth-century wars and the machine, that Bly himself felt with the Vietnam War and Puritan repression. The shamanic vision provides a new and vigorous role for the poet. Bly takes a poetic stance where to be alienated or isolated is part of the training. More importantly, Bly can be healed and can depict healing by connecting with a larger universe. This expanded world encompasses oppositions: dark and light, masculine and feminine, past and present, temporal and eternal, mundane and

divine, human and natural. Through the shamanic vision, the poet can reunite with the tribe in a way that perhaps the tribe (or most of it) does not recognize. In the shaman's world of forgotten myths and new myths, ancestors, nature, and spirit, Bly, like the shaman, finds healing. In the New York of the early Fifties, Bly found the healing vision of the inward journey. In turn, through depicting the expanded world, the interconnecting universe, he passes on the healing vision to his readers.

Bly successfully depicts such unity and healing in both his quieter, personal poems and his communal poems. His diverse poems arise from the single shamanic vision which is paradoxically two-fold. The shaman journeys into the mystical realms to find unity, but he returns to the mundane and tribal world to perform healing. Indeed, he shows how each world is part of the other. In similar ways, Bly takes the ecstatic journey and works to heal. In order to heal, Bly re-enacts the journey in the poem through deep images and through leaping images. Such images embody the journey out from rational consciousness into the earth, into the body, into the spirit. The deep image reflects the place "where the outer world flows naturally into the intestines and stomach" (Bly, NEWS 251). The leaping image is really the movement from image to image in some poems. In its associations, leaping embodies the ecstatic movement of the journey. Bly also re-enacts or performs the journey through

sound patterns and various rhetorical devices. While some poems, like "Spring" in his most recent chapbook *THE MOON ON THE FENCEPOST* (1988), may "perform" less well than others, the vision is no less present:

How long the evenings are in spring!
 I walk about carrying an old stick.
 The moon calms its part of the sky;
 the clouds facing them do not move.
 Cows are like boulders growing out of the field.

This poem reveals an interconnecting universe: man, moon, sky, cows, boulders. The poem depicts an ecstatic moment where the speaker takes joy in the spring evening and senses the unity. Typically, the poem re-enacts a journey into the dark. And the poem makes two small leaps from the ecstatic expression to the journey image, and from the anthropomorphic sky to the comparison of cows and boulders. The ecstasy engenders the journey, and on the journey, the speaker discovers a unity of earth to sky, and animate to inanimate.

However, the poem is flat because the journey in imagery does not go deep. The leaps do not go far, nor take any chances. The journey seems incomplete and so does the poem. The final image is most interesting, yet at the same time it is clichéd, as is the expression of joy at the opening. The ambiguous pronoun "them" in the fourth line also hurts the poem. It puzzles rather than intrigues. The /s/ and /k/ sound patterns are pleasant but weak, and alone they cannot carry such a short poem. There are no real rhetorical schemes or poetic forms to help the poem. In such a short

piece, certainly, the images may be most important. Because the images fail to "travel," the poem fails.

Despite some failures, the shamanic journey and performance succeed in giving Bly's work unity and in enhancing the rhetorical power of both the public and the private poems. The ancient, time-honored, and energetic way of the shaman provides Bly with a way to depict the healing he feels his culture needs. The journey-performing imagery which Bly uses enables him to depict the interconnecting universe. Sound and rhetoric help in that depiction. The image reunites the human with the natural and the divine source. The image becomes the poet's World Tree, an axis mundi, a bridge between worlds.

In another poem from THE MOON ON A FENCEPOST, Bly is more successful in crossing the bridge. Entitled "The Moon," it is a lovely, quiet, modest poem which displays Bly's new attention to tighter poetic forms, as well as continued attention to sound and images reflecting the unity of worlds:

A solemn moon, nearly full, stands in the east,
 where we imagine Palestine to be.
 A few birds flying. It is the sort of night
 when children do not go home for supper.

The fence posts walk slowly around the field.
 One post has a stone weighing it down.
 Some mower, tired of having it in his sickle,
 lifted it there, balanced it, left it.

Isn't it possible the moon is a stone?
 But we don't know if it will stay.
 Perhaps some day a man walking alone
 will find the moon by surprise in the grass. (poem 1)

A phonetic transliteration of some of the sounds of the first

stanza will be helpful to the discussion:

A /s//o//l/ e/m/ /m//u//n/, /n//i/r /l//i/ /f/u/l/,
 /s//t/a/n/ds in the /i//s//t/ [t/o]
 /w/here /w//i/ i/m//ae/gi/n/ P/ae//l/e/s//t//ay//n/
 /t//u/ b/i/ [t/o]
 A /f//u/ birds /f//l//ay/ing. It is the /s/or/t/ of
 /n//ay//t/ [t/o]
 /w/he/n/ chil/dren d/u/ /n/o/t/ g/o/ h/o//m/ for
 /s//upper. [t/o]

Bly establishes some interesting sound patterns. The transliteration of this first stanza reveals the emphasis on the /s/, /l/, /m/, /n/, and /f/ consonant sounds, with lesser emphasis on the /w/. Used throughout the poem, these consonant sounds give resonance to the "solemn moon" image, repeating the image in sound. The repetition of /f/ and /l/ ties the "/f/u/l/" moon to myths of the tribe in "Pa/l/estine," to the journey into spirit and nature in "/f//l//ying," and to the human world of the "/f/encepost" and the "/f/ie/l/ds." Through the /l/, /m/, and /n/ the "solemn" and "full" "moon" is linked with "Pa/l/esti/n/e" again, and then to the "/m/a/n/ walking a/l/o/n/e." Thus through sound, nature, myth ("Palestine"), and man are linked. The sounds of the moon resonate in the sounds of the earth, tying images and ideas together. The /w/ pattern works similarly.

The vowel sounds provide additional resonance to the poem. The /u/ of "moon" is of importance in the poem than the word's consonant sounds which tie it to "man," but the /u/ ties the moon to the "f/u/ birds" and to the "children" who "d/u/ not go home for supper" when the moon is full. The /u/ ties the moon to living things and to magical times. The

/ay/ and /o/ vowel sounds are more important. The /ay/ links "Palest/ay/ne" with the "birds fl/ay/ing," "n/ay/t," and "surpr/ay/se." The sound connects myth, magical (yet natural) flight with the magical time of night, and the poem's final magical puzzling. Thus the sound helps the poem to depict a mystical realm where "fence posts walk slowly around the field," and where the moon may be found, one day, lying in the grass. Of course, this mystical realm which Bly depicts is the natural world, the shaman's world full of mysterious energies and wonders.

The poem journeys out at night, into the dark realm where shamans go. The natural world reveals its non-ordinary status. Bly uses ordinary details of a Minnesota evening to display the mystery of the everyday. He pricks our ordinary perceptions, playfully, in the trickster shaman's way. In images such as the children who won't come home, the poem portrays a magical vision of night. For Bly, the image is not a rational perception of the world, nor a rational creation or re-creation of the world. In the shamanic vision, the imagination does not superimpose its will on the scene or on nature; rather it seeks that place where the worlds join. Bly's images "attune" with nature. For Bly, the imaginative act is an attunement with the object, with nature, with the self, and with the tribe. Attunement involves "seeing," sometimes "listening," sometimes "questioning"; often it involves all three.

The speaker's child-like question in stanza three is part of a shamanic act of attunement. While the question seems odd, through it, the speaker gets at the shamanic "facts" which partake in, yet go beyond scientific facts. The moon really is a stone--a very large stone or rock. And it may some day go out of orbit. Orbits deteriorate. Even scientific "facts" change. Like a meteor, it might land in a farmer's field. The moon might fall some day. Yet now, it "falls" as light, revealing the shimmer of spirit emanating from the real and "factual" world. The fence posts do surround the field, but in the moonlight they "walk slowly around" it. The /l/ sounds link the bewitched fence posts to the "full" moon, emphasizing a spell-like cause-effect relationship. The shamanic poet reveals the mystical in the ordinary and natural through the images and sounds of the poem. The images do journey, and the poem succeeds. Moon, man, stone, fence posts, field, and flying birds are all alive and lit.

The poem closes with a small healing message: some day we might be walking alone and find the moon, a white stone, lying in the grass. In the ordinary world, at any moment, magic and spirit can be discovered. Bly's shamanic vision may not always be full of the grand ecstasy of the four-fold Great Mother as it was in LIGHT and SLEEPERS, but nonetheless it depicts healing. Throughout his poems, he displays a willingness to take chances, to be foolish, childlike, to

"not go home for supper," and to bring back whatever images and sounds, small or grand, quiet or not, which journey and heal.

To conclude, Bly's work consistently displays a cluster of elements which arise from the shaman's role. The investigation of these elements in his work reveals that they are not peripheral but essential to that work. They are characteristics of his poetic vision. Out of the "journeying" image comes the performance of the poem. Poem and image become acts of attunement or healing. The journeying image is complex, both deep and leaping. Sound and rhetorical devices enhance it in performance, but its success or failure ultimately determines the success or failure of the poem. The journeying image can be, in itself, the most forceful rhetorical "device," persuading or not by its power of attunement. This kind of image enables Bly to show his readers the truth of his vision. Whether that vision actually heals or not, if the attunement with other realms is there, if the healing image is there, then the poem can succeed. Indeed, the more successful Bly's images are, the farther they journey, the more likely his poems will have rhetorical impact and succeed in providing more than the pleasure of the vision. His readers can then participate in the vision. When his poems succeed, we are better able to journey out with him to the place where the worlds are one.

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