

THE UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA
NATIVE LITERATURE IN JUNIOR
AND SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAMS

by

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ABSTRACT

The literature of North American Indians is not widely represented in Canadian school curricula. Because Native students are staying in schools in larger numbers than ever before it is increasingly important that Native and non-Native students alike receive accurate and positive information about Natives. Literature is generally considered an effective vehicle for the transmission and understanding of culture, and thus it is a matter of great urgency to include literature by Native authors in the school curricula.

There have been problems in the acceptance of Native literature because the concept of "Native literature" has not been clearly understood. Because Native literature is still closely linked with the oral tradition there has been a reluctance to accept it as a legitimate body of literature. Problems of transferring this literature from the oral to the written, in translation from Native languages to English and in selecting among variant versions need to be examined. This dissertation attempts to alleviate some of the difficulties by identifying and describing a body of Native literature for inclusion in the Grades VII to XII literature courses. This will include myth, legend, and traditional Indian poetry as well as contemporary writing.

Myth and legend are defined and their importance in a culture is explored, with special emphasis on folklore relevant to the development of a child. Various types of myths, including both traditional myths with their emphasis on the trickster motif, and modern-day myths are examined and compared with European folklore.

Traditional poetry is described and its role as a functional aspect of society is explained. Examples of the various types - songs, chants, rituals,

and historic tales - are included along with a discussion of the difference between Native poetry and poetry from Western society.

A brief historical survey of Native literature from pre-European contact to contemporary times is given. Better known contemporary writers and their major works are discussed with American and Canadian writers treated separately in this field because of the different ways in which the literature from these areas is evolving. This dissertation identifies five main aspects which demonstrate that Native literature is truly an expression of Indian culture: the sacredness of the word, identification with the land, the importance of ritual and ceremony, the importance of community and an holistic world view. A unique aspect of Native literature is that the oral and written traditions exist side by side. Native literature has qualities which makes it a valuable contribution to modern society.

The dissertation concludes with a representative, annotated bibliography of Native literature. Collections of myths, legends and poetry as well as oral narratives, memoirs, biography, autobiography, short stories, drama and novels which are suitable for Grades VII to XII literature courses are included. Detailed criteria for selection of materials are included; the strengths and weaknesses of each item in the bibliography are noted.

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CHAPTER I

PROBLEM AND OUTLINE OF THE DISSERTATION

I. THE PROBLEM

Neither traditional nor contemporary Native literature is generally represented in school literature programs. Although a considerable body of writing by Natives exists, few books by Native authors are found in Canadian classrooms. For example, the authorized textbooks for Manitoba for the year 1982-83 for Language Arts and English for Grades VII to XII include a number of books about Native people written by non-Native writers but only one book is edited by a Native: I Am an Indian by Kent Gooderham, a book of collected works by Native writers.¹

This dissertation will, therefore, identify a body of literature for inclusion in the Manitoba curriculum and establish selection criteria. It will attempt to address certain problems related to this task. Because much traditional Native literature is still in oral form it is necessary to appreciate the difficulties that arise when oral tradition becomes a body of written material. Native literature comes twice translated - from the Native language into English and from the oral into written. In evaluating a piece of writing it is important to keep the translation processes in mind; for example, a "Native" poem may appeal to a reader because the literary style is quite similar to that of poetry from Western cultures, however, the style of the poem may be due to the fact that the translator took considerable liberties with the original.² Translation procedures will be discussed so that the authenticity of a piece of writing can be evaluated; only works of translators

recognized for their reliability will be quoted.

A further problem requiring examination is the difference between oral narrative and written prose. Some contemporary Native literature has been recorded in writing but still contains strong elements of the oral tradition; in other cases only traces of oral narrative remain, but the Native tone is discernible. Even where the reader is not familiar with the original language this translated literature can be appreciated for its unique qualities.

Native literature may include cultural referents and themes that may be unfamiliar to the reader, not only to the non-Native reader, but also to a Native person from a different culture. Because Native literature may be based on a world view that is significantly different from the European world view, its major themes need to be identified.

In order to identify these major themes traditional myths, legends and poetry will be examined. This traditional literature is important in several ways; not only does it have intrinsic value because of its literary merit but it also forms the basis of the culture. Literature is one of the major vehicles whereby the underlying assumptions of a culture are understood and transmitted. Traditional mythology forms the basis of much modern writing and is easily recognized in the literature of Western culture, but Native literature has rarely been studied for its mythological basis. Because Indian mythology has not always been recognized as having the same significance as other world mythologies the origin of all mythologies and common themes are discussed. The different kinds of Indian myths are examined and classified as to those which can rightly be called myths, to those that should be classed as legends and to those that arise from contemporary cultures. Emphasis is placed on the importance of familiar mythology in the healthy development of

children. Many divergent versions of particular legends exist; the problems various versions create is recognized. As well, traditional Indian poetry is described and compared to poetry from Western society.

II. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Because Native students are completing school in larger numbers than ever before, the inclusion of Native literature in programs of study is of increasing importance. The trend toward higher education for Natives is Canada-wide, even though the drop-out rate is still significantly higher than that of the non-Native population. In 1971 the Indian Tribes of Manitoba prepared a document which predicted that ninety per cent of Indian students who started school in 1968 would not complete Grade XII by 1980.³ Their predictions were quite accurate, although the student retention rate was starting to show improvement. In her 1980 study of achievement by Indians in federal and provincial schools, Kirkness lists the high drop-out rate as a continuing major concern.⁴ Statistics for Métis students are not as readily available, but educators tend to point to the Manitoba Indian Brotherhood statistics as also representative of the school achievement of Métis students.⁵

Indicative of change is a recent statement by a spokesman for the Sandy Bay Reserve in Manitoba which claims that since the Band assumed control of the local system in 1981, the student drop-out rate has fallen from 90 per cent in 1974 to 20 per cent.⁶ Neither local control nor high student retention is province-wide, but it does suggest possibilities for future directions in Native education. Emphasis on relevant curricula is a major concern of locally controlled schools.

Some attempts have been made in recent years to include what has been called "Native literature" in school curricula, but most of the writers have been non-Native. It is only in the last decade that literature about Native people has even been included. Concern for relevant curricula has been expressed in almost every statement Native people have made about education in the last fifteen years,⁷ but, although some changes in history courses are evident, there are no real changes in literature courses.

Fostering understanding across cultures has been sadly neglected. It is important that Native children receive instruction in a way that will enhance their self-images and provide accurate knowledge about themselves; it is also important that non-Native students receive this same insight into Native cultures. Literature is generally considered an effective vehicle for the transmission and understanding of a culture. It has the power to recreate reality and it combines cognitive and affective insights in a manner that may be lacking in other disciplines. Art and music may achieve the same results but unlike language arts, they are not a required component of every child's school day. Some form of literature is used in every reading program, thus it is a matter of great urgency to include literature by Native writers in the school curricula. Growing awareness of their own culture has been nurtured among Native students through handicrafts, art and music but literature has not been emphasized to the same extent. Inclusion of literature by Native writers would likely not only enhance the self-concept of Native students, but also create a greater interest in literature classes.

Paula Gunn Allen, a Native critic, points out in "The Sacred Hoop: A Contemporary Perspective" that although literature is only one facet of a

culture it is largely through literature and art that the assumptions underlying a culture are understood. She goes on to say,

A person who was raised in a given culture has no problem seeing the relevance, the level of complexity, or the symbolic significance of a culture's literature.

8

The significance of a literature can be best understood in terms of the culture from which it springs. It is of considerable importance to readers to have access to literature that will enable them to understand and accept the principles upon which the values and traditions of their cultures are based.

The belief in the relative worthlessness of the various Indian cultures has long prevailed, as Leslie Monkman (1981) demonstrates in his documentation of the images of the Indian in English-Canadian literature. It was not until the 1950s and 1960s that Native people themselves began to articulate their concerns, thereby influencing the thinking of some non-Native writers. The awareness of Indian culture by Canadian writers, however, has not significantly affected the Indians. Monkman concludes this book by saying,

the apparently irreconcilable opposites embodied in the tension between Indian and white cultures are, in fact, complementary parts of a common humanity. Poised between two cultures, these writers find in the Indian and his world unique touchstones through which they can illuminate the character and culture of the white man in Canada.

9

Monkman does not say that this literature has in any way illuminated the characters and cultures of the Indians in Canada. These non-Native writers have made significant contributions to Canadian literature in that they have presented works that are uniquely Canadian and reveal intimately Canadian ways of perceiving Indians from the non-Indian point of view; however, the Native cultural heritage, long in North America, has hardly been acknowledged by Canadian writers. Few critics show the perception of Norman Newton (1975)

when he wrote that Canadians

have never really come to terms with the intellectual history of our country, which is predominantly the intellectual history of the Indians. Instead we have invented the wilderness simply to avoid facing it. The wilderness never existed.

10

Literature portraying Indians as an integral part of Canadian society is a relatively recent phenomenon. Though Indians appeared in the literature of a century ago in such novels as John Richardson's Wacousta (1832) and James Fenimore Cooper's The Last of the Mohicans (1826) the Natives were stereotyped and the plots centred around non-Native characters. This kind of literature is rarely produced today, but non-Native writers frequently portray Natives only from an outsider's point of view.

Literature about Natives by non-Natives is often sympathetic and perceptive, much of it written by established Canadian authors. It can perform an invaluable service in helping non-Native students confront their feelings of ambivalence toward Native people. Margaret Laurence's Tonnerre family is present in many of her stories, and the sensitive young reader wonders about those strange children who are, and yet are not, a part of the Manawaka world. However good it may be, such writing can further isolate and alienate Native students since they have no choice but to identify with the "non-persons". The author depicts the non-Native characters' lack of understanding of the Tonnerres so well that the Tonnerre children also remain an enigma to the readers. A further problem is that, as non-Native writers include Natives in their stories, the focus tends to be on problems confronting Native people. Though timely and important, the literature can make depressing reading. Native readers may well react with further feelings of entrapment within a stereotype - a stereotype of the helpless Indian, suspended between

two cultures and able to cope with neither.

Writers have a tendency to portray every aspect of the lives of Native people as problematic; strengths of the culture may be downplayed, ignored, or not recognized by the writer. A book such as Allen Fry's How a People Die, found in many high school libraries, does nothing to enhance the self-concept of a Native reader as Fry attempts to portray life on a reserve as it "really" is. Though he accurately chronicles the devastating influences of alcohol and lays the blame on the white men who take the liquor to the reserve, he downplays the positive actions of the Indians. The story is told from the point of view of the Indian agent who sees only evil and despair. It is a story without hope because Fry does not even suggest that Indians are capable of accepting responsibility for their actions - or that they should be expected to do so.

Where Native characters are portrayed only from the non-Native point of view and as shadowy secondary figures, the literature should not be used as "Native" literature. For example, "The Loons" in Margaret Laurence's A Bird in the House does an excellent job of portraying Vanessa's romanticized notions of what the Métis girl, Piquette, might teach her:

some of the secrets which she undoubtedly knew - where the whippoorwill made her nest, how the coyote reared her young or whatever it was that it said in Hiawatha.

11

Vanessa admits that Piquette's

sickness was about the only thing I knew about her.... Otherwise, she existed for me only as a vague embarrassing presence, with her hoarse voice and her clumsy limping walk and her grimy cotton dresses that were always miles too long.

12

Vanessa shows complete indifference toward Indian history. Though Piquette

takes responsibility for her family at the age of thirteen, Vanessa perceives this only as a reproach to her parents. Life in a small town and the attitude toward the Métis on its fringes are portrayed accurately, but this can prove to be painfully embarrassing for the Piquettes in the classrooms of the 1980s.

The importance of including literature by Native writers not only for Native students, but for all students, is indicated by Thomas E. Sanders and Walter W. Peek, two Native writers. Non-Natives, they say, are seeing Indian literature for the first time, and the cultural riches it contains come from Indians telling their own story. In Literature of the American Indian they assert that their collected work is, for Native people,

a source of strength adding depth and status to their knowledge
and belief that their ways and wisdom are indeed of value.

13

The authors believe that their book also holds special significance for non-Native readers. They give extensive explanations of cultural values and religious beliefs, and include many examples of literature to illustrate each example. This helps readers unfamiliar with Native culture to appreciate the literary aspects of the writing by providing insights into Indian culture that are not available in other forms of writing.

Native American literature provides a meaningful experience in reading for Native students because it expresses familiar points of view. The students are led to see the beauty in their world; beauty that has not always been recognized in other kinds of literature. Their oral narratives, values, beliefs and traditions are recorded and their particular brand of humour and figures of speech are present.

Native literature emphasizes communal living and portrays a life of sharing and mingling; ancestors wait to teach Indian ways to the young who

may be floundering in an alien culture or questioning traditional ways. The non-Native reader may not always recognize the strength and beauty of the literature, but can recognize common themes. The Native reader may find an unprecedented source of strength in the literature, an avenue for personal development that has not as yet been utilized to its fullest potential.

Because of the increasing demands for culturally relevant materials by Native people and because much of the literature about Indians of the past is condescending and insensitive, incorporating Native literature into school curricula is a matter of considerable urgency. The neglect of the past can be rectified because a body of literature written by Native people now exists. As well, many sensitively written works by non-Native writers which have been written from a Native point of view can be used.

III. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

While every attempt has been made to outline the problems and identify a body of suitable Native literature along with selection criteria, this investigation has been restricted by certain limitations. Some of these limitations are deliberate in order to avoid duplication of previous studies, others are inherent in the study of Native literature.

Though it is important to understand why Native literature has not been included in school curricula it is not the intention of this study to go into detailed analysis of the reasons. Numerous studies exist which examine the relationship between minority and dominant cultures; many studies specifically deal with European domination over Indian cultures and the effects this had

on Indian loss of identity. This study assumes that Native culture, and therefore Native literature, is not intrinsically inferior to non-Native culture, but that it has been neglected for a variety of reasons. This study attempts to prove the value of Native literature but does not elaborate on the reasons for the neglect in the school curricula.

Although considerable emphasis could be placed on the importance of Native literature for non-Native readers in bridging cultural gaps, this is not the purpose of the study. Numerous works of such a nature exist.¹⁴ The emphasis in this dissertation is on identifying and describing a body of literature that will be especially effective for Native students.

Though this dissertation will attempt to define what Native literature is, these generalizations will have to be made on a relatively small body of literature compared to the literature of other cultures. A considerable body of myth and folktale upon which generalizations can be formulated exists, but there is a tendency to speak about "Indian" mythology, disregarding the wide differences in various Indian cultures. The same holds true for poetry.

Readily available literature, both traditional and contemporary, is strongly representative of Indians in the southern areas of the United States, such as the Navajo and Pueblo. Some mythology and poetry from northerly areas is available, but it has not been collected and translated to the same extent. Also, very little contemporary literature has been produced by Canadian Natives. Any generalizations about recent Canadian Native literature can, therefore, only be even more tenuous than for Native literature as a whole. It is postulated, however, that if common characteristics are found in traditional literature of various Native cultures, especially in myth and folktale, then similar characteristics will also eventually appear

in contemporary writing. If elements of traditional myth and legend are found in contemporary Native writings from other areas, it is likely that they will also be found in Canadian writing as it develops.

A further limitation exists in that this dissertation will not examine original works, that is, literature written in a Native language. Judgement as to the accuracy of translations will be made on the basis of the reputation of the translator and on how well a piece of literature appears to demonstrate the criteria the translator used in making the translation.

IV. DEFINITIONS

Before Native literature can be discussed, it must be defined and terms used in discussing this literature must be clarified. To define it as "literature written by Native people or by people who identify themselves as Native" is a starting point, but it does not answer the question of who these "Native people" are, or what is meant by "literature". For the purpose of this dissertation the following definitions will be used:

1. Native - any person of whole or partial North American Indian ancestry.
This study will not deal with literature of the Inuit.
2. Indian - any person of North American Indian ancestry, whole or partial, as the term is used legally today. It also includes persons of Indian ancestry, whole or partial, before legal definitions created
15
categories. It will be used as an adjective to describe traditional literature, but when referring to contemporary works "Native" may be used if the distinction between Indian and Metis is not important. If the distinction is important the specific adjective will be used.

3. Métis - any person of partial North American Indian ancestry, or a person of North American Indian ancestry without legal Indian status; that is, a person who does not come under the jurisdiction of the Indian Act.
4. Literature - writing which includes the literary forms taught in Grades VII to XII Language Arts courses - myths, poetry, oral narratives, memoirs, biography, autobiography, drama, short stories and novels.
5. Native literature - literature written by writers who fall into categories # 1-3.
6. Western Culture - culture of the European world and its North American extension, rather than that of the Oriental, African and ancient North and South American civilizations.

V. ORGANIZATION OF THE DISSERTATION

Chapter II describes the procedures used in the study; the problems inherent in this type of research are discussed as well. Chapters III and IV are devoted to a description of traditional Native literature, identifying major differences between Native literature and literature from Western society. Chapter III deals with myths, legends, "modern myths" and a comparison of Native folklore with folklore from Western culture. The importance of mythology to a child's development is stressed. Chapter IV deals with traditional poetry and describes its distinctive characteristics. The various types - rituals, songs, chants, epic and oratorical poetry - are discussed, poetic structure and differences between poetry from European culture and Native poetry are noted.

Chapter V discusses representative contemporary Native writers. The major themes of contemporary writing are identified and examples are given.

Chapter VI summarizes the ways in which Native literature differs from Western literature, summarizes the "Native" aspects of contemporary Native literature, and comments on the importance of Native literature to contemporary society.

The work concludes with criteria for the selection of Native literature, including works by non-Natives, suitable for Grades VII to XII English programs. A representative, annotated bibliography is included. Annotations include genre, reading level, a brief description of content and a commentary on the strengths and weaknesses of each book.

NOTES

1

Province of Manitoba, Approved Textbooks K-12 and the Manitoba Textbook Bureau Catalogue for 1982-83 (Winnipeg: Department of Education, 1982.)

2

Examples of Europeanized poetry are found in Schoolcraft's The Myth of Hiawatha and Other Oral Legends. Brandon, in The Magic World, admits that he did not adhere to the originals, rather, he used free translations that sounded most poetic to him.

3

Indian Tribes of Manitoba, Wahbung (Winnipeg: Manitoba Indian Brotherhood, 1971), p. 104.

4

Verna Kirkness, Educational Achievement of Indians of Federal and Provincial Schools in Manitoba, M. Ed. Thesis, Manitoba 1980, p. 76.

5

For example, Howard Adams, Prison of Grass (Toronto: New Press, 1975).

6

Isaac Beaulieu, "Reserve School Receives Needed Expansion Boost," The Brandon Sun, 4 Aug. 1982, Sec 1, p. 2, col. 1.

7

Some studies are National Indian Brotherhood (1972), Verna Kirkness (1980) and D. Bruce Sealey (1980).

8

Paula Gunn Allen, "The Sacred Hoop: A Contemporary Perspective on American Indian Literature" in Studies in American Indian Literature (New York: The Modern Language Association of American, 1983), p. 3.

9

Leslie Monkman, The Native Heritage (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981), P. 165.

10

Norman Newton, "Wilderness to Wilderness," Canadian Literature, No. 63, (1975), p. 20.

11

Margaret Laurence, A Bird in the House (Toronto: Macmillan, 1963), p. 119.

12

Ibid., p. 115.

13

Thomas E. Sanders and Walter W. Peek, Literature of the American Indian (Toronto: Collier Macmillan, 1973), p. xvi.

14

For example, R.K. Carlson, Emerging Humanity, Multi-Ethnic Literature for Children and Adolescents, Blanche Gelfant, "Mingling and Sharing in American Literature" and the works of Anna Lee Stensland.

15

This did not happen until the first Indian Act was passed by the Government of Canada in 1876.

CHAPTER II

PROCEDURES AND RELATED PROBLEMS

I. INTRODUCTION

Because Native literature has not generally been included in school curricula this study will examine some of the reasons for this neglect. Those related to the position of a minority culture which has been overwhelmed by a conquering majority have frequently been documented, but the problems inherent in the acceptance of the literature itself have received scant attention.

One problem lies in the acceptance of Native culture per se, and consequently of the literature. Keiichi Hirano (1962), in an article "The Aborigine in Canadian Literature", expressed a deep-seated negative attitude toward Native cultures. He proposes that the Indian presence in Canadian literature is hardly felt and that no one seems to miss it. He suggests that the problem lies not so much in the lack of interest on the part of Canadian writers as in the unpromising subject matter. He admits that Indians had their own mythology and thought-patterns and their own way of responding to outer reality, but goes on to say that the folklore is

neither profound nor rich. The impression the reader gets on reading one story after another is that of monotonous repetition, a lack of depth and insight.

The nature-worship of the Indians, charming as it sometimes is, never reached the speculative or spiritual depth of a religion. It is not something you can take really seriously. Spiritually and culturally the Indians lacked the wherewithal to withstand the onslaught of white man's civilization. . . . One must admit it offers no alternatives (much less a challenge) to Western civilization in the way the Arabic, Hebrew or Far Eastern civilizations do. It is simply not of that calibre.

He continues,

the state (or level) of the Indian world view (or thought pattern) being what it is, we cannot expect it to make any strong impact on Canadian literature. It cannot re-orientate or add new dimension to the existing and prevalent thought patterns.¹

This attitude toward Indian cultures is rarely expressed as bluntly as in Hirano's statement. The belief that there is no depth to mythology from minority cultures and that these cultures were all but destroyed because they lacked spiritual and cultural strength is a convenient explanation used by colonizers in all parts of the world.

Hirano is perhaps correct when he says that Indian literature is not a challenge to Western civilization but he does not recognize that it can indeed offer an alternative way of thinking and it can add a new dimension to existing thought patterns. In agreement with Hirano, is May Hill Arbuthnot who warned educators that Indian legends

are by and large neither sufficiently dramatic nor well enough organized to command interest. . . . the variants of old world tales collected among the North American Indians gives one the impression that their narrators were incapable even of preserving a good tale, to say nothing of inventing a new one. While this may sound like an extreme statement, as a matter of fact, it is largely true.²

3

Though this book has since been revised and the section on Indian mythology has been dramatically changed, the 1964 edition has influenced students of mythology for children for many years and is still found on library shelves.

Overcoming attitudes such as these can perhaps be accomplished by examining Indian mythology and placing it in the context of other world mythologies. If Indian mythology is found to have the same motifs and themes as mythology from other cultures, then the cause for not understanding the literature would well be that no serious attempt has been made to understand how these themes and motifs are interpreted and incorporated by the various

Native cultures. Other themes and motifs may also be found, those not found in European mythology, which could lead to a profoundly different world view from that held by Europeans. The same holds true for traditional Native poetry; its literary merits may be overlooked because of an inadequate understanding of the underlying cultural assumptions. Once the mythological basis of Native literature and the role of traditional poetry are understood, not only traditional but also contemporary Native literatures take on new meaning.

There are, however, three major problems inherent in the study of Native literature that require particular attention. The literature may not be generally accepted because it is still very close to the oral tradition and may be accepted because it is still very close to the oral tradition and may have many attributes of oral narrative. When oral narrative is being changed to "recorded literature" it may not be appreciated by readers who have a definite preference for written literature. A further problem is presented by translation procedures. The translator has considerable impact on the content and style of the translated product, especially when the literature comes from languages whose structural bases are radically different from the Indo-European languages. The problem of versions also arises; different translations of the same myths and legends must be recognized in Native cultures and the reasons for differences understood and accepted.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Although it is true that the aboriginal inhabitants of North America were divided into a large number of cultures, each with its own customs, lifestyles, values, beliefs, and language, the term "Indian" is commonly used to categorize all aborigines, thereby neglecting or simplifying the social and cultural diversity that actually existed among them. Anthropologists and ethnologists frequently studied a particular group, but their writings have been interpreted as describing "Indian" culture, as though Indians were one single, cohesive whole. It is, therefore, incorrect to refer to Native literature as though no differences between its various forms existed. The difference between these Native "literatures" and literature from Western culture, that is, the literature of the European world and its North American extension, is so great, however, that a separate category for Native literature is warranted.

Attitudes towards Indians are reflected in the written records of various eras. Not surprisingly, many of these works are characterized by lack of scholarship about Indian cultures. Early writers, making little attempt to understand aborigines, portrayed them as uncivilized and pagan. They were seen as a source of converts for the Christian church so that many early descriptions, usually the work of missionaries, were intended mainly to influence European supporters. Relationships changed when Natives became invaluable partners in the fur trade or allies in wars which had their origins in European politics. Even these changing relationships did not stimulate any particular interest in the cultures, because the focus was

mainly economic. The role the Indians played in warfare has been amply illustrated in history and fiction, contributing a great deal to the stereotype of the Indian delighting in savagery and torture. Once the battle for the continent was over, the Natives were adopted as protégés of the government, especially in Canada. It was felt that as a race they would soon be extinct: they would either die or assimilate into mainstream society. The paternalistic attitudes of the white man did much to destroy and discredit Native cultures. The suppression of languages and religious beliefs was particularly severe, leading inevitably to the suppression of any form of literature.

Fortunately, some scholars were interested in studying and preserving Indian cultures, although some of their works are unacceptable by today's standards because they reflect strongly the biases of the times or because they took unwarranted liberties in the interpretation of materials from languages which they themselves did not speak.⁴ The majority of these scholars, however, approached Native cultures in an objective fashion; many learned to speak the languages of the cultures which they studied. It is the works of these writers that have been used in compiling information for this study, with allowances made for the historical period in which they wrote and the prevailing attitudes that might have influenced their works.

The literature reviewed in order to complete this study falls into five major categories:

1. Comparative Mythology In placing American Indian mythology within the context of other world mythologies the following writers were most instructive: Maud Bodkin, Archetypal Patterns in Poetry: Psychological Studies of Imagination (1934), Franz Boaz, Race, Language

and Culture (1940), Joseph Campbell, The Hero With a Thousand Faces (1949), and The Masks of God: Primitive Mythology (1959), Northrop Frye, Anatomy of Criticism (1957) Mircea Eliade, Shamanism, Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy (1964), Erich Neumann, The Great Mother: An Analysis of Archetype (1969), Alan Dundes, "Structural Typology in North American Indian Folktales" (1964) and The Study of Folklore (1965) and Terence Hawkes, Structuralism and Semiotics (1977). Albert B. Lord, The Singer of Tales (1964) was used to examine oral tradition as opposed to written literature.

2. Indian Mythology Collections of Indian folklore in the form of myths and legends are legion, but not all are equally useful because of their lack of authenticity and because of the questionable integrity of the of the translator. For the purpose of this study the works of Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, G. Frazer, Washington Matthews, Stith Thompson, Franz Boaz, Mentor L. Williams and Paul Radin were most useful.
3. Traditional Indian Poetry Scholars of traditional poetry have produced a considerable body of descriptive literature. The earliest work in this field is George W. Cronyn, The Path on the Rainbow (1918), with an introduction by Mary Austin, who was at that time considered to be the leading authority on Indian poetry. Frances Densmore's outstanding collections span the years from 1918 to 1932. Washington Matthews published The Night Chant, a Navaho Ceremony in 1902, J.N.B. Hewitt, "The Requickenning Address of the Iroquois Condolence Council" in 1944. Daniel G. Brinton's large body of work was originally published between 1884 and 1889 with most of it reprinted in 1969. Other useful works are Ruth Bunzel, "Zuni Ritual Poetry", (1932), Ruth Murray Underhill, Singing for Power, (1938), A. Grove Day, The Sky Clears (1951), Margaret

Astrov, The Winged Serpent: American Indian Prose and Poetry, (1962), and John Bierhorst, In the Trail of the Wind (1971) and Four Masterworks of American Indian Literature (1974).

4. Contemporary Non-Native Critics Several collected works on Native literature have been published recently. Leaders in this field are Karl Kroeber, ed, Traditional American Indian Literature, Texts and Interpretations (1981), Dell Hymes, "In Vain I Tried to Tell You" (1981), and Brian Swann, ed, Smoothing the Ground: Essays on Native American Oral Literature (1983). All three books contain essays on traditional Native literature as well as on such issues as structure and themes found in contemporary writing.

Discussion of Contemporary Native literature is found predominantly in journals such as the American Indian Culture and Research Journal and American Indian Quarterly, though articles occasionally appear in such publications as English Education, College English and Critical Inquiry. Peter P. Biedler, Fred McTaggart, Michael Dorris, Robert C. Bell, Larry Evers, Carol Mitchell, Kenneth Roemer, James Ruppert, Kathleen M. Sands, Susan J. Scarberry and Alan R. Velie have all contributed to a considerable body of critical discussion. Of particular note are Jarold Ramsey, "The Teacher of Modern American Indian Writing as Ethnographer and Critic" (1979), Galen Buller, "New Interpretations of Native American Literature: A Survival Technique" (1980), Blanche H. Gelfant, "Mingling and Sharing in American Literature: Teaching Ethnic Fiction" (1981) and Arnold Krupat, "An Approach to Native American Texts" (1982).

5. Contemporary Native Critics The works of few Native scholars and critics of literature have been published. N. Scott Momaday's "The Man Made of

Words" was first published in Indian Voice (1970) and has been reprinted many times.⁵ The same holds true for Paula Gunn Allen's "The Sacred Hoop: A Contemporary Indian Perspective on American Indian Literature".⁶ George Clutesi's, Son of Raven, Son of Deer, contributes valuable insights into the role of Indian mythology and Thomas E. Sanders and Walter W. Peek, in Literature of the American Indian, cover a wide variety of topics. The latter book serves a worthwhile function in that it combines explanations with examples of Indian literature; but it has received some severe criticisms from other Native writers.⁷ Paula Gunn Allen, ed, Studies in American Indian Literature (1983), is an invaluable asset to the scholar of Native literature. Pan-Indianism has had considerable influence on contemporary literature. Although Native people of today identify most readily as members of particular tribes the Pan-Indian movement has developed in order to transcend tribal boundaries. It is a nationalistic movement but the philosophic goal is ultimately spiritual survival. Stewart Levine and Nancy O. Lurie discuss the movement and its impact on contemporary thought in The American Indian Today (1965).

This review of literature has identified the most influential writers on Native folklore and traditional poetry. The numerous discussions and criteria used by these writers help identify authentic versions and translations. Contemporary critics provide insights into the creative work of today's Native writers and assist in gaining an appreciation of work that is significantly different from the literature of Western culture.

III. PROBLEMS IN THE ACCEPTANCE OF NATIVE LITERATURE

In order to discuss Native literature agreement should be reached on

what Native literature is, how it is different from Western literature and why it should have a designation of its own. Native literature, except for some Mayan and Aztec works, was transmitted orally; it is only since the coming of European civilizations that it has been recorded. A problem arises because of the long-standing preference for written literature found in Western thinking, a preference which has come about partly because there has been little exposure to oral narrative, though other factors also come into play.

When oral narrative was first recorded, it was the record of a special performance. Though written down, it was still "oral"; the narrator who had dictated it was the "author" and the particular performance reflected a single moment in the tradition. It was unique. Yet, perhaps unwittingly, a fixed text was established as a result of the performance. This record then became the "original" and was viewed, not as one moment of tradition, but as the text. This emphasis on a fixed version was to become the difference between
8
the oral way of thought and the written way.

Oral tradition often dies when published texts are spread among artists. The shift from oral composition to the reproduction of a fixed text erodes memory. The technique of memorization is a skill entirely different from performing oral narrative, and because memorization stunts the ability of the artist to compose orally, his art is usually lost. It is not inevitable, however, that a literary tradition will automatically destroy the oral tradition. The two can exist side by side, as is demonstrated by Native cultures that have made a point of keeping their oral tradition alive. Our system of Western thought and education, however, has largely chosen to ignore this possibility. The problem is not a simple one to be remedied by placing different books on the prescribed curricula.

That scholars generally view written literature as superior to oral literature is indicated by Albert B. Lord when he says,

One of the difficulties in comprehending the change from oral to written lies in the fact that we think of the written always in terms of quality, and that of the highest. We assume without thinking that the written style is always superior to oral style, even from the very beginning. Actually this is an error in simple observation of experience, perpetuated, alas by scholars who have shunned experience for theoretical.⁹

He comments on this fallacy when he points out that

The art of narrative song was perfected, and I use the word advisedly, long before the advent of writing. It had no need for stylus or brush to become a complete artistic and literary medium.¹⁰

In order to fully appreciate Native literature readers must recognize the difference between oral and written literature. Although contemporary Native writers are using Western forms for self-expression, much of the literature they heard as children was oral.

English teachers, except for those few with a particular interest in oral narrative, find Native literature difficult to teach; existing critical theories generally refer only to the literature from Western cultures. In particular, there is a dearth of work by scholars from within the Native cultures, though a few writers such as Paula Gunn Allen and Vine Deloria Jr. have written critical articles from a Native perspective. It is ethnologists and anthropologists rather than scholars of literature who have described Native literature and have shown an interest in preserving it. Yet it is not they but literary critics who, often applying criteria from the dominant culture, currently comment on literary works by Native writers.

Before we can appreciate Native literature for its unique qualities we need to identify assumptions underlying the cultural beliefs. Galen

Buller (1980) contends that more and better criticism will be necessary to uncover the unique features of Indian writing. He asserts that there is need, if not for a new theory of criticism, then at least for new perceptions of existing critical theory as applied to Native American writers so that the student can find an alternate approach to understanding a distinctive ¹¹ literature.

Jarold Ramsey (1979) also addresses the problem of applying unsuitable critical methods and goes on to say,

What we are doing now as teachers and reviewers will have significant effect on what Indian writers will be able to do or will be given credit for in the future.¹²

He points out that Indians have an ethnographic identity; what they need now is recognition of their artistic identity. A criticism that takes into account diverse cultural and artistic aspects needs to be developed in order to do justice to Native literature.

IV. PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH TRANSLATION

Henry Rowe Schoolcraft first popularized Chippewa mythology and introduced it to a wider audience. Mentor L. Williams has stated that Schoolcraft should ¹³ justly be called a "father of ethnology and folklore", an honour he richly deserves, for he was the first folklorist to recognize the literary value and worth of Chippewa Indian mythology. His translations have since come under a great deal of criticism, but if it had not been for his pioneering work, much Indian folklore would have been irretrievably lost.

Many writers have taken liberties with Schoolcraft's originals. His correspondence shows that he did not intend them to be tales of literary

merit; they were, he said, the "scattered bones of original lore", awaiting an "arranger" to touch them "with the spear of truth and cause the skeleton¹⁴ of their ancient society to rise and live". Schoolcraft said of his own technique.

These tales have been taken from the oral relation of the Chippewas. . . . Written down at the moment, and consequently in haste, no opportunity for literary refinement was presented; and after the lapse of some time, we have not judged it expedient to make any material alterations in the language adopted, while our impressions were fresh. A literal adherence to the sense of the original, to the simplicity of the narrative, and in many instances to the mode of expression of the Indians, is thus preserved, while the order of the incidents throughout is strictly the same. . . . We do not feel assured that the selections here given present a just specimen of their merit - particularly in relation to the poetic machinery or invention of the Indians.¹⁵

In spite of this acknowledgement of his work's shortcomings, Schoolcraft's critics were severe: the most severe and authoritative, and the most widely quoted, is Stith Thompson. He wrote that

Unfortunately, the scientific value of his work is marred by the manner in which he has reshaped the stories to suit his own literary tastes. Several of his tales, indeed, are distorted beyond recognition. . . . Among these tales was the myth of Manabozho, though he caused great confusion by adapting to his myth the name of the Iroquois hero, Hiawatha. Through the poem of Longfellow, the details of this myth have become part of American literature. . . .

A result of Schoolcraft's sentimentality has been the attitude of a large part of the general public toward Indian traditions. All sections of the country have acquired legends of "lover's leaps". The courtship of Hiawatha and Minnehaha, the least "Indian" of any of the events in Hiawatha, has come for many readers to stand as the typical American Indian tale.¹⁶

This statement does Schoolcraft something of an injustice. The link between the myth of Manabozho and the Iroquois Hiawatha is first found in Longfellow's poem. It would appear, though, that Schoolcraft later copied Longfellow, likely because sales of his own collection of legends were poor.

There is no doubt that the legends were adapted to Schoolcraft's literary and religious tastes, and that being aware of the tastes of the reading public, not have been sentimental enough for the reading public of his time. Yet Williams completely rejects Thompson's accusation that Schoolcraft distorted tales beyond recognition, saying that Schoolcraft might have shortened a tale here and there, but that he was too much of a dedicated man to recast one to suit a moral prejudice.

That difficulty of translation exists for all researchers is evident in the introductory and explanatory comments that folklorists add to their works; most point out the deficiencies and inadequacies of their translations and meticulously describe their sources and method of work so that the final product can be evaluated accordingly. These problems of translation may present a barrier to an adequate understanding of Native literature. Many translations of poetry and legends were made with no other thought in mind than to transmit their factual meanings and so to add to the knowledge about a culture. On the other hand, literary translations were concerned also with the connotations or suggestive qualities of the words. The best renditions have been made by men and women who were professional students of Indian languages and who also had some poetic abilities of their own. No poet, regardless of gifts or talents, can enter upon this task of translation without a thorough knowledge of the Indian language being translated. The translations of Franz Boaz, Daniel G. Brinton, Natalie Curtiss, Frances Densmore, Washington Matthews, Frank Russel, Herbert J. Spinden, Ruth Bunzel, Leonard Bloomfield, Paul Radin and Edward Sapir are widely quoted and seem to be acceptable to most critics of Native North American literature. These folklorists were professional students of Indian lore and Indian life.

A number of specific problems face the translator - more than one language and culture are involved and also a different time period. The experiential integrity of the original must be retained while regenerating the spirit of the source in a new paradigm. When the tribal ear listens ceremonially at one time and the modern scholar reads a printed page at another, questions of forms and function peculiar to each situation become vital to an accurate understanding of the literature.

Furthermore, every Indian language is different: a translator cannot assume that what is discovered in the literature of one tribe will apply to another. For example, Ruth Murray Underhill¹⁷ experienced difficulty with tense in her translations of the Papago language because the lives of the Papagos themselves were a constant shift between the old and the new. She chose to use the present tense to describe the ceremonies, though some existed only in the memories of the old men. Oliver Wells describes a more complicated time structure in Squamish myths.¹⁸ There is no time element to any Salish verb; the action or state of mind is always "present", never "now" or "then", a peculiarity noticeable in the texts of the myths.

A further problem arises when myths are treated as factual history. A literal translation may merely make a myth absurd and may miss the fundamental symbolism. If stories which originated as sacred narrative are edited or bowdlerized to fit adult ideas of what children should read or to fit trends of a particular era some of the fundamental meaning is lost. Probably more meaning is lost through bowdlerization than by translation from one language to another. Many trickster myths with sacred meanings have been changed to simple aetiological tales through moralizing translation.

Problems all translators face in translating Indian poetry are those of meaning, style and rhythm. Meaning is lost when songs are taken out of their ceremonial settings. Sometimes a song is incomprehensible unless accompanied by some description of its ritual and social function or of the legend of which it is a part. The difficulties of rendering literal translations, especially in ritual poetry, are increased when the poem relies on tribal symbolism, figurative, secret or archaic language and allusions to Indian myths which are familiar only to tribal listeners.

Rhythm is an aspect of poetry that is most frequently forfeited. To most translators a successful interpretation of meaning and style takes precedence over merely metrical interest. Sometimes it is possible for a translator to attain an effect similar to that of the original metre by choosing a European metre which might be expected to arouse the same emotional attitude on the part of the listener. Ruth Bunzel, for example, points out that ritual prayers of the Zuni compare favourably to the free verse of the King James version of the Psalms.¹⁹

Translators often find themselves having to cope with an Indian delight in deliberate ambiguity or puns. The Indians did not always seek clarity of meaning, and what might seem to us as obscurity of expression might have been prized for its indirectness. The Navajo, according to Matthews, felt no discomfort if a passage in a chant seemed to have two different meanings.

Allusions to commonplaces within a tribal culture bring perplexity to the modern reader; even the most capable translator cannot listen to a poem with the same receptivity as could the tribal member. The connotations aroused by the words might be entirely different. In the emotional sense, then, the feelings awakened by translated poetry cannot be carried over in exactly the

same way to another language and another culture. This, however, does not damage their poetic value in English nor their capacity to arouse aesthetic satisfaction in the contemporary reader.

The ideal translation is "lexical", or word for word rendering, but as this rarely yields readable English, the translator resorts to what might properly be called a "literal" version. In this the words are rearranged with perhaps a few additions and deletions to make the text comprehensible. A third approach is to recast the text completely in a new mold; this is called "free" translation. Still another method, no longer acceptable, is the "interpretive" translation, in which a skimpy text is filled out with explanatory phrases to convey what the translator thinks was "really" meant; this often led to misinterpretations.

Many anthologies use Schoolcraft's "Chant to a Firefly" as an example of how a literal and literary translation can be achieved. Schoolcraft says of this chant,

In the hot summer evenings, the children . . . along the shores of the upper lakes, and in the northern latitudes, frequently assemble before their parents' lodges, and amuse themselves by little chants of various kinds, with shouts and dancing. Attracted by such shouts of merriment and gambols, I walked out one evening, to a green lawn skirting the edge of the St. Mary's river, with the fall in full view, to get hold of the meaning of some of these chants. The air and the plain were literally sparkling with the phosphorescent light of the firefly. By dint of attention, repeated on one or two occasions, the following succession of words was caught. They were addressed to the insect.²⁰

Thomas E. Sanders and Walter W. Peek use Schoolcraft's work to demonstrate how the actual process of translation can take place. (Appendix I)

Reference to the work of A. Grove Day is helpful in evaluating Native poetry. He has established four criteria for judging the excellence of a translation:

1. How close is the literal translation to the original?
2. With what skill have such features of the original as meaning, verbal style or metrical effect been carried over into the English?

(These first two criteria can, of course, only be judged by a person with a knowledge of the original language.)

3. How is the translation valued in comparison with translations from other primitive verse?
4. What worth has the translation of the Indian poem as a contribution to the main body of American literature?²¹

More useful criteria for the contemporary English-speaking reader are established by Kenneth R. Lincoln in his discussion of "Tribal Poetics of Native American":

1. Does the poem honor the source of the original (its inherent cultural values)?
2. Does the poem sing with an echo of the original music (rhythm, tone, syntax, structure)?
3. Does the poem freshly penetrate things (insight and meaning)?
4. Does the poem give expression to a truth (accurate form and style)?²²

The loss of many nuances and subtle meanings in translation presents a real limitation in the new versions, but there still is validity in studying English versions. Many young Native people do not speak an Indian language and hear only English renderings of their own literature. Although structures of the stories do not change a great deal, ideally myths, legends and poetry should be transmitted in the original language. One of the unique aspects of Native mythology is that it is still being transmitted orally in both English and Native languages; oral tradition and written literature can and do exist side by side.

Some progress in translating works has been made by contemporary scholars of Native literature. They gradually have recognized that Western methods of

studying literature do not always apply to Indian literature and scholars are turning once more to the original works and retranslating them in the light of new knowledge and attitudes. Daniel G. Brinton was one of the earliest translators to study Aztec and Mayan works for literary qualities; John Bierhorst has continued with his work. Other folklorists and critics whose work on many different cultures is presently available are Karl Kroeber, Kenneth Lincoln, Dennis Tedlock, Dell Hymes, Kenneth Roemer, Barre Toelken and Andrew O. Wiget.

V. THE PROBLEM OF VERSIONS

Another problem of oral literature is that a text is so multifaceted a thing that even a single example can be studied again and again, and scholars will have different interpretations. Each new reading can bring to light other elements of the text's potential for meaning. Oral literature deserves the same kind of attention as has been given to written literature over the years. It, too, offers rich possibilities.

To determine accuracy of a translated legend it is necessary to utilize informants from the culture. Myths especially seem to be conservative, and an insider can point out whether this may be because priests or some other wardens of truth exercised formal watchfulness over story, recital, content, style and development. Variation of myth is not impossible, but within a given structure it is inhibited by a number of factors which can only be determined from within the culture. A narrator's freedom to add personal touches is generally affected by restrictions that are part of the ethnic group's own sense of how to perform a genre.

Structuralists, of whom Levi-Strauss is the leading proponent, have

made it a matter of principle that myth requires no special handling as art. Critics like Wi²³get and Dundes²⁴ have applied the science of structure to folklore and to cultural anthropology. Wi²³get, in particular, has applied linguistics to literature abounding with ceremonial language and showed by examining familiar patterns, metre, metaphor, rhyme and pitch how content and technique are related to it. This kind of work adds immeasurably to scholarship regarding Native literature, but it tends to ignore the phenomena that the more old-fashioned critic loves - the idiosyncratic features of a particular telling.

Contemporary scholars have written widely on versions of myths and legends, many from the structuralist point of view but structuralists have a tendency to ignore the purpose of the legend. Literary style does not have the same significance for them. For structuralists the gross elements are more important, especially for the purpose of comparison, than are particulars of style, texture, occasion and nuance. Structuralists, unfortunately, tend to ignore artistic accomplishments in favour of anthropological significance. There is a danger that a feeling of cultural superiority may arise; the art of "primitive" people may be seen as poorly developed.

A carefully shaped tale will reveal as much about ceremonial functions as will an anthropological study. The contradictions inevitable in a culture will necessarily provoke different responses from participants which will lead to different versions. If the artistry of literary versions is not taken into account, justice will not be done to a cultural group. It is in this respect that most ethnographic descriptions are deficient.

As a structuralist Levi-Strauss has emphasized the presence of contradictions within a culture, expressed in versions of all kinds. They are inherent in the role of myth; there is a constant "making new" regardless

of who the teller is because these contradictions will lead to differences. There is also the cultural belief that the world of myth was never complete, so that alternate versions were not unusual; a single telling was often not expected to be complete.

Different ethnographers show a preference for generalized features or for the variance which divergence will bring; it is a matter of valuing similarity or originality. Critics may not agree on what should be emphasized. If a version appears to be deviant it may be considered less valuable ethnographically, but to the literary critic it might be aesthetically superior.

Studying the balance between traditional elements in a given version and the features of new creations is one of the most important problems of the folklorist. It is truly the root of all other problems. Folklorists have finally admitted that such a tension exists and they are now admitting its positive features by observing variations in their interpretation of texts.

In the study of versions a useful distinction may be made between functional and literary tales. Radin points out,

Many of the myths attained in North America are found in two distinct types of versions, one in which they have not, to any appreciable extent been subject to literary workmanship and one in which they have . . . The one represents the myth as folklore, the other as literature.²⁵

In brief, the artistic tale is not likely to be repeated with accuracy. When narrative is a vehicle for non-aesthetic purposes, various recitalists will likely observe some consistency throughout the retellings. The artistic story is more fragile for if an artistic story is badly told it becomes relatively worthless. A gifted artist, however, one with imaginative originality, refines and reshapes the common material.

The question then arises whether or not the artistic tale is truly authentic. Artistic narratives do not intend to deceive; they render tales accurately. But a gifted and imaginative recitalist cannot retell a story exactly as heard, and so the integrity of the tale may be threatened. He transforms, less by conscious intent than by an intuitive process of altering because of his creative abilities.

To make this point is not to justify deliberate "improvements," bowdlerizations and adaptations by Westerners that have plagued North American Indian folktales. Literary art, written or oral, can be a means of exploring intricate difficulties arising from the principle of a specific pattern of life. This is why even brief oral tales can be remarkably significant to a culture but difficult for an outsider to analyse as literature. The folklorist must consider carefully the necessities of art, but the literary critic must in turn remember that other legends are not badly told or "poor art" simply because their aim is not primarily aesthetic. Neither similarities of general form nor shared general subject matter justifies treating two narrative versions as the same story if their purposes are aesthetically distinguishable.

No discrimination between artistic and non-artistic tales can ever be absolute or definitive. Still, the attempt to distinguish between the two can deepen an understanding of particular stories and the cultures from which they came. A non-literary tale will tend to emphasize the overt, announced, officially recognized aspects of the story-teller's culture, which will be represented by uncomplicated affirmations; the narrators tend to conceal the contradictions of the culture. Ethnologists and folklorists are likely to record these stories, for they are primary modes of asserting and reinforcing the explicit characteristics of a particular way of life. A tale told by an artistically-gifted individual will be both rare and deviant because it will

not embody generalized or common attitudes and understandings. It will deal with a particular situation in which the figure is potentially capable of upsetting a cherished manner of living, giving it particular artistic value.

Folklorists need to know as much as possible about the tradition upon which the story-teller drew, and the only reliable way of establishing what the story-teller's input was is to find a number of versions for comparison. The "artistry" of a tale may be a well established part of the tale's tradition.

Interpreting oral texts can become a very difficult and complex undertaking. It is just too easy to assume that any differences between a "functional" version of a story and a "literary" version, which the collector or critic prefers, is the result of the individual story-teller's skill. Meaningful variations, however, occur regularly within the tradition. The story-teller's purpose may bring in large amounts of detail of different kinds for each version. Externally the episodes may appear quite different. (Appendix II)

The present day folklorist method of literary criticism recognizes, and is willing to deal with traditions attached to a story but as parts of a story rather than as encumbrances. Improved linguistic techniques and techniques introduced by structuralists all assist in improved work in the area of translation of mythology.

NOTES

1

Keiichi Hirano, "The Aborigine in Canadian Literature," Canadian Literature, No. 14. (1962), pp. 50-52.

2

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3

May Hill Arbuthnot and Zena Sutherland, Children and Books (London: Scott, Foresman & Co., 1972).

⁴
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⁵
N. Scott Momaday, "The Man Made of Words" in Abraham Chapman, Literature of the American Indians (New York: New American Library, 1975), p. 96.

⁶
For example, Ibid., p. 111.

⁷
Paula Gunn Allen, ed. Studies in American Indian Literature (New York: Modern Language Association of American, 1983) p. 27, as well as conversations with D. Bruce Sealey, University of Manitoba, summer 1984.

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Albert B. Lord, Singer of Tales (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964), p. 124.

⁹
Ibid.

¹⁰
Ibid., p. 134.

¹¹
Galen Buller, "New Interpretations of Native American Literature: A Survival Technique:", Indian Culture and Research Journal, 4, No. 1 & 2, (1980).

¹²
Jarold Ramsey, "The Teacher of Modern American Indian Writing as Ethnographer and Critic", College English, 41, No. 2, (1979), p. 163.

¹³
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¹⁴
Ibid., p. xxi.

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¹⁶
Stith Thompson, Tales of the North American Indians (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1929), p. xv.

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Alan Dundes, "Structural Typology in North American Indian Folktales", Southwestern Journal of Anthropology, Vol 19, (1963).

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CHAPTER III

TRADITIONAL NATIVE LITERATURE: MYTH AND LEGEND

I. INTRODUCTION

The investigation of Native literary sources has revealed motifs and themes that are common to all world mythologies. Because Indian mythologies have not always been recognized as having significance comparable to other mythologies it is useful to discuss briefly the origin of myths and the universal themes found in all mythologies in order to compare Native mythologies with others. This is followed by a discussion of the uniqueness of Native literature and identification of the differences between myth and legend, a distinction which is still an important aspect of the on-going oral tradition of Native cultures. Major categories of Native folklore found are origin myths, trickster cycles, legends and modern day myths; by far the greatest number fall into the category of trickster cycles or fragments thereof. The chapter concludes with a discussion on the importance of myth and folktale in the healthy development of a child. Because existing school programs are based almost exclusively on folklore from Western cultures it can be argued that neglect of Native literature in schools may well have caused deep-seated damage to Native children.

Certain difficulties are encountered by readers unfamiliar with Indian mythology; most are the results of the assumptions, values and modes of perception which come from a distinctively Western literature. The reader must keep in mind that Indian legends spring from an oral tradition. The narrator of a myth or legend will supply only the bare skeleton of the story in words. He recites external actions with a minimum, and sometimes

complete absence of setting, description or analysis of the characters' feelings. The narrator is supplying supplementary information to his audience with his voice, his facial expressions and his gestures. Moreover, the audience that listens to him is so homogeneous and so familiar with the narrative or a similar version of it that it has no difficulty in filling in the gaps that might remain.

A further difficulty that a very literal-minded reader might experience is that of the continual shape-shifting that characterizes many narratives. It must be understood by the modern reader that these transformations were not simply an artistic device for the Indians but an article of belief, even if this belief comes from a time when such things were possible, a time far removed from the present. The traditional Indians' sense of the range of phenomenal possibilities was far wider than that found today. It must simply be accepted by the reader.

The preference for written literature that exists in contemporary society has handicapped many readers in fully enjoying the unique artistic experience that oral literature brings. In Singer of Tales, Albert B. Lord makes a statement which is significant when considering the nature of Native mythology.

The term "literature" presupposing the use of letters, assumes that verbal works of imagination are transmitted by means of writing and reading. The expression of "oral literature" is obviously a contradiction of the terms. ¹

He suggests that oral tradition is as "intricate and meaningful" as written tradition; it is not simply a less polished, more haphazard or cruder form of literature. By the time written techniques come into being, oral art forms are long set and highly developed. It is important to remember that most North American mythology was and still is transmitted orally.

II. SIMILARITIES BETWEEN NATIVE AND OTHER ORAL LITERATURES

Native literature, like any other literature, is based on mythologies which shaped its underlying assumptions. So-called "primitive humanity" when properly assessed is not childishly ignorant and barbaric; rather it is instinctively and characteristically poetic in its response to the world. The necessity and capacity to generate myths is one generally distinctive and human characteristic discernible in all early societies. In twentieth century society the governing principle has been a rational scientific tradition which has set absolute standards by which to judge truth. This has led to a common degeneration of the term "myth" to mean fiction or invention; however, this definition is becoming widely recognized as being a gross misrepresentation of the term.

Myths, more thoughtfully interpreted, can be seen as "civil histories² of the first peoples who where everywhere naturally poets." Terence Hawkes explains,

All myths. . . have their grounding in the actual generalized experience of ancient peoples, and represent their attempts to impose a satisfying, graspable, humanizing shape on it.³

The myths created a foundation for social institutions in early societies; they represent not childishly primitive responses to society, but rather mature and sophisticated ways of knowing, understanding, and presenting information. Like all art they were a way of coping with reality.

In spite of the twentieth century scientific bias there have always been philosophers who have argued that there are two kinds of knowledge: knowledge of the conscious, external world of everyday life, and a fundamentally different kind of knowledge of the subconscious internal workings of the human mind. It is this subconscious, intuitive kind that mythology

tries to explore and explain. The rediscovery of the importance of myth in this century has led to a fundamental re-examination of ourselves as human beings and of our categories of knowledge.

No one explanation can fit all mythologies, nor will scholars agree entirely on any one theory. There are those that attempt to explain myth as a response to locally-conditioned interests, an attempt to explain local imponderables. For them climate, history, landscape, social conditions and other material circumstances are the primary focus shaping humanity's ideals, emotions and fantasies. Many more writers on mythology, however, refer to Carl Jung and the theory of archetypes when discussing the role of myth in a culture.⁴ Terence Hawkes⁵ points out that a wholly objective perception of individual entities is not possible, so that any observer is bound to create something of what is observed; this imaginative literature and psychology are brought into clearer relationship through the work of Jung who maintained that literature possesses certain emotional significance, a certain going-beyond the definite meaning conveyed. Jung attributed this insight to the stirrings of the reader's mind, within or beneath his conscious response, in response to what he terms archetypes.

Immanuel Velikovsky was the main influence on both Jung and Freud as the first writer to identify racial memory,⁶ an inherited unconscious memory, as a powerful motivating force. He also referred to this memory as the collective mind which is found in the early stages of the development of the species and which accounts for world-wide similarity of actions. It is never fully exposed to man coming to the fore only in excited states of mind. He also postulated that this collective mind is responsible for the similarity of myths.

Velikovsky spoke of archetypes as psychic residue of numberless experiences of the same types, experiences which have happened, not to the individual but to his ancestors. The results of the experiences form the basis of structural brain patterns which are passed on as inherited memory. These stories are deeply imbedded in the memory of a people; they help identify and clarify cultural patterns. This holds true he argues for all cultures. Velikovsky defines primordial archetypes as those manifested in the early phase of human consciousness, ⁷ that is, those that are created when the society is in a "primitive" state. The way in which these archetypes are interpreted into symbols and are understood form the various cultures.

The universality of mythic structures was the focus of Joseph Campbell's The Hero With a Thousand Faces, which compared meanings of myths from around the world. If mythology springs from similar sources, Campbell argued

The parallels [in all cultures] will be immediately apparent; and these will develop a vast and amazingly consistent statement of the basic truths by which man has lived throughout the milleniums [sic] of his residence on this planet.

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Similar archetypes which he found in all cultures are, for example, the Great Mother, the rebirth pattern, initiation rites, and the rise and fall of the tragic hero. The archetype is manifested principally in the fact that it unconsciously determines human behavior, but in accordance with laws and independently of the experience of the individual.

An example of how an archetype may influence literature and art is shown ⁹ in Erick Neumann's work on the Great Mother. He clearly indicates that nature of an archetype and its function in a culture. The archetype or primordial image of the Great Mother does not refer to an image existing solely in time and space, but to the outward expression of an inward image at work in the human psyche. He explains how universal symbols for various

archetypes are found in the early periods of mankind and demonstrates the pervasiveness of a vessel symbol which is used for femininity. Woman is experienced as the vessel "par excellence" which is extended to a formulaic

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woman = body = vessel = world. He contends that correlation of the human body with the symbolism of the vessel in the feminine archetype, and therefore with the world, is so commonplace as to be a law of primitive man.

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He continues,

When we consider the whole scope of feminine functions - the giving of life, nourishment, warmth, and protection - we can understand why the feminine occupies so central a position in human symbolism and from the very beginning bears the character of "greatness".¹²

This archetype can take the form of the "great" and the "good" mother, as well as the "terrible" mother. The symbolic expression of this psychic phenomenon is to be found in the figures of the Great Goddesses represented in the myths and artistic creations through the ages. The effect of this archetype may be followed through the whole of history, for its workings can be seen in the rites, the myths and the symbols of early man. It exists in the dreams, fantasies and creative works of today.

The theory of archetypes is very important to the study of Indian mythology, particularly if this mythology is to be seen as having depth and profundity equal to that of other world mythologies. Writers such as Keiichi Hirano and May Hill Arbuthnot stated that Indian mythology lacks depth, yet an archetypal examination of Indian myths proves this position invalid. Erich Neumann, in fact, stated,

The most recent research makes it quite certain that the American cultures developed independently from those of the Old World. The striking correspondence between the symbolism of the two worlds must then rest on an archetypal foundation.

Most scholars of Indian folklore have identified various aspects of the Great Mother archetype - both the "good" and the "terrible" forms. Some aspect of this symbolism is found in creation myths, fertility rites and others, whereas the "terrible" mother is most often found in the myths and artistic representations of the "toothed vagina".¹⁴

Indian mythology abounds with other familiar archetypes. The rebirth pattern is recorded by Henry Rowe Schoolcraft and Basil Johnston. (Appendix II) The god Mandamin had to be killed in order to be reborn in the form of food for mankind. G. Frazer records various forms of the maize ritual found in the New World.¹⁵ An archetype at the heart of all world religions is the rise and fall of the tragic hero. The death of the hero brings pain mingled with something like exultation to the readers - a glory in the greatness of the soul's ultimate passion. This pattern is best exemplified in North American mythology by the Aztec God Quetzalcoatl.¹⁶ (Appendix III)

These few examples show that similarity of archetypes are, indeed, world wide. Though the form and events in Indian mythology may be quite different it can be of some comfort to the uninitiated reader that its themes and motifs are quite often familiar.

III. UNIQUENESS OF NATIVE MYTHS AND LEGENDS

Mythology dates back to early man but myths do not develop only in primitive society, they also develop in societies where the recounting of oral narrative is still a way of life. Franz Boaz feels that the first step in the study of the development of folktales must be an investigation of processes that may still be observed at the present time in some cultures;¹⁷

Indian cultures in North America occupy a unique position in that both oral and written traditions exist at the same time. Paula Gunn Allen¹⁸ believes it is difficult to speak coherently about myth at the present time because the term has been misused; this is the reason why few sacred myths of the Indians are published. She explains that ritual usually accompanies myth and that both are based on visionary experiences, the seeking of visions being a practice central to most Native American societies. She believes that Black Elk Speaks is in the most proper sense a myth,

consisting of a logical progression of symbols, it is in truth a metaphysical statement that is significant in its cosmological implications, in its prophetic content, in its narrative sequence, in its source of timelessness, in its characters, and ultimately in its meaning for people all over the country. Seen that way, it is an example of myth at its most sacred and abstract.

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Allen believes that it is because of the importance of the vision to the life of the people that the religious life of the tribe endures, even under the most adverse circumstances. But a vision can only be experienced by one person, and it must be shared; thus myths originate. Black Elk Speaks is a rare example of modern day myth recorded in writing. Though the North American Native Church, based on the peyote ceremony, continues the practice of translating visions into stories and songs, few are recorded. Where this does take place it is more often in the form of poetry.

Not all contemporary writers agree on the importance and ubiquity of myths in modern society. In The Sacred Legends of the Sandy Lake Cree a Canadian collection of mythology, Stevens,²⁰ contends that, because most of the Indians are Christians, their beliefs have been curiously combined with many of the old ways and persist under a veneer of Christianity. Though the rituals of the church are accepted and many Indians participate

fully, their old traditional beliefs are retained. Indians accepted new ways eagerly and were highly innovative in adapting them to their old ways and the new religion combined with the traditional beliefs readily so did not replace them. There is a noted reluctance to relate myths because of the conflict with Christianity in the minds of the non-Native listeners; also, the Sandy Lake Cree hold the old myths to be too sacred to tell because they embody the ancient beliefs of the people. Stevens maintains that myths are no longer told or created because reformists in the north disapprove of the stories, believing them to be sacrilegious or obscene according to Western teaching. The educational system has not used the stories in school curricula and the encroachment of Western civilization on the remote areas of the north has resulted in mythology becoming irrelevant as a form of recreation and as a world view so it is no longer used as a means of understanding the culture.

Agnes Grant's experience has been otherwise. She says that Native parents have always kept these myths and legends alive and the process of transmitting them from generation to generation has continued with little interruption, even though the educational institutions have not participated in this process in the past and still contribute little. Grant says,

After nine years of teaching courses in Children's Literature, Oral Narratives and Native Literature to Indian and Métis students from the prairie provinces, I have yet to find a student who is not familiar with [the trickster]. I have yet to find a student who cannot tell a Nanabush or We-sa-ka-chak legend with competence and appreciation. 21

It is in legends that a combination of the old and the new is most frequently found. The trickster continues his wanderings in modern society, and although his pranks are timeless, the situations are contemporary. One legend explains why the city of Winnipeg, meaning "muddy water", bears

its name: the trickster attempted to fly like Santa Claus and his subsequent threshing around has muddied the water hundreds of miles away. ²² Another tale tells why the song, "Your Cheating Heart" is so popular in northern Manitoba - it is being sung by the trickster because he was outwitted in a contest. ²³ Perhaps Basil Johnston best sums up the role of modern myths when he says,

Because each Ojibway story may embody several themes and meanings, time and deliberation are required for adequate appreciation. There is no instantaneous understanding. Ojibway stories are as broad and deep in meaning and mystery as are the tales, legends, and myths of the Greek, Roman, and Egyptians and other peoples and are just as difficult to understand as are the parables of the Bible.

Fortunately Ojibway stories are flexible in nature and scope. It is for this reason that they are best narrated. Skill and imagination will enable the story-teller to impart any level of meaning according to the scope and ability of the audience.

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Grant's and Johnston's comments are supported by Ron Roulette, a gifted Native story teller from Saskatchewan. Roulette capably disproves Stevens' statement that stories are no longer created today. Moreover, Roulette asserts the stories of Native people are as alive today as they were four hundred years ago. He tells of rumors that We-sa-ka-chak went away to an island in the north-west because white people make too much noise but, occasionally, something new is heard about what he has done. Roulette heard that he had wrecked an airplane up in Churchill Falls and not long ago the Old Man was supposed to have created a disturbance on the Red Lake Reservation in Minnesota. Then there are those who say he is working for the government in Ottawa. ²⁵

The important thing about the Old Man is that no matter where Indian people go, he will go with them. Story telling is more than entertainment. It is an expression of life. The stories of We-sa-ka-chak share the joys and sorrows of being human.

The Old Man might not like noise and he might go away to his island once in a while, but We-sa-ka-chak will always come back because someone will always be telling stories about him. 26

Though this rich body of Native folklore exists the mythology and folklore which has been used in the schools has largely come from Western cultures. Most common are the nursery rhymes and fairy tales of early grades. Through fairy tales recognizable stylistic patterns are taught - the opening phrase of "Once upon a time", the abrupt ending, the magic number three - all giving shape and pattern to the story. These patterns acquire implicit significance for the child who is exposed to them again and again. 27

Indian myths and legends must not be confused with fairy tales. Fairy tales are products of Western culture and are not only structurally, but also thematically different. Though there are some structural similarities as in cumulative tales, by-and-large significantly different structures are found in North American Indian tales. The beginning of the tale is more commonplace - "One day Nanabush was going along" or a variant thereof. The ending is not definite, though in many cases there is a conclusion which explains why a certain phenomena of nature exists, but the legend itself is only a fragment of the total trickster cycle. The "magic" number three is replaced by the "sacred" number four with all its religious significance.

George Clutesi explains

In all the Indian ceremonial procedures, customs, actions and teaching the number four was invariably used to denote the completeness of any task, enterprise or song; for four days and four nights he prepared himself physically and morally to communicate with his god. His song was always sung four time; so too was the main point of a lesson for a child so he may discover and perceive on his own, thus remember and benefit to the fullest possible extent, the morals therein.

The Western emphasis on child and orphan heroes and their eventual triumph over evil forces is usually absent; instead the characters are more likely to be animals of undetermined age or sex. The tales do not "fit" the Western concept of what a "good" story should be; that is, a story with a beginning, middle and ending; a story with suspense and a definite resolution of a problem, or the teaching of a moral lesson.

In fact, there is a complete absence of moralizing in primitive folklore. The plots of primitive folklore find happy solutions and conform to the standards followed by the narrator. This, however, is not the same as a fable which teaches a specific moral truth. Although an American Indian folktale may be used for teaching moral truths, this was not a part of the integral purpose of the tale, though the narrator sometimes conveys morals in the form of metaphorical expressions. ²⁹ The Heaven/Hell image of Western culture does not exist in aboriginal Native mythology; it was introduced by Christian Europeans and has found its way into later works. The God/Satan image is not included, but good/evil is a prevalent theme; good is a principal unity penetrating the whole universe while evil is the enemy of group values.

The most outstanding characteristic of North American mythology is repetition; the same motif recurs again and again. A large mass of material collected from the same tribe is liable to be repetitious, perhaps even monotonous to the uninitiated listener. Typical repetition of some incident is found among tales from many tribes. The story may concern the misfortunes that befell a number of brothers until the last one is successful in the undertaking. Another way this repetition is manifested is in a type of cumulative tale in which a climax is reached by an unfortunate person being helped in a very insignificant way. The help extended to him then becomes more and more potent, until the sufferer becomes the fortunate possessor

of power and wealth; this has similarities to some European tales.

Rhythmic structures, especially rhythmic repetition, are a fundamental trait of primitive narrative prose. It is very difficult to gain an accurate understanding of the forms of primitive prose because most of the available material has been recorded in Western literary style. It is important, therefore, in considering reliable collections, to pay particular attention to the parts that appear to have had a fixed formal structure. A complete understanding regarding the rhythmic character of formal prose presents problems for the modern mind but there is little doubt that frequent repetition of a single motif was in part, due to the pleasure given by rhythmic repetition.

It must not be assumed, however, that the literary style of a people is uniform; in fact, it is quite often varied. A tribe may develop complex tales with definite structural cohesion, but it may also produce brief anecdotes. Some stories are told with evident enjoyment of diffuse detail, while others are reduced almost to formulae.

Few discussions on Native mythology written from a Native point of view are available since most critical work has been done by non-Native researchers. Thomas E. Sanders and Walter W. Peek, while presenting a Native point of view, agree with the conventional wisdom surrounding mythology but go on to express a much deeper affinity with oral narrative which demonstrates that myths are still an integral part of North American Indian culture.

Native American people know the Power of their songs, legends, history, stories, oratory - those things which a "literate" society calls its "literature". Listening to an elder talk during a winter evening or responding to the rhythm of the drum and the melodies of the singers is more than just entertainment or social passtime for the People of this Land. It is "literature" which passes on advice and knowledge, which binds together individuals into the web of extended family and clan and tribe and Membership in the Creation which Western Civilization knows of, but seldom experiences.

IV. THE NATURE OF MYTHS AND LEGENDS

The terms "myth" and "legend" are not interchangeable so arriving at some sort of distinction is important because of the different roles they play, even in Native cultures today. Folklorists have long grappled with definitions but no matter what definition of myth they adopt or what distinctions they make between myths and legends they cannot avoid establishing some arbitrary boundaries. Certain contents of these modes are largely the same, for there is continual flow of material from mythology to legends and vice-versa.

Myths and legends are not generally regarded as fiction by members of a culture, but as true ancient history, something important which happened long ago. As such, they are an integral part of the culture and reflected its belief in the vital relationships between the human, animal, inanimate and spiritual elements of the world. Myths were and still are sacred literature and tell of a physical universe which is filled with spiritual powers. They deal with a time long past - with events that can no longer happen. Legends are less serious and tell of secular activities - anecdotal records, the work-a-day world or history.

Northrop Frye describes myths as

a particular group [of tales] which is thought of as more serious, more authoritative, more educational and closer to fact and truth than the rest.

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He further distinguishes between "canonical" and "apocryphal" myth - canonical presumes a high plane of authority, thus exerts greater thematic importance for the culture. Apocryphal myths are equally mythological in the literary sense but do not have the same sacred importance in a culture and thus are

more commonly referred to as "legends".

Frederick W. Turner³² and Allen R. Velie³³ distinguish between sacred and secular myths. Sacred tales deal with an age long past and include divine or semi-divine figures; secular tales are less serious, chiefly anecdotal, stories with unexpected events or embellished accounts of recent events. Secular myths are thus closer to legends than to myths.

Mircea Eliade defines myth as an account of creation which relates how something was produced or how some aspect of the present reality came into being. It also reveals models for all significant human activities. Although he clearly defines myths, he does not specify what type of stories would be called "legends". In a society where myth is still a living tradition, he would argue, a man or woman re-enacts an event performed in mythical times with every secular activity.³⁴

Franz Boaz claims his categorization comes from the Indians themselves. He calls the first category, which relates incidents which happened when the world had not yet assumed its present form and was not yet in possession of all the arts and customs that belong to our period, "myth". The other group contains tales of our modern period which he calls "history".³⁵ In this scheme the appearance of mythical characters is not the criterion of what constitutes a myth; rather the story's distance in space and time gives it its characteristic tone. This distance in space and time gives it a particular importance because it deals with the sacred realm of events no longer possible. The tales of the modern period, or "historical" tales, fall into the secular category. According to Boaz his definitions have the advantage of corresponding to concepts that are perfectly clear to the Native mind and they avoid arbitrary distinctions made by a foreign modern cultural point of view.

Two native definitions seem to support Boaz' contention. Winnebago society divides its myths and legends into two types: those which deal with the past and are irretrievably gone are referred to as "what is sacred". The second category deals with the present work-a-day world and is called "what is recounted".³⁶ In much the same spirit Paula Gunn Allen³⁷ divides myths into two categories: those having a supernatural or non-ordinary kind of figure as the central character and relying on mythical symbols to convey the significance and those with a lesser degree of such figures and symbols. The mythical symbols convey the authoritative teaching of the culture and belong to the ancient world when the present form of existence had not yet been established.

Within Boaz and Allen's general definitions, Indian folklore can be divided into three general categories. Origin tales and trickster cycles, either complete or fragments thereof, fall into the category of "myth", and incidents which develop entirely or essentially in human society can be referred to as "legends" although the trickster straddles all three categories. In some cultures the trickster plays a prominent role in creation myths or he may play the role of "culture-hero".

Whenever the desire to benefit humanity is a predominant trait of a trickster tale, there are generally two distinct persons: one the trickster, the other the culture-hero. Thus the culture-hero of the Pacific coast gives man his arts and is called "the one who sets things right". He is not a trickster, but all his actions have a distinct bearing upon the establishment of modern order. The most characteristic feature of the culture-hero tales is their lack of detail; the hero performs some very simple act and ordains that these conditions shall be changed. In some tales from Southern cultures the culture-hero rises to greater heights and the tales

acquire greater complexity.³⁸ Most legends, though less serious and often more contemporary in nature than myths, rely on the trickster as the central character as well.

A. Origin Myths

Origin myths deal with the transition from a mythological to a modern age, brought about by a number of disconnected incidents sometimes centering on the acts of one particular figure, sometimes by incidents distributed throughout many tales. The mythical world of earth, water, fire, sun, moon, seasons and animals all existed, although they did not possess their present forms; or they were jealously guarded in some part of the world inaccessible to the human race. Essentially the myths tell how the world was created and how living beings came to benefit from the phenomena of nature; for example how the humans got fire, how the moon was released from captivity, or the myths tell about transformations in which animals, land and water obtained their present forms.

The idea of "creation" in the sense that the world came into being from a void was foreign to Indian cultures. There was no unorganized chaos preceding the origins of the world; everything has always had an existence in objective form everywhere. This is true even of ceremonials and inventions,³⁹ which were given to humanity by beings of another world. Thomas E. Sanders and Walter W. Peek say of the origin myths,

It is not necessary to understand creation myths. . . for they are part of Wah'kon-tah. . . The insights and methods of thought they offer will give the unbiased reader a new dimension in his life. For the reader who seeks to reduce them to the level of "mythology" that his own religious accounts remain the only "true" impartings, the Great Mystery will only become more mysterious.

Wah'kon-tah is an abstraction - it has a quality of totality, allness, inseparability. Wah'kon-tah is the sum total of all things, the collective totality that always was, without beginning, without end. Neither a force nor a spirit, it is the inexplicable sharing-togetherness that makes all things, animate and inanimate, of equal importance because they are all Wah'kon-tah simultaneously, their forms collectively creating the form of Wah'kon-tah which is obviously incapable of being anthropomorphized. ⁴⁰

Anthologies show great variety in origin myths representing almost every Indian culture group. In most cases a supreme being did not create the world from a void, rather something was already in existence. The Pueblo version tells of mists and streams of growing flowing out of the divine creator. He then created the sun which gathered the mists to form ⁴¹ a lake upon which he could create the world. The Micmac and Ojibway world was created on the Great Turtle's back. A vast flood covered the land; the Great Turtle called upon the animals to dive to the bottom to retrieve some mud, for a pinch of dirt was needed in order to re-create the land. Many tried, and perished, until the beaver, or in some versions, ⁴² the muskrat, succeeded, though sacrificing their own lives in the attempt. A different origin myth is told by the Cheyenne Indians. The creator, Maheo, lived in a void until he created a world for mankind. This myth was recorded in 1960 and bears so many similarities to the Biblical account ⁴³ of creation that it likely has been adapted since traditional times.

B. Trickster Cycles

The trickster figure is one of the most widely distributed mythical personages and belongs to the oldest expression of humanity. He appears in all hunting cultures and survives in a modified form in later agricultural societies. Instead of participating in socialized, co-operative activities, the trickster wanders from place to place, a vagabond who systematically violates all accepted human values. Few other myths have survived as well with their fundamental contents unchanged. The trickster is found in recognizable form among the simplest of aboriginal tribes and among the more complex; it is repeatedly combined with other myths and frequently drastically changed and reinterpreted, but the plot as outlined above, always seems to reassert itself.

The trickster is a figure and theme which has had permanent appeal and an unusual attraction for humanity from the beginnings of civilization. Trickster is, at one and the same time, creator and destroyer, giver and negator, one who dupes and is duped himself. He wills nothing consciously, is impulsive, knows neither good nor evil but is responsible for both. He possesses no values, moral or social, is at the mercy of his passions and appetites, and yet through his actions all values come into being. He may take the form of an animal but more frequently appears as an inchoate being of undetermined proportions, a figure foreshadowing the shape of man.

Laughter, humour and irony permeate everything the trickster does. The reaction of the audience in aboriginal society and modern society as well both to him and to his exploits is prevailingly one of laughter tempered with awe. It is difficult to say whether the audience is laughing at him and at the tricks he plays on others, or at the implications his behavior and

activities have on society. Whatever the reason, the trickster becomes intelligible and meaningful only if he is viewed as a psychological problem, that is, as an attempt by man to solve his problems, inward and outward. Carl Jung saw the trickster as a personification of those traits of character which are sometimes better and sometimes worse than those which the ego-personality possesses. A collective personification like the trickster is the product of the totality of individuals and is welcomed by the individual as something known to him; this would not be the case if it were just the experience of one individual.⁴⁴

The trickster is a primitive "cosmic" being of divine-animal nature, on the one hand superior to man because of his superhuman qualities, and on the other inferior because of his unreason and unconsciousness. When he takes the form of an animal he is not a match for animals either because of his extraordinary clumsiness and his lack of instinct. These defects are the marks of human nature which is not as well adapted to the environment as are animals, but are an indication of the potential development humanity can achieve.

The trickster becomes the segregated and vicarious aspect of human experience with the coming of civilization. In a civilized situation God and Satan are at an infinite and disassociated distance from human experience. Among primitive people all elements are bound into the ritual cycle, the sacred is an immediate aspect of man's experience; good and evil, creation and destruction are fused in the actions of the trickster. Pure good, pure evil and moralizing are not found in trickster tales, but human beings are assumed to be capable of any excesses; however, the person is held to account for all those actions that seriously threaten the balance of society and

nature. Even while creating their myths and ceremonials, meanings and insights, primitive people are aware of the realities of society.

Although Karl Kerenyi compares the trickster with Greek mythological figures and expresses the belief that the trickster is not as pregnant with meaning as a Greek god⁴⁵ several American trickster figures come close to Prometheus. Instead of practising tricks for his own ends, the trickster approximates the figure of a beneficent creator and becomes what ethnologists call a "culture hero". Franz Boaz emphasizes that the identification of the trickster as transformer is a feature which deserves special notice. Most mythologies in which the trickster and culture-hero appear as one person bear out the fact that the benefactions bestowed by the culture-hero are not given in an altruistic spirit, but are the means by which he supplies his own needs. Even in heroic achievements he remains a trickster bent upon the satisfaction of his own desires.

The trickster was the first picaresque hero, that is, the loveable travelling rogue of fiction, though the purpose he served in the literature was always either magical or didactic. Stories about him served a special function by providing a unique form of entertainment. The trickster can be defined as the root of all picaresque creations of world literature, a being exalted above the petty limitations of a mortal trickster. He is, however, generally shown in anything but an heroic light; there is a predominance of drastic entertainment which provides the dominant note in the Indian trickster cycles. This does not mean that trickster tales are pointless and chaotic. Quite the contrary. Disorder belongs to the totality of life and the spirit of this disorder is the trickster. The function of this mythology, of the tales told about him, is to add order to disorder and so make a whole, thus making it possible for humanity to learn what

behavior is permissible and what is not. The antics of the primitive trickster hero are neither primitive nor civilized; they are timeless. Only the technological background changes; humanity remains constant.

Thomas E. Sanders and Walter W. Peek draw comparisons between Indian and Western cultures when they compare the trickster figure in Indian mythology to Satan. They describe the trickster as a link between man and his passion for self-indulgence, and point out that the trickster hero is as much a part of modern man's aspirations as he was of the primitive man's. They draw parallels with such characters as Odysseus, Aeneas, Beowulf, Tom Jones and James Bond; all are representatives of the archetypal hero - clever, cunning, self-serving, self-indulgent and powerful enough to effect their own designs. The readers' vicarious participation is socially acceptable because it is a sublimating process which protects the group from harm.⁴⁶

Trickster tales and origin myths cannot be strictly separated because many of the trickster tales are simultaneously origin tales. Whole cycles have been developed and retained in some cultures,⁴⁷ whereas in others only fragments and isolated stories remain - or perhaps the cycles have not been translated and recorded. Franz Boaz' research has found the trickster tales most prolific on the North West coast of America, the Northern Plateaus and the East,⁴⁸ but all Indian cultures have fragments of cycles or isolated trickster tales. Raven, Mink, Bluejay, Coyote, Old Man, Ishtimiki, Ishtumi, Manahosho, Nanabush, We-sak-a-chak and Badger tales are all variants on the same theme, with as many variations of pronunciation and spelling of the name.

C. Legends

The plots of stories that have been developed in human society are striking

in that they reflect the cultural settings, occupations and interests of Indian people. The expression of the cultural life of the people, whether hunters or gatherers, gives the legends a marked individuality, whatever the incidents of the story. The reflections of tribal life, which are characteristic of the tale, are also expressed in the mass of supernatural concepts that enter into it and form, in part, the scenic background of the story. The legends of each tribe differ from those of other tribes because of their differing modes of life. Interests that have prevailed among Indians during the last few generations are revealed and appear most clearly in the study of hero tales.

In the secular tale the plot of the story rests on a certain amount of description of individuals and on their emotions, but the individual character is not developed in any depth. Frequently the characters are portrayals of animals. The characters are schematic types - the lazy man, the inquisitive woman - types that are found in every society. Wherever there is individuality of character, it expresses the apparent nature of the personified animal, not of the typical human being. These characters differ from origin and trickster myths which deal with types that are so impersonal that they do not represent any individual, or else they are mere personifications of an emotion.

Though not at a junior or senior high school reading level Daphne
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"Odjig" Beavon's Nanabush Series is a superb example of sacred myths rewritten to make simple aetiological tales. The books have proven to be very popular with young, and some not so young, Native readers. Though they are fully aware of the fact that the stories are not identical to the ones they have heard in oral form in their own language, they still represent a familiar culture figure, an aspect of their own culture that has finally found its way onto library shelves.

V. EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

Bruno Bettelheim, in his book The Uses of Enchantment, discusses the role of folklore in the treatment of disturbed children, and from this perspective draws some significant conclusions regarding the use of folk and fairy tales in the development of normal, healthy children. He believes education must assist the child to find meaning in life.

Regarding this task, nothing is more important than the impact of parents and others who take care of the child; second in importance is our cultural heritage, when transmitted to the child in the right manner.⁵⁰

The use of the term "our cultural heritage" is significant. What if the school system is transmitting an alien culture, a culture at best unfamiliar to the child and, at worst, a culture at variance with the one taught in the home? American and Canadian schools have traditionally transmitted a culture based on "our" European heritage, both implicitly and explicitly, and the price paid by students from divergent cultures has been high. Bettelheim capably makes his case for the value of folklore in education when he says that children exposed to conflict in fantasy will be able to cope with it in real life. If children do not experience conflict ritually, they have no model for resolving conflict and are forced to do it on their own without any guidance.

The argument is equally true for myth. Myth is a universally true reflection of some of the central social and psychological conflicts faced by people at all times. Joseph Campbell⁵¹ contends that society needs to discover and to distinguish between what is universal in human nature and what is part of local sociology. Myth is a psychological phenomenon but mythical imagery must be understood as a reflection of local conditions. Particular images,

events and behavior in myth have to make sense to local people before they can become an acceptable part of local mythology. While similar messages may be repeated again and again in various parts of the world and throughout all periods of history, the particular symbols or codes in which they become embodied convey a kind of local literature.

Julie Cruikshank believes that mythology, and especially the role of the trickster, is not understood by modern man and so does not serve as a behavioral model for the developing child. The fundamental problem of today's society in the Western world is one of ignorance of unconscious motives; behavior is rationalized and recognition is no longer given to contact with the mind.

There can be no question: the psychological dangers through which earlier generations were guided by the symbols and spiritual exercises of their mythological and religious inheritance we today . . . must face alone, or at best, with only tentative, impromptu and not very effective guidance. This is our problem as modern "enlightened" individuals for whom all gods and devils have been rationalized out of existence . . . there is a growing recognition that, to be a reasonable, whole, functioning member of society, the individual must first bridge the gap between his own mind and body. The individual must try to make the modern world spiritually significant.²⁹

For those Indian people who still live with oral narrative as Sanders and Peek assert that they do, the foregoing statement would not appear to be relevant.

It is important that children have the opportunity to continue their growth with the literature of their own cultures when they start school because myths have various functions in different societies. At the most obvious level they instruct. Less obvious, but equally important, is the psychological function; myths represent the outward dramatization of internal conflicts experienced in every generation. The distinctive challenge of mythology is to take individuals out of the historical context in which they live and to

guide them through psychological and spiritual journeys which, though unfamiliar, are nevertheless phrased in familiar symbols and framed within familiar images, and then to reunite the learners with historical and local cultures in which they will have to spend the rest of their lives as fully functioning beings. To fail to recognize this dual purpose is to miss the purpose and mystery of mythology. Julie Cruikshank believes that the oldest mythologies, whose of the hunting societies, may have the most relevance for modern society.

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Individuals must explore the mythical world on their own, but ultimately must come back to everyday society with new contributions. Once they have mastered this transition, they can pass back and forth at will between the spiritual world and the world of social action. In other words, they become balanced between the inner and outer realities. If children can learn to appreciate literature and mythology as guides to the inevitable complexities and crises of life, they will be able to discover, to enjoy and to create poetry, fiction and art in their own way.

George Clutesi, a Tse-shat Indian, clearly understands the dilemma of an education system geared to a specific culture in a multi-cultural society. He addresses the problems of an Indian child when the culture is ignored by the education system. He writes

The Indian child is prone to accept these fairytales as folklore stories of the white man, and therefore the truth, since he is no longer able to hear many of his own people's folklore tales.

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Though Clutesi is likely not familiar with Bettelheim's work he understands the implications of such an education process. He goes on to say,

. . . there is bewilderment in the average Canadian Indian. There is, in fact, a broken link in his life growing period.

[emphasis is Editor's]

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The role of myths and legends in traditional society was much more important than it is in contemporary educational systems, and many children from Native cultures are still being raised in the oral tradition. The fact that oral tradition still exists among Native North Americans is significant in the teaching of myths. Any teacher who wishes to consider Native mythology seriously in the classroom should be aware that many Native students are able to go to parents and grandparents for instruction and some older Native people may be willing to talk to the classes. The oral mythology will then be much more alive than a written or fixed version can ever be. Moreover, stories told by persons who understand all the nuances have considerably more impact on the listeners than stories that are simply read out of context.⁵⁶ George Clutesi vividly portrays the possibility of using elders to transmit oral narratives in his portrait of old Nan-sis of the Tse-shat tribe.

In spite of his great age Nan-sis was still a very important member of society. He was the story-teller to all his ka-coots [grandchildren]. Moreover, he was loved and respected, understood by all because of his great patience with the young and his great love for them was very evident in his voice and speech.⁵⁷

Unfortunately, modern society ignores these masters of oral narrative and turns instead to the work done by scholars.

Basil Johnston explains the role of folklore in traditional Ojibway society when he writes,

It was the elders . . . who taught about life through stories, parables, fables, allegories, songs, chants, and dances. They were the ones who had lived long enough and had had a path to follow and were deemed to possess the qualities for teaching . . .

[the stories] are simple yet complex. They are simple in that they appeal to the very young; complex in terms of the scope and depth and number of themes in each.

To foster individuality and self-growth children and youth were encouraged to draw their own inferences from the stories. No attempt was made to impose upon them views. The learner learned according to his capacity, intellectually and physically. Some learned more quickly and broadly; others learned more slowly with narrower scope; each according to his gifts. 58

This process of transmission of oral narrative has remained largely unchanged, and it is immediately obvious that there is a great discrepancy between the transmission of oral narrative in Indian culture and the instruction in the structured classrooms in which Indian children have been placed.

It cannot be overemphasized that Native myths and legends are much more than one-dimensional fairy tales about animals and men. They have the same psychological and social power as does a good play or novel in Western society; in re-telling the story a skilled narrator elaborates the dramatic episodes which have personal psychological appeal to him. Just as the best literature can be read on more than one level, so also can myths.

Various Native writers have commented on the role of oral narrative in the cultures today. George Clutesi describes this oral tradition.

Quaint folklore tales were used widely to teach the young the many wonders of nature; the importance of all living things no matter how small and insignificant; and particularly to acquaint him with the closeness of man to all animals, bird life and creatures of the sea. The young were taught through the medium of tales that there was a place in the sun for all living things.

This resulted in deep understanding and love of man for all animal life . . .

The Indian child of today is left bewildered by the white man's fairy tales that are too often tragic, injurious and harmful and frequently foster anxiety in the childish mind.

The Indian child feels bewilderment with this type of nursery rhyme because there seems to be no concern or regard for a very apparent injury inflicted upon a child - which, in his world, may well be himself.⁵⁹

Verna Kirkness, a Cree educator from Manitoba, also acknowledges the importance of Indian folklore to Native students. In the foreword to Wild Drums, a collection of tales and legends by Alex Grisdale from the Brokenhead Reserve in Manitoba, she explains that

In a day when young people are realizing the need for strength through self-identity and identity as a race of people, Alex Grisdale is providing us with a most valuable tool.⁶⁰

Frank Everwind, in the novel Bearwalk explains this learning process in another way while attempting to explain the importance of mythology to Richard Savard, a young Indian raised in a non-Native foster home and desperately trying to understand his Native heritage. The protagonist recalls,

whenever I was a kid, whenever I did anything wrong, you know, misbehaved in any way, my mother never spanked me. She had a far worse punishment up her sleeve. She'd sit me down and tell me a story . . . Usually about Nanabush . . . The object of the exercise was that there was a message in there somewhere, mixed in with Nanabush's antics, and my punishment was to figure out the lesson . . . Let me tell you, many's the night I lay in bed, cussing out that Nanabush, trying to figure out the god-dam message . . . I churned that story over and over in my mind, sifting the details, looking for the meaning . . .⁶¹

Frank's description shows the influence that the stories actually had on the children though he goes on to say that at times the only purpose achieved was to keep him out of further trouble while he was mulling the story over in his mind!

There is little disagreement among scholars of folklore about the importance of mythology and folklore. It is considered an art, vital to most races and underlying all literary forms. As more and more stories are told detail can be seen as a code, a "language" describing complicated ideas about

the world in symbolic form which must be learned and understood by members of the community, especially the young children. This provides a guide for the creative, intuitive and philosophical aspects of life, which are also dimensions of the day-to-day world. If myths can be studied with this broader perspective in mind they will contribute more than if they are presented simply as amusing or diversionary anecdotes.

Although Indian mythology compares favourably with other mythologies it has not been incorporated into courses of study. This is not due to lack of knowledge about the mythology; Joseph Campbell's work on the unity of the race of man, in spiritual as well as biological history, drew examples from all over the world. ⁶² He asserts that a rational comparison of all cultures reveals that all have been built from one fund of mythological motifs, variously selected, organized, interpreted and ritualized according to local need; each has its own beauty. These themes have created civilizations each with a mythology and self-compelling destiny of its own. He sketches a natural history of the gods and heroes, which, in its final form, gives an overview of all divine beings. He presents a chronological table showing major breakthroughs in knowledge, including knowledge about Indian mythology.

There is a tendency, however, even when teaching myths seriously, to consider them simply as a part of the past. What people have thought is quite as important as what they have done. Mythology is not only about the past or about transmitting values of the past. In fact, an understanding of contemporary literature, modern social and political structures, and individual psychology really depend on at least a passing acquaintance with the themes of mythology.

NOTES

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23

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56

Author's note: In discussing with me the role of legends within the context of a university course an elder from a Southern Manitoba reserve in 1973, warned that I would find students who would be reluctant to tell legends because they would not know them "right". He pointed out that the art of telling oral narratives has all but died out with younger people in southern areas. He advised me to emphasize that there is no "right" way of telling a legend; if the details cannot be recalled precisely, the story teller improvises. He ended by telling me, "Tell your students, if they are afraid of making mistakes, that Nanabush was the biggest liar of us all." Taboos surrounding telling of stories in summer were also discussed. The elder advised students to tell stories in summer because the original reason for not telling them was that there was work to be done to prepare for winter. The nature of their work now has changed since they are training to become teachers. He did not advise, however, forcing students to tell legends in summer time if they were uncomfortable doing so. "And," he added, "don't come complaining to me if there are frogs and toads in your beds!"

57

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CHAPTER IV

TRADITIONAL NATIVE LITERATURE : POETRY

I. INTRODUCTION

Investigation of traditional Native literature has revealed two major categories: mythology and poetry. The poetry was found to have played a major role in traditional Native societies, a role unequalled by the role of poetry in European cultures, though some similarities existed. Above all, poetry was sacred and performed specific functions in the cultures. Traditional societies had a great reverence for sacred words that were considered to have the power to reach the unseen forces controlling the universe. The largest category of Indian poetry was made up of songs, though, in fact, all poetry was sung. Songs which were composed to fulfill specific functions are discussed with examples from various culture groups. Chants and rituals, which bear a resemblance to religious rites of other cultures, are also discussed, as well as some historic tales. The chapter concludes with a comparison of Native poetry with poetry from Western culture in order to assist the reader unfamiliar with the literature in recognizing the major differences.

It is sometimes difficult to differentiate between traditional prose and poetry, but some distinction can be made on the basis of function. Myths and legends were used to teach sacred truths and pass on historical information. This also holds true for some poetry but even in the most primitive examples a line of demarcation can be discerned and a differentiation begins. The beginnings of poetical structures existed in traditional societies but it is important for the contemporary reader to remember that American Indian

oral poetry is not poetry as it appears on the printed page, but song. Pre-Columbian poetry was composed in an Indian language for an Indian audience and, though imperfectly preserved or distorted through translation, not only is it beautiful but it also reveals a highly sophisticated world view. Most Indian cultures did not have an orthography and only Mayan and Aztec poetry was recorded in bark books, most of which were burned by the Spanish Bishop Landa. Nothing remains of them but remembered fragments, lovely, tattered and hopelessly garbled. One Mayan poet wrote,

With rivers of tears we mourned our sacred writings among
the delicate flowers of sorrow.¹

Even those scraps and remnants cover thousands of pages. A great body of a magnificent human story has been largely lost; it exists only in the form of song and ritual of some tribes. The great human story of the American Indians as they lived in the Western hemisphere before European contact can only be reconstructed with great difficulty, and then only in broken fragments.

The religious and artistic preoccupation of much of the Indian world went far beyond anything in the European experience at the time when the two cultures met. Poetry was an integral part of everyday life, not as a thing set apart to be enjoyed by an initiated select group. Life was a mystical adventure; the composition of songs and their singing was a most important occupation. Much of the poetry was religious; it transformed the soul to an awareness of beauty and holiness. But some of it was secular, it provided enjoyment and entertainment.

Some of the most honoured masterpieces in Western literature, such as Homer's epics emerged from the same conditions that apply to most American Indian literature, that is to say, it was originally composed in oral tradition

that was translated into another language and then recorded in its written form. In such a case the original poet is unknown and of little importance for the reader's attention is fixed on the poem rather than on the poet.

The sacred property of Amerindian songs (which all traditional poems are) cannot be overstated. Each song, according to Thomas E. Sanders and Walter W. Peek, contains four interrelated elements - music, words, body movements and the belief of the singer-dancer. Music, which lifts the words to a supreme spiritual being embodies the inexpressible soul of the Indian which is added to the expressible in words - words which have in and of themselves, sacred properties. Some North American Indians believe that the word existed prior to anything else, including gods, because thought precedes creation; complete/entire nothingness never was, for thought existed, and thought can only be manifested in words.²

Whether the word existed before, simultaneously, or shortly after the creation of a supreme spiritual being is immaterial; the word was vital to the understanding of one's spiritual being and the mystery of creation. The word was, perhaps, the greatest mystery of all, not only because it was believed that it caused medicine to work, plants to grow and game to multiply, but also because it was heard by the spiritual being; through the word it was possible for humanity to enter the spiritual realm. As such, language was sacred, not to be profaned by off-hand and casual usage.

Music and dance were an inseparable part of Indian poetry. Music enveloped the Indian's individual and social life like an atmosphere. There was no personal experience of which it had no part, nor any ceremonial where it was not essential to the expression of the religious feeling. All tribal

members were singers, as song played a vital role in everyday life but each traditional society had its peculiar songs for ceremonial occasions. Officials, chosen from among the members for their good voices and retentive memories led the singing and transmitted with accuracy the stories and songs of the society.

Turner describes Indian thought as inextricably rooted in things, yet this very grounding gave rise to "magnificent flights of imagination like birds in liquid loops over a particular landscape."³ The Indian was, on the one hand, a very practical realist and unusually aware of the physical structure of his world; on the other hand, he was an abstractor, capable of the furthest ranges of metaphysical departure. Nowhere is this mental tendency more obvious than in the poetry which seems to spring from the earth itself and encompass the whole universe.

In order to know a people it is necessary to examine its poetry for it is there that the most emotionally honest statements are frequently found. The natural eloquence of the culture is revealed as it unveils its needs, desires, passions, aspirations and dreams. Indian poetry reveals the capacity to hear the voice of a supreme being, the spirit of place and the relationship of self to self, to others and to the totality of the universe. Although it can be used to reveal the mental and emotional capabilities of the Indians, it can also be studied and appreciated as literature. Even when North American Native poetry has passed through translation into another language, the soul of Indian society is still preserved in its songs.

II. POETRY WITH A FUNCTION

For traditional Indians poetry and ritual were functional. Myths and

tales were educational tools that taught the younger generation the beliefs and history of the tribes. But poetry had other functions - it was always in the form of song or chant and was usually associated with religious or magical ends, used to obtain power over invisible life forces. The main purpose was to trap the universal mystery in a net of magical words. This power brought control over the positive creative forces in the world which tribal members believed they needed in order to achieve anything beyond individual human strength. Singing was usually a serious occupation, approached in a reverent mood; the invisible voice could reach the invisible power that permeates all nature, animating all natural forms. As success depended upon help from this mysterious power in every avocation, undertaking and ceremonial, singers appealed to the power through song. Ritual was a form of sacred drama filled with poetry, song and dance; it acted out on earth events taking place in a more important realm.

An Indian singer might work for years to learn his material. Power was impersonal, and a great unknown force, which could be harnessed, through words, and used for good or for evil, pervaded the earth. The power was dangerous to a person if he were not wise, and wisdom came from knowing tradition. The keepers of traditions had a special place of honour in every tribe; they also had a great responsibility. Songs were the most important instruments of medicine men and a specialized group called "singers", but any person could, by means of drama and visions, find a personal song to help him in time of need.

Functional poetry in its purest form is found in the literature of the Papago Indians, desert-dwellers of southern Arizona for whom song was the practical basis for life and the most precious possession of the people.⁴ The power of song was an honour to be earned; it could not be assumed lightly

at the mere whim of an individual. A man had first to perform an act of heroism which placed him in contact with the supernatural; then he would fast and wait for a vision. From that vision or dream would come a song; the practical man was valued only if he were also a poet. Every person's song, however simple, was accepted as a contribution to the maintenance of cultural stability.

Though song was not as important in many other cultures as in those of the desert dwellers, nowhere was it used solely for entertainment or for the outpouring of emotions. The reasons for creating poetry were varied and every experience of life was celebrated with song. Sacred songs were sung to praise the gods or to pray for help in life; this was usually done in the form of rituals in honour of the gods. Creation accounts, which were always sacred, are found in both narrative and poetic forms, although narrative forms are more commonly used. The following Pima creation story was clearly sung:

Song of Creation

I have made the sun!
 I have made the sun!
 Hurling it high
 In the four directions
 to the east I threw it
 To run the appointed course.

I have made the moon!
 I have made the moon!
 Hurling it high
 In the four directions
 To the east I threw it
 To run its appointed course.⁵

The following Delaware poem speaks not only of the beginning of the earth but also tells of the migration of the people:

Over the Water

The water ran off, the earth dried, the lakes were at rest, all
 was silent...
 After the rushing waters had subsided the Lenape of the turtle
 were close together, in hollow houses, living together in there.
 It freezes where they abode, it snows where they abode, it storms
 where they abode, it was cold where they abode.
 At this northern place they speak favourably of mild, cool lands;
 with many deer and buffaloes...
 Over the water, the frozen sea, they went to enjoy it. On the
 wonderful, slippery water, on the stone-hard water all went,
 On the great Tidal sea, the mussel-bearing sea. Ten thousand at
 night, all in one night. To the Snake Island, to the coast,
 they walk and walk...
 Those from the west come with hesitation, esteeming highly their
 old home at the turtle land.⁶

The following Tuscarora account, more a prose narrative than a poem,
 shows marked similarity to the Delaware myth. It was recited by David Hewitt
 of the Shawnee Beaver Clan in 1948 and again in 1950. He views the legend
 as a semi-sacred trust, recalling that his great-great-grandmother told his
 father, "You keep this story up!" - implying that it was sacred but esoteric
 tradition. Hewitt linked it with the possible migration of his people across
 the Bering Strait.⁷

Crossing the Ice

My father told me how the Indians came here.
 Long ago they didn't know that there was land here.
 He said long ago they began to starve.
 In the old world nothing would grow.
 For many years they were starving.
 They held a council.
 Because they were starving they decided to go and look for another land.
 They made up their minds.
 They thought elsewhere there was land.
 They will try to eat.
 As they were walking suddenly they knew they were walking on ice.
 Then they chose seven of the best runners.
 So the two groups started out.
 One group didn't want to go.
 One group went to the east.
 They went where the sun rises.
 They went in search of food.

Early in the morning several of the runners went away to the east.
 They continued a long time in the direction of the east.
 They rested when night came.
 Suddenly they saw a black streak in front.
 They thought a big snake lay there.
 The seven of them stopped.
 They started out.
 They separated.
 They spread out.
 The first runner calls.
 He will hear.
 He will call.
 The next will hear.
 Until the morning returns to the south.
 When the seventh runner arrived he saw a big woods with abundant food.
 There was so much food to eat here they decided to go back for the others.
 Here they will also live.
 They went back to find where they had come across.
 They were not able to find it.
 The ice had melted.
 Then they were not able to go back for the others.⁸

Though sacred songs were performed on ceremonial occasions songs were also an integral part of day-to-day living. The day was greeted with a morning prayer usually sung by an older "singer" or a medicine man. When the hunter went out to hunt he sang to ensure the assistance of the unseen powers in capturing game. When the planter sowed the seeds, he sang so they would fructify; and there was a song for every stage of growth. Moreover, there were songs for rain and songs to mark the seasons. Of equal importance was the good health of the tribe, and so the medicine man sang as he gathered healing herbs, and he sang as he administered them to the ailing.

Songs were used to build morale before battle as well as to bewitch the enemy. Every Indian had a song to sing when confronted with death or danger; this he sang so he might have strength to meet his fate unflinchingly. As well there were songs that communicated the poet's private experiences in dreams or vision quests; and of less spiritual significance, but equally important to the life of the tribe, were songs about everyday activities --

to brighten tribal games, to ridicule a rival, to tease or mock, or to lighten the burden of work. A few songs tell of some aspect of tribal history or praise famous men. Some songs survive that seem to have been poetic parts of narrative tales.

There were songs and more songs - to rouse laughter, to express joy and to enter into the spirit of fun. Boasting songs were popular, but there were also mourning songs, lullabies, gift-giving songs, love charms, songs for going visiting or for greeting visitors; Densmore even recorded a Chippewa divorce song.⁹

Though it is difficult to distinguish between Indian prose and poetry because the poetic impulse was so strong that it carried into what would ordinarily be called prose types, the distinction can frequently be made on the basis of function and style of delivery. Poetry was used only on certain occasions, was always rhythmic in form, was chanted or sung and used certain poetic stylistic devices that are not found in prose.

III. SONGS

Indian songs are usually printed as poems in anthologies with no indication that they were originally musical compositions. This gives a distorted view of the pieces. They were songs, not read to a silent audience as literary creations, but sung, often to the accompaniment of drums or rattles. The music for a few songs has been preserved, but it is not generally appreciated because Native music was markedly different from music from Western culture; but the songs still merit consideration solely as lyric poetry.

Various attempts have been made to categorize songs - old, new, mythical,

historical, sacred, secular, occasional, ceremonial, private or communal. Because none of these categories serve to describe all the recorded poetry, most collectors categorize poems according to occasion or use. This greatly assists the reader, unfamiliar with Indian poetry, in the interpretation of it. It is also necessary that the name of the tribe be given since this provides vital information regarding physical environment and social aspects of the culture. The list of occasions is virtually endless if all poetry is considered. This study will describe briefly and give examples of some of the more broadly representative categories - dream songs, medicine songs, love songs, hunting and planting songs, animal songs, death songs and songs that were once parts of folktales.

Various kinds of songs existed in every tribe, though each culture seems to have favored its own particular type and style. Songs which served as tribal conductors of dream powers are found universally. In dreams spiritual powers spoke to the tribal members, giving their daily lives a sacred strangeness, an "unreal" reality since dreams heighten awareness. Supernatural elements could be dealt with through dreams; dreams could also be medicinal or therapeutic, cleansing and energizing the psyche. Dream visions, incantations and imitative magic all worked toward securing well-being and power through forces thought to be beyond human limitations. Songs appearing in dreams and visions might cover any aspect of life and usually remained personal and private property. Dream songs were the most precious spiritual possession of the individual; they were received in dreams by vision-seeking youth after much suffering and loneliness. The obligations of the dream were as binding as the necessity to fulfill a vow. The nature of the dream allied the man to others who had similar dreams. The following Teton Sioux song was passed on

by a warrior called Siyaka.

At night may I roam
Against the winds may I roam
When the owl is hooting
May I roam.

At dawn may I roam
Against the wind may I roam
At dawn may I roam
When the crow is calling
May I roam.¹⁰

The following song came to the mind of a Chippewa Indian in a dream.

In the Sky
I am walking
A Bird
I accompany.¹¹

In later years he believed that by singing this song he could recall the condition under which it came to him - a condition of direct communication with the supernatural. The following vision song of the Ojibway came from the spontaneous climax of a ten days' fast by an adolescent youth when he finally met his long-awaited guardian spirit.

Blue-bird I feel his legs
Blue-bird I feel his legs
Oh, Yes, of course, I feel his legs
Oh, Yes, of course, I feel his legs.¹²

When the singer became old, he would pass the song on as a legacy to another, whose property it then became. It was only after generations of private ownership that a dream song might become communal property. In Plains cultures it was possible to purchase dream songs, a practice which became more widespread with the coming of the horse, which was used as a form of currency. The Sun Dance was often a song-selling ceremony. A dreamer, however, might be directed in his dream to share his song, in which case it became communal property immediately.

Another major category of songs found in all cultures was the medicine song. Content and structure of healing songs reflect medicinal theory and world view as well as the artistic precepts of each culture. In some tribes, for example the Papago, the medicine songs had nothing to do with the patient; they told of the medicine man's own dreams. It did not matter what the dream was, so long as it took the medicine man out of the daily life and into the realm where power could be captured. In other cultures the songs were specific to the ailment and cure.

In reading medicine songs, the reader faces the challenge of trying to reconstruct the ceremonial performance and to visualize the objects pictured in the images. Some songs were holistic in approach and aimed at a restoration of the entire individual and even at a re-adjustment of the cosmic order, whereas others were charms for an immediate cure, as specific and limited as a pill.

The "gopher song" of the Pima was used specifically for stomach trouble in children.

In the reddish glow of nightfall
 In the reddish glow of nightfall
 I return to my burrow
 About which the flowers bloom.

With the four eagle feathers
 With the four eagle feathers
 I stir the air. When I turn
 My magic power is crossed.

And I make hills of soft earth
 And I make hills of soft earth
 My breath withers before it all
 My breath withers before it all.¹³

The reader must not only see the gopher, who is depicted as singing the poem about himself, but also must try to visualize the singer/dancer performing the

gestures prescribed for the treatment being conducted. Lines 1-4 and 9-12 render observations of natural phenomena in describing a gopher's actual behavior. The middle stanza refers to the singer's actions as he waves feathers in the air during the performance. Paraphernalia used during the performance include deerskin bags containing tufts of eagle down together with twigs which have been cut by a gopher and earth from a gopher mound, all to be pressed on the sick child's stomach. The final two lines express the power of the gopher, which has caused the illness. This power is invoked by the song; the singer identifies himself with the malicious being which enables him to control the power and turn it around to make it beneficial. All this happens through the words and gestures of the rite. "When I turn my magic power is crossed" is the key sentence in the song.

The following chant of Owl Woman, a medicine woman of the Papago tribe, was sung as she began to fight for the life of a sick man at dusk.

How shall I begin my songs
In the blue night that is settling?

In the great night my heart will go out,
Toward me the darkness comes rattling,
In the great night my heart will go out.¹⁴

The chant, she claimed, was taught to her by a spirit returned from the dead.

Though all tribal cultures placed a great value on songs the Ojibway¹⁵ (Chippewa) are considered to have been among the most musical of Indians. An unusually large body of poetry has been collected from this culture group; every phase of life provided subjects for songs. Although no songs were the exclusive property of a family or clan, the Ojibway associated the song with its composer and used to recite the history before singing it on formal occasions. Many songs were composed to celebrate particular events, while others arose

out of exciting or painful situations. Perhaps the most widely known today are the Ojibway love charms and love songs, many of which were composed by women. Though the artistic contributions of the women were greatly appreciated they were given no formal recognition. John Robert Colombo, in Songs of the Indians I, gives four different versions of the same Ojibway love song.

- I. Do not weep, I am not going to die.
- II. Do not weep, I am not going away.
- III. Do not weep, I am going away but will return soon.
- IV. Do not weep, I will take care of you.¹⁶

The following is a very old Ojibway courting song.

I will walk into somebody's dwelling
 Into somebody's dwelling will I walk

To thy dwelling, my dearly beloved
 Some night will I walk, will I walk

Some night in the winter, my beloved
 To thy dwelling will I walk, will I walk

This very night, my beloved
 To thy dwelling will I walk will I walk.¹⁷

The young man walked slowly through the camp singing each verse several times so that his girl would have plenty of time to make up her mind to welcome him.

Though it is Ojibway love songs and charms that are most commonly found in anthologies, the Ojibway were by no means the only cultural group to preserve love songs. The following show considerable diversity in style and content.

Love Song
 (Cree)

- I. I wonder if she only looks out
 Near to weeping, my sweetheart
 and says,
 "Ah me, my sweetheart,
 I love him."

II. Hasten
Your walking
My lover.¹⁸

(Swampy Cree)

One time I wished myself in love.
I was the little squirrel
with dark stripes.
I climbed shaky limbs for fruit for her.
I even swam with the moon on the water
to reach her.
That was a time little troubled me.
I worked all day to gather food
and watched her sleep all night.
It is not the same now
but my heart still sings
when I hear her
over the leaves.¹⁹

Whereas the previous love songs were all composed by males or the gender of the poet is unknown, the following Blackfoot song was obviously sung by a female.

Song of a Maiden Disappointed in Love

My lover looked like an eagle from a distance
but alas!
When he came nearer I saw that he was
nothing but a buzzard.²⁰

Agricultural societies were profoundly preoccupied with the events of their daily lives. Magic which called upon the powers of nature and constrained them to man's will was essential. The men, or in a few cultures the women, worked and sang together; their songs dealt with the holiest of all things to planters - rain, for rain was life itself. The whole culture revolved around the power of song to bring rain so life could go on and once the rains came, there were songs for planting, songs to celebrate the wonder of every stage of growth and songs for the harvest. The best of these planting songs come from the area which is now the southern United States.

Ruth Murray Underhill wrote of the Papago Indians that when the desert riots with purple vetch and yellow rabbit brush, with huge moons of white poppies and the flame-points of pink starflowers, the planting can begin. And then it is time to "sing up the corn", for the corn cannot grow without help. The planter walks around his field or sits in a circle with other tribal members. There is a song for every stage of growth (only the first five of fifteen verses reproduced here):

Evening is falling
Pleasantly sounding
Will reverberate
Our song.

The corn comes up;
It comes up green;
Here upon our fields
White tassels unfold.

The corn comes up;
It comes up green;
Here upon our fields
Green leaves blow in the breeze.

Blue evening falls,
Blue evening falls,
Near by, in every direction,
It sets the corn tassels trembling.

The wind smooths well the ground
Yonder the wind runs.
Upon our fields
The corn leaves tremble.²¹

On the same theme, the following Osage "Planting Song" was sung at the end of the rites of initiation in which women take part. In this condensed form, the various stages of growth and causes for celebration are shown, indicating what an integral part of life the singing was.

I have made a footprint, a sacred one.
I have made a footprint, through it the blades push upward.
I have made a footprint, through it the blades radiate.

I have made a footprint, over it the blades float in the wind.
 I have made a footprint, over it the ears lean toward one another.
 I have made a footprint, over it I pluck the corn.
 I have made a footprint, over it I bend the stalk to pluck the ears.
 I have made a footprint, over it the blossoms lie grey.
 I have made a footprint, smoke arises from my house.
 I have made a footprint, there is cheer in my house.
 I have made a footprint, I live in the light of day.²²

Songs were no less important in hunting societies where the hunter hoped to insure the assistance of unseen powers to lure game into range and guarantee a successful hunt. Sometimes these songs came to the hunter in a dream or vision and he felt that the power could be recaptured by singing the song. At other times the songs were composed during the hunt. The following Ojibway "Song of the Buffalo" is an example of the former where there is an attempt to recapture the spirit of the buffalo, while the Montagnais-Naskapi "Songs of the Hunt" were likely composed during the tedious hours of waiting for the prey to appear.

Song of the Buffalo

The buffalo
 as they stand in a circle...
 I join them.²³

Songs of the Hunt

Otter
 I am waiting, waiting, waiting
 For the otter, otter, otter
 To come out, out, out.

Caribou
 Because there's a caribou coming,
 Everything is just fine!²⁴

Closely associated with hunting songs were the animal songs; numerous traditional animal songs exist in which the Indian's power of observation is illustrated. Animals were thought to possess special powers because they were more at home in the environment than man. They adapted more

comfortably than man and because man learned from them and depended on them, they were thought of with reverence and called "elder brothers". Careful observation and description shows this deep respect for animals. Indians believed that the power of the animals could be captured through songs and that the animals would willingly give themselves as food to their "younger brothers". But just as animals could cause beneficial events, they could also cause evil. Illness was believed to be the vengeance of animals brought about if people had not properly understood their ways. Punishment followed if anyone killed an animal not needed for food or even if disrespect was shown for the bones. Prayers were said and rituals were performed for slain animals. Animal songs played a major role in all cultures, maintaining man at the centre of the universe, but in harmony with all creatures.

Because animals could cause illness poetry was utilized to enlist the help of unseen powers in preventing or curing sickness. The point of these animal poems is to visualize the animal with all its peculiarities and make it real. Thus, its power is acknowledge and it is willing to revoke the punishment of disease.

Quail children under the bushes
Were chattering.
Our comrade Coyote heard them.
Softly he came padding up
And stood wriggling his ears
In all directions.

Our comrade Coyote, thirsty,
Just yonder lay down to sleep.
Quail birds above him
Fluttered their wings.
Frightened, he jumped up and
looked about him.
Haiya, God my father!
Would it might rain, now!²⁵

These songs are vignettes of desert life, humorous, exquisite and friendly.

Few biographies of Indians are written that do not mention the existence of death chants. The Jesuit fathers recorded examples from among the Iroquois the Ottawa and the Hurons and as late as 1885 Wandering Spirit sang on the way to the gallows. Two distinct types of death chants exist - those that were composed in the very hour of death and chanted with the last breath of the dying man, and those that had been received in a vision but were sung only in an hour of need, when death was imminent. Many death chants were meaningless vocables; others show a world view that was grim but serene. There is no mention of the continuance of man's soul after death, but there is a calm acceptance of the inevitable and not infrequently, the assurance that it is better to die young in battle than to be a pitiful old man.

Densmore recorded the story of Namebines, a leading warrior of the Chippewa, who was badly wounded during a fight with the Sioux. At his own request his comrades, who were about to retreat, laid him near the sheltering bush to die. With his last strength he sang his death song which he had composed at that time.

The odor of death
I discern the odor of death
In front of my body.

And, looking into the faces of his friends, he added: "When you reach home²⁶ sing this song for the women to dance by and tell them how I died. . ."
The Cheyenne "Death Song of White Antelope" is probably the best known song of its kind.

Nothing lives long
Nothing lives long
Except the earth and mountains.²⁷

White Antelope was a noted war captain of the Cheyennes for almost fifty years; he was killed at the Sand Creek Massacre of 1864 as he stood with arms folded singing this song.

The inevitability of death was accepted in tribal societies and the birth of children was considered a joyous event for without the birth of new members tribal life could not continue. Day points out that Indians of the Northwest, like all other Indians, were fond of their children and indulged them to a point just short of spoiling them. ²⁸ Mothers quieted their children by singing, just as all mothers do, and no one needs to be a specialist in interpretation of poetry to be able to enjoy the cradle-songs of the American Indians. Lullabies were sung by the women and were frequently spontaneous compositions; others were passed down from generation to generation.

Like other poetry, lullabies also differed in the various cultures. The Creek "Cradle Song" has many similarities to poetry from Western culture.

Down the stream
 You hear the noise of her going
 That is what they say
 up the stream
 Running unseen
 Running unseen
 Up the stream
 You hear the noise of her going
 That is what they say
 to the top of the bold peak
 Running unseen
 Running unseen.²⁹

The following Ojibway lullaby is "sung" more by whistling it through the teeth than by "singing". ³⁰ Densmore noted that wewe is a root, the meaning of which implies a swinging motion, thus wewe'bizun signifies a child's swing or hammock.

Lullaby

We we
 We we
 We

We we
 We we
 We

We we
We
We₃₁

A totally different type of lullaby has been preserved from the Blackfoot culture.

- I. Come, wolf, bite this baby;
He won't sleep.
- II. Come, old woman, with your meatpounder,
And smash this baby's head;
He won't sleep.₃₂

There were few ceremonies to mark events in the child's life but the name-giving ceremony had special significance, especially among the Ojibway. The following song was sung by the elder who had been selected to name the child.

The Rite of Naming

All you manidos in the east
All you manidos in the south
All you manidos in the west
All you manidos in the north
All you manidos in the earth
All you manidos in the air
Bear witness that I give this child
The name of _____₃₃

Poetic lines were used in traditional oral narrative to characterize actors. Very few of these poetic lines have been translated; the myths and legends have survived without them. Many "songs" could well have come from this source but have been transmitted as poetry in their own right. Work of modern folklorists will hopefully uncover more of these connections. Several examples from cultures that lived in what is now Canada have been preserved.

The following Micmac song comes from a tale called "The Story of Three Strong Men".

Maiden's Song

There are many men in the world,
But only one is dear to me.

He is good and brave and strong.
 He swore to love none but me.
 It was a bad spirit that changed him,
 But I will love none but him.³⁴

Collected by Alanson Skinner, this Northern Saulteaux song occurs in the midst of a tale about the trickster hero "Wisekejack". It is sung by Toad.

Song to Bring About the End of the World

Yiciwekwaki nishenawishkan
 Yiciwekwaki nishenawishkan
 Yickiwekwaki nishenawishkan
 The end of the world, when I rattle.³⁵

IV. CHANTS AND RITUALS

In general, allowing outsiders access to chants and rituals was done cautiously and with reluctance. As the rituals were at the heart of the Indian religion, it was believed that the publication or teaching of ceremonial rubrics risked the unleashing of the powers the words evoked. European society's attitude toward Indian religion led to secrecy and suspicion on the part of the Indians; where the religion was not actively forbidden or destroyed, Westerners did not usually treat it with the ceremony and respect it deserved.

The difficulty of obtaining reliable ritual material is great; most rituals were religious and magical, and therefore treasured possessions of individuals or tribal societies; even in pre-Columbian times they were secret. Many tribes believed that the value of such verses would be lost if they became common property and so, because of the scarcity of information on rituals, few scholarly works are available on this topic.

This chapter will deal with three major rituals which are extant and
 36
 apparently complete - the Navaho Night Chant, the Iroquois Ritual of

³⁷
Condolence, and the Zuni Sayatasha's Night Chant.³⁸ All three are outstanding examples of superb renewal rituals; Bierhorst says of the first two that "The ritual pattern is indeed the prototype 'par excellence' for modern literature."³⁹ All three involved the whole tribal society in a ritual ceremony which expressed the religious beliefs of the group and reaffirmed the position of humanity in harmony with the rest of the universe. They are rituals of restoration, serving to idealize the common flux of decay and re-integration, summoning to the mind the "circle" of death and life familiar in popular writing and, in fact, often specified in ancient lore. The renewal narrative or ritual may be viewed as a focused progression away from the old and into the new, building to a climax in which the awaited transition is at last made possible through the mechanisms of a sacred "mystery". It is probable that, if anything like adequate records of the literature of the pre-Columbian period existed, there would be many notable examples of outstanding rituals. Songs which appear to be fragments from longer works, the key to which has been lost, exist in every tribe.

By far the most intricate and highly elaborated ceremonial system extant is the Navaho Night Chant. Unlike the shamans of other tribes, Navajo conductors of the chant are not necessarily individuals especially endowed with visionary insight or direct personal access to superhuman powers. A singer, rather, is one who has made the decision to study rituals and has learned one or more chants, a process which usually takes years. The Night Chant is a nine-day "holyway" ceremony divided into four night purification sequences which culminate in a night-long dance integrating all aspects of the rite. It is held when the necessity for a curing ceremony arises. All night long alternating prayers and rituals of exorcism and healing are chanted.

The Night Chant epitomizes the myths of the Navajos and gives expression to ideals of the culture. In its narrowest use it serves as a form of therapy conducted by a shaman for the benefit of a principal communicant. It is performed when a member of the tribe feels the need for a ritual of regeneration in which he will be drained of evil, instilled with new power and restored so he may "walk in beauty". But with the addition of assistant singers, impersonators, new initiates and assorted spectators it becomes an occasion for a general religious celebration. The ceremony is two-fold: on the one hand the ritual repulses evil, on the other it attracts holiness. A typical prayer will have a balance of additory and purgative elements. The tension created by the two opposing ideas operates at every level and may be looked upon as the ceremony's organizing principle. Participants slowly move clockwise as the ceremony progresses. This circuit is called the path of ideality or the "trail of beauty" or "beautyway". The poem culminates in an expression of "centering", whereby the patient is restored to harmonious relationship with himself and with the cosmos. He is placed "in beauty" at the centre of the universe.

Each of its separate rites may be categorized as either repulsive or attractive, as either purgatory or additory. For the sake of balance, however, each ceremonial unit, though it may seem essentially "holy", will contain elements of "evil", and vice versa. In a typical prayer, for example, words that imply healing are immediately followed by words of exorcism.

Part I/ The Purification (lines 25-60)

Owl!

I have made your sacrifice.

I have prepared smoke for you.

My feet restore for me.

My legs restore for me.

My body restore for me.
 My mind restore for me.
 My voice restore for me.
 Today take out your spell for me.
 Today your spell for me is removed.
 Away, from me you have taken it.
 Far off from me it is taken.
 Far off you have done it.
 Today I shall recover.
 Today for me it is taken off.
 Today my interior shall become cool.
 My interior feeling cold, may I walk.
 No longer sore, may I walk.
 Impervious to pain, may I walk.
 Feeling light within, may I walk.
 With lively feelings, may I walk.
 Happily may I walk.
 Happily abundant dark clouds I desire.
 Happily abundant showers I desire.
 Happily abundant vegetation I desire.
 Happily abundant pollen I desire.
 Happily abundant dew I desire.
 Happily in earthly beauty may I walk.
 May it be happy before me.
 May it be happy behind me.
 May it be happy below me.
 May it be happy above me.
 With it happy all around me, may I walk.
 It is finished in beauty.
 It is finished in beauty.⁴⁰

These last two lines are analogous to the Christian "Amen".

The individual rites tend to be predominantly repulsive in some cases, attractive in others. Taking a somewhat larger view, the entire first four days of the ceremony can be classed as repulsive, the second four days attractive. From an even more distant vantage point the nine-day ceremony is an exercise mainly in attraction, "according to holiness" as compared to some other chants which were "according to evil" and consequently placed a heavier burden on the chanter.⁴¹

⁴²
 The Iroquois Ritual of Condolence was an occasional ritual prompted by the death of a high hereditary chief. The idea underlying the ritual is

that death has breached the great social order which the ritual now effectively mends or restores. It does this, finally, by resurrecting the dead chief in the person of his successor. Society itself, which is portrayed as a bereaved woman, has been laid low with mourning and is also resurrected through the ritual. The ritual points to the role of woman as the progenitress in a matrilineal and matriarchial society. It also accords with her role or imagined role as unifier of the social structure. The enemy of society is not merely death itself, but the cult of death. In traditional Iroquois society death could lead to morbid thoughts; which, in some cases, led to murder or suicide. In theory the ritual safeguards the life of the people. Hewitt has said of the ritual,

The psychological insight of the framers of this wonderful ritualistic address is without question unsurpassed in any other composition of its kind in any other literature of the world.⁴³

The first part, or "article" of the ritual is called "Tears, Or One's Eyes" and is spoken by the visitors who have come to perform the ritual for the mourners.

Oh, my offspring, lo, verily, this present day, such as is this day in kind and aspect, He himself, He the Finisher of Our faculties, He the Master of All, has made. Even He has prepared the light of this day, such as it is.

Now therefore, they who are customarily called the Three Brothers are journeying along the path of the Ritual as it was prepared for us by our forefathers upon whom our minds rested in confidence.

It is that, therefore, that brings their persons here, the calamity, so hopeless and dreadful, which has befallen thy person, this one (indicating), thou whom I have held in my bosom, thou noble one, the two of you who are the Two Brothers.

It is that, therefore, as to that, verily, this present day, I thrust aside the door-flap from the place where thou art lying as an object that is black; it is that in the midst of great darkness thou art sitting too prone in grief, thy back alone visible in the thick darkness. Thou whom I have weaned.

It is that, therefore, that I shall stoop low there at the edge of thy ash-pit, grasping my knees, and that, therefore, I shall utter such words that I shall with them soothe and appease by caresses any displeasure of thy guardian spirit.

It is that, therefore, that I come for the sake of my Offspring.⁴⁴

While the ritual was a secular method of installing a new hereditary chief it was also regarded as sacred.

The Zuni held annual spring celebrations; Sayatasha's Night Chant was an elaborate week-long ceremony in which brilliantly costumed priests known as kachinas danced life and prosperity into Zuni society. Coronado came to America in search of gold, and because his vision was so narrow, he left disappointed. Little did he know of the wealth within the dark, subterranean circular rooms known as kivas where a complex calendar was maintained and where an artistry equal to any in Europe existed.

The ritual was acted out by masked, costumed priests who impersonated the gods of their religion. In dealing with these kachinas it was not necessary for the tribal society to suspend belief; rather the ceremony was an assertion of belief. Fiction was not opposed to reality, but merged in it with an archetypal world which was the common ground between the sacred and secular. Much of the significance undoubtedly was derived from aspects of the performance that are not available today; it is nevertheless valuable for what it can communicate as literature. The ritual was chanted in unison by the priests, the actual performance taking six hours to complete.

The cultural references in the chant form a mimetic pattern that has as its object the assurance of fertility. By returning mythically to the original time and place of creation, identifying ones self with the First Being, and in that context ritually duplicating the act of creation, the Sayatasha impersonator and his party bring about the renewal of the world.

The chant was both ritual and narrative in form. The ritual chant is a quest for power, positing both human and spiritual worlds, each represented by an individual. The human world desires water, the prerequisite to life, and the spiritual world has the power to grant fertility. The poem speaks of man's need for order and rebirth, revealing a universal perception; without renewal and rebirth, the initially vitalized order of life sickens and dies; without harmony and order the generative dynamism of life leads to chaos and conflict.

Like most oral narrative there is not much characterization in the chant but dialogue is handled in a sophisticated manner. An outstanding example is Sayatasha's visit to the dead. The ancestral dead give an extremely vivid and human portrait of their group. The forms for signifying age are conventional; the characterization is moving.

When all this was at an end
 My father questioned me;
 "Yes, now at this time
 You have passed us on our roads.
 Surely you will have something to say,
 some word not too long,
 If you let us know that,
 I shall know it for all time."
 Thus my father spoke.
 When he had spoken thus, (I answered)
 "Yes, indeed it is so.
 Yonder to the south,
 Following wherever your roads come out,
 I have been bringing you prayer sticks,
 I have been bringing you prayer feathers.
 Now this day,
 Having reached the appointed time,

I have passed you on your roads."
 "Is that so. With plain words you have come to us.
 We are clothed with your prayer sticks;
 We hold your prayer meal;
 With your prayer plumes in our hair we are sitting waiting.
 Here we are just standing around,
 Where we are just sitting on our haunches,
 You have come to us.
 When the sun who is our father
 Has yet a little ways to go,
 Before he goes in to sit down at his sacred place,
 Nearby your daylight fathers,
 Your bright mothers,
 Your children
 You will pass on the roads.
 Wherever you come to rest,
 All together we shall come to see you.
 All the men,
 Those with snow upon their heads, with moss upon their faces,
 With skinny knees,
 No longer upright but leaning on canes;
 And the women,
 Even those who are with child,
 Carrying one upon the back,
 Holding another on the cradle board,
 Leading one by the hand,
 With another yet going before.
 Yes, with all of these,
 Your daylight fathers,
 Your daylight mothers,
 Your children
 You will pass on their roads,
 And wherever you come to rest
 We shall come to you."
 Thus my father spoke.⁴⁵

On the whole, however, characterization is sacrificed to maintain the narrative trend. The essential purpose of the narrative is ritual, and in ritual, character is less important than function or activity. The events alone are important, but the ritual predominates.

V. HISTORIC TALES

Historical narrative poetry is rare in Indian literature because prose was usually used for narration, but Walam Olum of the Delawares has similarities⁴⁶ to the European epic. The poem relates the creation myth of the Delawares and gives a record of Delaware history from the earliest times to the coming of the white settlers. The historical portion of the poem is a record of Delaware leaders in a manner reminiscent of the "begats" of the Old Testament.

After him, Not-Black was chief, who was a straight man.
 After him, Much-Loved was chief, a good man.
 After him, No-Blood was chief, who walked in cleanliness.
 After him, Snow-Father was chief, he of the big teeth.⁴⁷

The poem ends with the Delawares' initial encounter with the Europeans, which was evidently pleasant. (Appendix IV)

Two works in John Bierhorst's (1974) sizeable legacy of verbal art which has survived more or less intact from pre-conquest times, have historical elements - the Aztec Quetzalcoatl and the Mayan Cuceb (pronounced Koo-Keb). These have been retranslated from original manuscripts and are outstanding examples of bardic, oratorical, and prophetic styles characteristic of the cultures that produced them. Bierhorst's work is the first attempt to interpret them from a literary point of view. He arrives at the conclusion that, though symbolic, the poetry is far from chaotic and that, owing to its geometrical lines, it cannot be read for style in the same way the European poetry is read. The ideas and images are there. Like the incantatory poems, these mythological-historical poems also contain the renewal rituals. They were rituals of restoration at one time before their assimilation to the narrative and prophetic modes. Yet a vestige of history remains.

There is an ancient saga of the king Huemac in Mexican literature in which the sins of King Huemac are paid for by misfortunes which befall the people. The sins become the symbol of accumulated guilt which can finally no longer be tolerated. This implements the theory of renewal as does the Quetzalcoatl legend. The dualistic tension between the two figures, Huemac and Quetzalcoatl, is operative at several different levels. As a crude generalization it could be said that together they represent the spiritual and earthly aspects of a single personality. Yet for the most part the myth and saga are kept separate by ancient narrators. Evidence about whether or not a king by the name of Quetzalcoatl actually existed is hard to find; the early missionaries accepted it without question, as have a number of modern investigators, because⁴⁸ the oral tradition leaves no doubt he did exist.

The Mayan Cuceb is in the form of a prophecy, which in turn is a "book of years" describing historical events. The prophecy, at least in part, is the messianic vision of a priest seeking his people's deliverance from an alien ruling class. The name Cuceb is translated as "that which revolves" and is a veiled reference to the 7200 day (roughly twenty years) life cycle of the Mayan katun lord. Though historic in nature, the katun is best considered not as a one-time god to be dispatched and replaced, but as an eternal being who is killed and resurrected. Beneath the Mayan trappings of the katun cult and rich calendrical symbolism the regenerative theme of other myths is found.

VI. COMPARISON OF NATIVE POETRY WITH POETRY FROM WESTERN CULTURE

It is probably impossible to invent a logical scheme by which to classify Indian poetry so that it might be easily compared with types of poems common in Western literature. The oral tradition bound people tribally as it poeticized "common speech". The art of language was a daily shared activity and the word was a tribal bond; "literary history" was a function of memory, imagination and ritual. Words were grouped in parallel phrases, as though words were also tribal, to parallel a human condition with a natural phenomenon. Metaphors link man to his animal origins and the images spoke for themselves without explaining or exhausting the human parallels.

Words as things were left to their essential meanings as nature's less dramatic details received attention and poetic care. The smallest detail sharpened the attention to the larger world. Words derived from the actual world and remained in it, so that the singer felt no split between a word and the thing it named.

The tribal poet felt that he had inherited truths which were larger than himself and which would continue long after him. He discovered nature's poems and nourished them, never pretending to invent the poetic world apart from nature. The poet sang his place in the tribe and in nature, taking no credit for himself, giving his song back to those who gave it to him and humbling himself before the tribe and nature. The anonymity left him both unassuming and dignified, twice honoured. His visions fed into the public rituals, vital to the tribal health; his aesthetics proved utilitarian for he believed

that tribal life necessitated beauty. The names of composers, therefore, are unknown and, except for a few Aztec poets, the poem can only be attributed to the poet's culture. Though everyone was a potential poet and many ceremonies encouraged the invention of personal songs relating experiences either real or seen in visions, many of these religious songs remained personal; only a fraction of traditional poetry has ever been translated. These rituals were assumed to have been inspired by supernatural beings and the power to compose these songs was attributed to the gods.

Many Indian poems are not immediately comprehensible to a person who does not have knowledge of the particular culture. This fact has dictated the need for some explanation if a verse is to seem intelligible and pleasing. A mere anthology of Indian verse without any clues to the background of human needs and human emotions from which these poems sprang would be largely use-
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 less and might be misleading. The words of a ritual rain-making song, for example, become more meaningful when the reader is first made aware of the importance of rainfall to Indians of a desert area.

Indian poetry has frequently been described as "imagist" poetry, but many scholars agree that it can not be included in this movement; the tribal basis of the poetry places it in a different category. John Robert Colombo wrote that it is not surprising it was seen as imagist because much Native poetry was recorded, translated and published at the time when imagism was
 50
 in fashion - between 1908 and 1918.

The style of Native poetry differs markedly from English poetry but it does bear a striking resemblance to the Japanese haiku. Repetition and vocables are characteristic of Japanese poetry, and though they are often eliminated by translation they were part of the originals. Most haiku is

set out of doors and implies a close relationship between man and nature, and is usually seasonal. The Chippewa poem,

As my eyes search the prairie
I feel the summer in the spring.⁵¹

is similar to haiku in that it is brief, is set out of doors, is seasonal, and yet manages to evoke a range of thoughts and emotions. It is dependent upon a visual image, but, as in haiku, there is a strong element of synthesis of the senses. This is one of the charms of Indian poetry - it is direct and open with no rhetorical posing or assumed attitudes.

Use of synonyms is rare since meaning is usually very precise; one word can evoke a whole image. Ancient orators had certain fixed and beautiful phrases which seemed so "magic working" that there was little need to change them. In Zuni poetry for instance, we find ceremonial words repeated over and over again - "life giving road", "daylight people," "ladder-descending children". Papago poets always referred to the sun as the "shining traveller". Nature metaphors are readily evident in most Indian poetry though sometimes they have to be pieced together from far-flung clues.

Personification is not found since all animate and inanimate objects were thought to have an equally important position in the harmony of the universe. Man does not occupy a privileged position at the centre of the universe; rather man must maintain his position "at the centre" in harmony with the rest of nature. Every living creature, object, physical force (wind, water, rain, light) or abstract quality (death, fear, faith, joy) had spirit that personifies it. This is demonstrated in religious accounts; for example, it is not the hare that acts, but rather it is Hare, the spirit of the creature.

Magic words are used as incantations, not as assertions of survival or bravery. Through the magic of words the singer assumes command, he sings for power and achieves it. Articulation will cause the formulated phrase to become reality. The poem is a prayer; the prayer becomes incantation and incantation creates granting. An important difference between Indian and European poetry is the attitude toward the power of the word. Much Indian poetry can be categorized as coercive or incantatory. Sharp coercive phrases such as "Listen!" are used to help seize control of the powers of the universe. A sentence like, "The blue corn, with this it grows" may appear to be mainly descriptive but it is in fact a coercive utterance, spoken to bring about the action desired.

The ceremonial pattern that includes the four world directions, which are analogous to the four planes of the human body, creates repetition and pairings. Repetition is one of the outstanding characteristics of Indian poetry. The cult of the four world quarters is found in all Native cultures and, by extension, the number four itself is also sacred and fourfold repetition occurs frequently in Indian literature. Herbert J. Spinden is most frequently quoted for his authoritative work on traditional poetry.

The device of rhyme seems not to have been used by the most cultivated Americans of pre-Columbian times. Nor were there any certain stanza forms except such that were brought about by the repetition of phrases. The outstanding feature . . . comes from parallel phrasing, or, let us say, repetition with an increment, which gives an effect not of rhyming sounds but of rhyming thoughts. 52

Rhyme, parallel ideas, measured sound duration (metrics) and repetition are all apparent in traditional Indian poetry, but not as they are used in English poetry. That rhyme sometimes appears is incidental, an aspect

appearing in every language. Instead of rhyming words the songs rhyme perceptions, moods and natural objects, in fact, the whole world is combined with the poem as the unifying association. The ceremonial pattern that emphasizes the pairing of words, colours, animals, expressions and stanzas is used. Pairing obvious light and dark, yellow and white, sun and rain, land and water arises out of the idea of duality as in Father Sky and Mother Earth. Just as the closed couplet in English creates a sense of completeness, so does this pairing in North American Indian poetry.

This dualism as a figure of speech is common in Indian poetry. "He-rain" and "She-rain" is an example, as is "The white-rising! the yellow-rising!" This can be an expression of sexuality, white being the male colour and yellow the female in Navajo culture. More important than the expression of sexuality, however, is the concept that two together make for completeness. A thing or condition may be halved or doubled, and a happening is a reunifying merger. The formal recognition of this dualism is old; in modern literature it generally passes unrecognized, but in traditional song and myth it comes to the fore. The First Being was half-male, half-female. Dark and light are metaphorically represented as day and night, merging in the bright spot of dawn, hence the significance of the morning star in Indian mythology. The Navaho Night Chant is an outstanding example of dualism where paired stanzas, expressions, and even thoughts are found. The first part of the ceremony prepares the earth for the coming of the life-giving rain. "He-rain" and "she-rain" combine to prepare for the eventual coming of the "child-rain". It is only when the child-rain has arrived that the ritual can be completed.

Part I/The Purification

A little one now is prepared. A little one now is prepared.
For Hastshéhogan, it now is prepared.

A little message now is prepared,
Toward the trail of the he-rain, now is prepared,
As the rain will hang downward, now is prepared.

A little one now is prepared. A little one now is prepared.
For Hastshéyalti, it now is prepared.
A little kethawn now is prepared.
Toward the trail of the she-rain, now is prepared,
As the rain will hang downward, now is prepared.

Part II/The Healing

Grasshopper arrives,
From the east arrives,
The great corn arrives,
The child-rain arrives,
In a way of beauty arrives.⁵³

In traditional Indian poetry the most important elements of the song in order of significance were the rhythm, the melody and the words.⁵⁴ Rhythm, the pattern of measures of irregular length and the sub-divisions of the measures, is as much a matter of composition as the melody and often expresses the idea of the song. Words may differ in various renditions, the melody changes less, and the rhythm remains constant. Austin, in her introduction to The Path on the Rainbow, maintains that if an Indian could listen for a few hummed bars of a song he would be able to say, "It ought to be a war song."⁵⁵ Words could become obsolete or untranslatable but the song would survive.

Prose rituals were always intoned, and the delivery brought out the rhythmic character of the composition. Rituals that were sung were different from those that were intoned in that the words, in order to conform to the music, were drawn out by vowel prolongations. In order to meet the requirements of the musical phrases the vowels in some of the words were prolonged or doubled, or vocables were added or deleted to bring the line to the measure required by the music. The rhythm may have a complicated and varied arrangement in which tempo may change with every phrase, or it may be relatively simple.

In traditional Indian societies new prayers, new rituals, even new gods were borrowed readily and used for whatever good they might bring. Tribes borrowed from one another; in fact, Plains tribes were known to travel in order to learn new songs. Christianity was similarly embraced, but the spirit in which it was taken explains why many Christianized Indians were not really "Christian" at all. It was with ease that they could incorporate Christian teachings, especially songs, into their traditional beliefs, a custom which still endures. Christian influences in traditional poetry should therefore not be interpreted as "Christian" poetry in the strictest sense of the word.

Though there are significant differences between Indian poetry and the poetry of Western culture, there are also many similarities. If the main areas of difference are recognized, the study of traditional poetry can be incorporated into courses of study and can become a rewarding experience for all students.

NOTES

1

William Brandon, ed. The Magic World: American Indian Songs and Poems (New York: William Morrow, 1971), p. xi.

2

Thomas E. Sanders and Walter W. Peek, Literature of the American Indian (Toronto: Collier-Macmillan, 1973), p. 103.

3

Frederick W. Turner III, The Portable North American Indian Reader (New York: Penguin Books, 1973), p. 235.

4

A detailed description of the importance of song in a desert culture is given in Ruth Murray Underhill, Singing for Power (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976).

5 John Bierhorst, In the Trail of the Wind (New York: Dell Publishing, 1971), p. 54.

6 Ibid., p. 34.

7 John Robert Colombo, Songs of the Indians I (Ottawa: Oberon, 1983), pp. 120-121.

8 Ibid., p. 75.

9 Margaret Astrov, American Indian Prose and Poetry (New York: Capricorn Books, 1962), p. 121.

10 Ibid., p. 76.

11 Colombo, p. 50.

12 Ibid.

13 Helen Jankoski, A Word Has Power: Poetry and Healing in American Indian Cultures, (San Francisco: Modern Language Association of America, 1979), pp 12-3 (ERIC ED. 193 660).

14 A. Grove Day, The Sky Clears (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1951), p. 87.

15 Alan R. Velie, ed. American Indian Literature (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1979), p. 136.

16 Colombo, p. 35.

17 Kent Gooderham, I Am an Indian (Toronto: J.M. Dent and Sons, 1969), p. 141.

18 Colombo, p. 63.

19 Howard A. Norman, The Wishing Bone Cycle (New York: Stonehill Publishing, 1976), p. 8.

20 Colombo, p. 57.

21 Underhill, pp. 43-44.

22 Day, p. 109.

23 Colombo, p. 40.

24 Ibid., p. 30.

25 Underhill, p. 51.

26 Astrov, p. 49.

27 Brandon, p. 92.

28 Day, p. 57.

29 Sanders and Peek, p. 57.

30 Author's Note: In winter 1984 I heard a lullaby such as this whistled by Tom Little from Garden Hill, Manitoba. He used the blackboard to illustrate with Western musical notation how he was going to whistle the melody, which he then proceeded to do. Agnes Shorting from Little Saskatchewan Reserve in Manitoba, was in the audience, and whistled a lullaby that was common on her reserve. These softly-whistled lullabies can frequently be heard in northern airports, especially among older parents. Both Tom and Agnes agreed that false teeth have added a dimension to these lullabies that was not available in traditional times.

31 Colombo, p. 44.

32 Ibid., p. 60

33
Ibid.

34
Ibid., p. 24.

35
Ibid., p. 55.

36
John Bierhorst, ed., Four Masterwords of American Indian Literature
(New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1974), pp. 291-332.

37
Ibid., pp. 121-168.

38
Andrew O. Wiget, "Sayatasha's Night Chant", American Indian Culture and Research Journal 4, No. 1 & 2, (1980), pp. 118-138.

39
Bierhorst (1974), p. 129-130.

40
Ibid., pp. 294-295.

41
Ibid., p. 282.

42
Bierhorst (1974) reproduces Horatio Hale and J.N.B. Hewitt's version of the ritual. The use of the title (by all the above) as an "Iroquois" ritual is somewhat misleading. The rite was originally a Seneca ceremony and spread throughout the Six Nations but was not found among all Iroquoian tribes. Hale, in his original work specifies that he is referring only to Mohawks, Senecas, Oneidas, Onondagas, Cayugas and Tuscaroras. (Day, p. 133).

43
J.N.B. Hewitt, "The Requickening Address of the Iroquois Condolence Council", Journal of the Washington Academy of Science, Spring (1944), p. 65.

44
Bierhorst (1974), pp. 129-130.

45
Wiget, pp. 130-131.

46
Velie, pp. 96-135. The name "Walam Olum" means "painted record". The complete work is reproduced by Velie in pictographs, Delaware and English translation.

47
Ibid., p. 115.

48
Bierhorst (1974), p. 27.

49
Day, p. xi.

50
Colombo, p. 103.

51
Velie, p. 92.

52
Sanders and Peek, pp. 106-107.

53
Bierhorst (1974), pp. 293-4, 319.

54
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55
George W. Cronyn, The Path on the Rainbow (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1918), p. xviii.

CHAPTER V

CONTEMPORARY NATIVE LITERATURE

I. THE YEARS OF SILENCE

A considerable body of contemporary Native literature now exists. The development of Native literature is unusual in that there is a gap of many years - the literature of North American Natives was either destroyed or driven underground by colonization; it was not until the mid-1900s that Native people began to participate in contemporary forms of creative expression. Only a few exceptions exist which will be mentioned in this chapter. The major themes and distinctive styles emerging in contemporary Native writing are identified. New political boundaries are influencing the production of literature today; the literature has become more distinctly regional and has become more distinctly delineated into literary genre. On the basis of what literature actually exists the discussion can best be organized under the headings of American poetry, American prose and contemporary Canadian literature.

If Native literature had been allowed to evolve without interference from an alien culture, the mythological components would likely have become assimilated as they have in literatures from other cultures. Oral narrative would likely have changed as writing became more widespread; the beginnings of writing systems existed at the time of European contact, ranging from the rudimentary records of Iroquoian wampum belts to the orthography of the Mayans and Aztecs. This gradual evolution of Native literature, however, was not to be.

With the coming of European settlers and with their policies based on

the assimilation and suppression of Native cultures, the Native poet/singer/storyteller lapsed into silence and the interest in Indian mythology created by Henry Rowe Schoolcraft in 1839 was not sustained. In both Canada and the United States concentrated efforts were made to suppress all that was Indian; any expression of Indian religious belief was punished or ridiculed by extremely powerful and effective institutions. The collection of myths and songs by ethnologists and anthropologists was continued, but it was done to add to the store of knowledge about Indians. The emphasis was not on understanding and integrating the material into Western belief systems; if there was any interest in the literary aspects of the songs and myths it was not emphasized. The imagist movement led to a flurry of interest in Indian poetry in the early 1900s, but this also was short-lived.

The Natives themselves were largely mute; they lived only in the literature of the Western conquerors, moving from one stereotyped image to another. Cotton Mather's image of the "forlorn and wretched Heathen" made way for Rousseau's "Noble Savage" and eventually moved back to the victimized, dispossessed, cultureless nomads, an image which persists even to this day.

Though collection of personal narratives continued in what is now the United States, these collections received little attention as literature and virtually no work of this kind was done in Canada. One Canadian song writer, however, was not mute. Pierre Falcon (1793-1876), referred to by the Métis as the "troubador of the plains", is not well known but some of his work survives. He was born in the Swan River area of Manitoba and later moved to Grantown (now St. Francis Xavier) where he wrote about great occasions - battles that decided future events in Canada - and of small, everyday affairs. Spontaneity seemed to be a characteristic of his style; he felt a song in any event, large or small. His poetry cannot be classified as "great" poetry:

today it would fall into the popular "folksong" category. It was truly song and was not intended to be recited as poetry.

Falcon's songs are an important contribution to Canadian culture because there are few existing records of events as seen through the eyes of the Métis. He used the ballad form, a form that lent itself well to memorization. His songs immediately became community property and were sung at parties and to the stroke of the voyageurs' paddles. Many of his songs were not recorded, however, and so are lost. He is best known for the song "The Battle of Seven Oaks", an event which he witnessed personally. Though historians have long argued about who fired the first shot, Falcon tells the story "as he saw it". Though the English translations are a valuable source of information, Falcon's songs are best read in the original French. (Appendix V)

Whereas Falcon's songs are rarely included in school curricula another Native writer from a slightly later era, Pauline Johnson (1861-1913), is familiar to virtually every person who has completed the Canadian education system. She has been the object of adulation and praise on the one hand, and contempt on the other; editorials and journal articles have been written from both points of view.² A Canadian commemorative stamp was issued in her honour; yet biographers are not always in agreement on some of the most basic facts about her life. Every generation of Canadian school children has, however, been exposed to at least some of her poetry.

She was accused of masquerading as an Indian when she really was not one. Legally she was an Indian and today her Indian identity would be accepted without question. Her father was of German-Mohawk descent and her grandfather was Mohawk. Her English mother had been raised in a harsh Protestant environment and found warmth, love and happiness, such as she had never experienced before, on the Six Nations Reserve at Brantford. Although she taught her

children about their British heritage and although both she and her husband were Christians, she actively encouraged the acceptance of the children's Indian heritage. Pauline's interest in writing was frequently attributed to the "white" influences in her life, yet she spent many childhood hours with her grandfather, "Smoke" Johnson, known locally as the "Mohawk Warbler" because of his great gift for story-telling. Pauline herself said she was in Indian³ "by law, by temperament, by choice and by upbringing".

She did not have much formal schooling because she did not enjoy the confines of the classroom. She was influenced, however, by her gracious home and well-equipped library; Scott, Longfellow, Byron, Shakespeare, Addison, Dickens, and Emerson were familiar to her and shaped her thinking. Because her parents' home was frequently used as the official residence for visiting dignitaries, she enjoyed the company of important guests, often brilliant and witty.

Her poetry has been severely criticized. There is no doubt that her writing is Western in style and strongly influenced by European writers. If, however, her poetry is evaluated in terms of the writing of her own time, it cannot be dismissed out of hand. Much of the literature of that time exudes sentimental idealism and is very romantic, deriving much imagery and technique from the English Romantic period. The poems were rhetorical and overly sentimental. In the post-Confederation period, however, the emphasis was on Canadian writing, and comparisons between good and poor poetry were secondary to the nationality of the poet.

Pauline's success was due as much to her non-literary as to her literary career - her Indian heritage, her dress, her skill as a stage performer and her personality. She was an unusual woman in a highly unorthodox occupation; those were the days of platform entertainment and, when Pauline turned to the

stage in order to make a living she sacrificed her literary career. Much of her poetry is shallow doggerel, but she was a consummate performer - not of the "concert recital" variety but of the "music hall" type. Her engaging platform performance and her romantic poetry added to her popularity wherever she went. Canada was desperately looking for an identity and Pauline served as a symbol so that wherever she went she brought her vision of a great and united Canada, rising above regional differences and petty racial loyalties. Norman Shrive states that some of her best writing is found in her private letters; it is unfortunate that very few of her private papers have survived.

The popular image of the Indian was changing. No longer savage or noble, the Indian was seen as downtrodden, dispossessed and victimized. Pauline was appalled at this new popular image and published a satiric article about the Indian heroine who is always known as "Winona" or "Wanda", who has no surname, whose father is always chief and who is

always desperately in love with a young white hero, who in turn is grateful to her for services rendered the garrison in general and himself in particular during the red days of war.⁵

This kind of cynicism was not what the Canadian public wanted to read at that time.

Pauline Johnson's collection of West Coast legends, published in Legends of Vancouver, is probably her most lasting contribution to Native literature. Most of the legends were reproduced as told to her by Joe Capilano and she also describes the circumstances under which they were told. In her poetry she used some traditional Indian material but she wrote in a European style. The landscape is filled with human qualities and emotions, accepting a European mode of personifying nature. She sees the human being as the most important, the most pervasive element in the environment, and she overlooks

the influence of the natural world on the human. A tribal viewpoint, which gives equal place to all life forms and the interdependencies between them is missing from her work. She wrote some insightful pieces; her narrative poems, so popular with audiences, speak of the starvation of Indian people, intertribal warfare, and conflicts of cultural values. Some of her simple lyrics and lullabies live on because of their charm. (Appendix VI)

If Pauline Johnson is assessed dispassionately, she should be neither unrestrainedly praised nor scorned. Her work offers an important historical perspective on Native American literature; either directly or indirectly her work reflects the conflicts experienced by Native people because of the infiltration of a new religion and culture. Many of the poems, precisely because of their references to new ways and to a romantic non-tribal perspective, are significant contributions to literature and history. They reflect a neglected period in North American writing and are a poetic testimony to the loss of identity and conflicts imposed upon Native people, especially on those of mixed blood. For this reason, as well as for the beauty and insight of many of her poems, the work of Pauline Johnson will continue to live.

II. CONTEMPORARY WRITING

Contemporary Native literature consists of autobiographies, novels, short stories and poetry written in English by Native writers, many of whom speak no other language. By far the greatest body of literature has been produced in the United States and it is significantly different from Canadian Native literature. Thomas E. Sanders and Walter W. Peek identify the confrontation between non-Natives and Indians at Wounded Knee (1973) as a turning point in Native consciousness, hence a significant influence on

Native literature. These two Native writers contend that

He [the Indian] began to see why the mystic visionaries among English language writers were so chronically misunderstood. D.H. Lawrence, James Joyce, Ernest Hemingway, Hart Crane, T.S. Eliot - the literary gods of the transplant American, disillusioned with the dehumanizing results of the technological debasing, had turned in one way or another, to the primitive rituals and literatures and beliefs in a vain attempt to re-establish some part of the broken link between themselves and the Great Mystery.⁶

Many contemporary Native writers are caught in a dilemma; they cannot go back to their own language because they do not know it, or do not know it well; they must, therefore, use English, a language not quite adequate for what they want to say. The message is frequently resented by non-Native readers, no matter how articulate or eloquent the writer. The most natural presentations appear to accuse because if they come from the heart of the Native heritage, it is almost impossible not to accuse. Or the Native writer, though writing matter-of-factly about the most ordinary events, is viewed as yet another sensationalist, seeking public sympathy.

While the language is English, the underlying communication is usually Native. The underlying "Indianness" is strong and the writing of young Native Americans is proof if any is needed, that North American Indians have not vanished but many are participating fully in North American society.

Certain difficulties are encountered while reading some of this literature, because literary acts of the imagination are shaped not only by the individual artist but by the cultural tradition of which the writer is part. To understand and appreciate the art, the reader must understand the tradition from which it comes. This is particularly true of literature temporally and culturally different from the Western literature in our education systems. Ignorance of Native culture has been used as an excuse for

excluding Native literature from curricula for too long. A criticism relating particularly to Native literature will do little good for the teacher who does not take time to understand the old world view; however, no literature is taught without providing students with background information. Although Indian literature contains much that has meaning only for those who have embraced a particular religion or way of life, it also contains much that has universal value and meaning for people of all religions and cultures. The history of the Indian cannot be separated from the history of the immigrants, and in the same way Native literature should become an integral part of North American literature. Native literature is truly North American and should be taken seriously in its own right and not merely as a means of satisfying nationalistic demands of a minority group.

Paula Gunn Allen (Laguna-Sioux) explains some of the differences between Native writing and Western literature:

American Indian literature is not similar to western literature because the basic assumptions about the universe and therefore, the basic reality experienced by tribal peoples and westerners are not the same, even at the level of "folk-lore".⁷

Although Allen is primarily talking about the material of oral tradition, she has identified something unique and universal within the literature produced by contemporary Indian writers. The premises of Native American oral literature are fundamentally different from European literature in style, format, theme and world-view. The Indian writer stands with one foot in each of two literary traditions. Some of these works are American literature that happens to be written by a person of Native descent; in other cases the works are definitely founded on Indian oral tradition and can be identified as such by the reverence for words, the sense of place and dependence on that sense, the feeling of ritual, the affirmation of the need of community and the

significantly different worldview. Although these concepts are interrelated and do not function as individual entities, they can be identified as the key components of contemporary Native literature and are the criteria upon which any valid criticism should be based.

In the traditional Indian world-view the word is considered to be sacred. It creates. The speaker is not the centre of the world because words were on earth before man. The good story-teller does not create words to relay his story; rather he discovers words which have already created a story. Words are not spoken apart from meaning because all words create meaning; if words are used without thought, they create chaos. The silences between words are as full of meaning and as sacred as the words themselves; what is not said is as important as what is said. Though the careful selection of words is by no means confined to Native writers the reverence for the word and the sacredness of the utterance placed the traditional Indian composer in a position unparalleled in contemporary Western society.

One mark of the traditional Indian writer is extreme care in the choice of words. Linked to the immortality of the words is the need to use the precise word to express an idea. Often, when English is used, the reader should think in terms of the denotation because precise meaning is of great importance. This precision is accompanied by a great economy in the use of words. A speaker will use as few words as possible to convey a specific thought. This does not mean that Indian speeches are necessarily short; it means that every word in the utterance is important. Traditionalists frequently employ a figure of speech called synecdoche, that is, the use of a part for the whole. For example, in a Navajo poem my wool could be used to mean my sheep herd, or in modern terms, my wheels for my car. This use

of synecdoche can lead to frustration on the part of the modern reader who does not share the same body of experience or world-view with the poet. Simon Ortiz (Acoma) says in one of his poems that he picked up a woman hitch-hiking home from Pheonix because she "got a headache", and the poem goes right on without a pause. The "headache" conveys all the impressions of noise, heat, hurry, flashing signs, regulations and the claustrophobic atmosphere of the city.⁹

Precision of detail is a distinguishing characteristic of all Native writing and results in a unique and vibrant imagery in both prose and poetry. This perception of the word is likely the most important unifying factor. But the word does not stand by itself; it has meaning only if it is linked to the land. Indian literature cannot be defined as apart from the land.¹⁰ Paula Gunn Allen has said, "We are the land". The land is a reality in the physical sense, but beyond that, the land functions as a moral idea, a starting place and a unifying force. Sense of place is not unique to American Indian literature, but American Indian literature is uniquely dependent upon the land. It is only in the Native myths that an unself-conscious identity of man and land is taken for granted. The place does not restrict the Indian writer; rather it broadens his ability to imagine and create.

Land is related to memories and chants. It is a recognition that contemporary literature is not entirely new, that it has a relationship with the past, with oral tradition. Leslie Silko's (Laguna) writing is an example of how oral tradition can be used in contemporary works. In her writing, the old stories are found in the new stories; her short stories and the novel Ceremony demonstrate how this can be. Much of the oral literature was never perceived as apart from religion, morality and the ethics of the community. It is

this relationship between the word, the land, and the ceremony linked with the past that gives strength to truly Native contemporary literature.

Writers affirm the existence and the need for a sense of community as it currently exists among Native people. Ceremony and ritual can only live if there is a community for it to function within. Community is seen as an integral part of an Indian determination for survival; rugged individualism is not a characteristic of Indian literature.

Differences in world-view are commonly defined in terms of the Indian's attitude toward nature. The importance of all beings, animate or inanimate, is in fact a part of that world-view, but if this is what readers see, the comprehension of this different world-view will be very superficial. The equality of all beings, animate or inanimate, is difficult for the non-Native mind to comprehend; nature cannot be personified because it has being and power equal to that of mankind. Human beings are not the focus of attention at the centre of the universe, yet they must maintain a position "at the centre", meaning in harmony with the universe. One cannot adopt a condescending attitude toward animals if animals are one's equals. An awareness of this view of nature, the sacredness of the word, the identification with the land, and the importance of ceremony, ritual and community, creates an understanding of the characteristics that make contemporary Native literature unique.

III. CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN POETRY

Poetry seems to be the dominant genre of young American Native writers. This could well be because of the fact that in poetry the creative writer can more readily approach the style of the oral tradition. In many cases the

styles are the same as those of other American poets, but the subject matter is usually Indian in nature. The poetry is sometimes difficult and obscure as is much of that written by non-Natives. Allusions are often personal rather than cultural, organization is often associational rather than logical and the approach is often surrealistic.

N. Scott Momaday (Kiowa) is probably the best known contemporary Native writer. He belongs to the "post-symbolist" school of poets and uses closely controlled association for the structure of his poems. The following poem is representative of his style - heavy use of sensory perceptions, veiled cultural references, far-flung associations and emphasis on natural detail.

Angle of Geese

How shall we adorn
Recognition with our speech?
Now the dead firstborn
Will lag in the wake of words.

Custom intervenes;
We are civil; something more:
More than language means,
The mute presence mulls and marks.

Almost of the mind,
We take measure of the loss;
I am slow to find
The mere margin of repose.

And one November
It was longer in the watch,
As if forever,
Of the huge ancestral goose.

So much symmetry!
Like the pale angle of time
And eternity.
The great shape labored and fell.

Quit of hope and hurt,
It held a motionless gaze,
Wide of time, alert,
On the dark distant flurry.¹¹

The first three stanzas are his reflection on the death of a friend's child and describe the inadequacy of language to encompass such grief. The use of the word "adorn" indicates that language functions merely as a decoration in a painful situation. "We are civil" contrasts the custom of repressing grief with the more expressive tribal customs of keening and mutilation. In Anglo-Saxon America the poet cannot find even the "mere margin" or beginning of repose. In the second half of the poem Momaday shifts, without transition, from the death of the child to the death of a wild goose he experienced as a teenager. The link between the two is associational; the poem recalls the pathos of the dying goose, yearning to take its place in the "pale angle" with the rest of the flock. The goose becomes the "huge ancestral goose", a prototype, and the angle is the angle of time and eternity. The wounded goose, between life and death, is still alive and alert, and yet it is "wide of time", that is, its impending death has released it from the bondage of time.

There is similarity among much of the work of contemporary Native poets because it is still very close to the oral tradition. The most difficult aspect of dealing with oral tradition is the immensity of the phenomena of oral tradition existing simultaneously in the minds and lives of many people. The poet draws his strength from the ceremonies and sacred stories, variations of secular materials, oral history, personal reminiscences, place names, charms, prayers, lyrics, laments and popular characterizations of places and animals. The dynamic writer and this varied cultural material help define the writer and the writer's relationship to the community.

Oral tradition does survive the onslaught of modern culture, and poetry as an art form offers the reader a look at its continuance. Most poets

unlike Scott Momaday, take their inspiration from the oral tradition as subject matter and as medium. All modern poets seek to define their identities through their art, but Native poets are also concerned with the degree of their identification within the all-encompassing vision of tribal societies and oral tradition.

The poetry is essentially religious; the poems praise and celebrate the spirit. The Native poets try to give back and strengthen the oral tradition instead of exploiting it. They seek to help their readers experience the traditional world - the powers, the perceptions, and the amazing occurrences - because they believe the time and world of oral tradition still exist. Not that the readers undergo transformations or go on fabulous journeys; but the powers and perceptions of that story world, those things that define it and give it meaning, are alive and can be rediscovered in the world today. Ray Young Bear (Sauk and Fox) is representative of these contemporary poets. His uniqueness lies in his evocative use of composition and elements of the oral story as a form of his work. His poems use the fantastic events and perceptions of the mythical world to make new stories, rather than to utilize the elements solely as subject. In the poem "The Cook" the woman has super-natural powers and is instructed by these powers. Not only does she have power over human beings, but she also seems to have power over the weather as well.

.... she would caress her hands
over her face and every time
she did this, the rain would come
out from the fields, breaking
the winter and spring apart.¹³

As Young Bear creates his poetry he draws on two sources, the old traditional songs and his own dreams and visions. The actions in his poems are not so much metaphors as magical occurrences.

Like Simon Ortiz and Ray Young Bear, James Welch (Blackfoot) writes

poetry that is in some cases perfectly clear, even to the unsophisticated reader, but in other cases it is very difficult to understand because of its surrealism. Far-flung association of ideas, many stemming from the oral traditions, link seemingly disparate objects to striking images and become the distinguishing marks of the poems. Dream images are an important component since the use of the unconscious was the major thrust of the surrealist movement. The movement also incorporated a radical change in the use of language and the suggestive power of the words. It is not by accident that surrealism appeals to young Native writers; visions were widespread phenomena, especially among Plains tribes, in traditional times, and translating these visions into songs was commonplace. The relationship between visions and dreams was perceived in similar ways by both surrealists and Indians; they were seen as visual experiences outside and above waking reality, which gives meaning to everyday life. In fact, the peyote religion, which was adopted after tribal ways became all but impossible on the Plains, was based on visionary experiences induced by the hallucinogenic drug of the peyote plant.

In his non-surrealistic poetry James Welch reveals a good deal of bitter wit and humour, humour of a fierce, disturbing kind. He uses it as a weapon against bigots, both Native and non-Native; he seems to find all mankind ludicrous most of the time and responds by lampooning it. His heroes are anti-heroes floundering about in a meaningless universe. The archetype of the trickster is frequently found, but it is usually the negative side of the trickster's duality that he shows. In "Arizona Highways" he explores his reaction to a young Navajo girl he sees talking to a politician in a bar.

I see her seventeen,
a lady dark, turquoise
on her wrists. The land

astounded by a sweeping rain
 becomes her skin. Clouds
 begin to mend my broken eyes.

I see her singing by a broken shack,
 eyes so black it must be dawn.
 I hum along, act sober,
 tell her I could love her
 if she dressed better, if her father
 got a job and beat her more.
 Eulynda. There's a name
 I could live with. I could
 thrash away the nuns, tell them
 I adopt this girl, dark
 seventeen, silver on her fingers,
 in the name of the father, son,
 and me, the holy ghost.
 Why not? Mormons do less
 with less. Didn't her ancestors
 live in cliffs, no plumbing,
 just a lot of love and corn?
 Me, that's corn, pollen
 in her hair. East, south, west, north -
 now I see my role - religious.
 The Indian politician made her laugh.
 Her silver jingled in her throat,
 those songs, her fingers busy
 on his sleeve. Fathers, forgive me.
 She knows me in her Tchindii dream,
 always a little pale, too much
 bourbon in my nose, my shoes
 too clean, belly soft as hers.

I'll move on. My schedule
 says Many Farms tomorrow, then
 on to Window Rock, and finally home,
 that weathered nude, distant
 as the cloud I came in on.¹⁴

The girl seems thoroughly at home, not only in the bar, but in her cultural milieu. The imagery of the poem links her to the land - "The land ... becomes her skin". She is earthy in a way the poet no longer is with his "soft" belly, clean shoes, and nose filled with bourbon. He is not pure enough to be her lover and so he sardonically suggests other relationships. He recognizes, however, that with his civilized ways he would be like a "Tchindii" to her, a malevolent Navajo spirit, and so he moves on.

Simon Ortiz (Acoma Pueblo) is charmingly informal and colloquial in his diction, but his poems can also be profoundly moving and sometimes filled with stinging irony. He, like other poets, is very close to the myth and oral tradition of his people as is shown in this simple poem, on a totally contemporary topic.

Washyuma Motor Hotel

Beneath the cement foundations
of the motel, the ancient spirits
of the people conspire sacred tricks.
They tell stories and jokes and laugh
and laugh.

The American passersby
get out of their hot, stuffy cars
at evening, pay their money wordlessly,
and fall asleep without benefit of dreams.
The next morning they get up
dress automatically, brush their teeth,
get in their cars and drive away.
They haven't noticed that the cement
foundations of the motor hotel
are crumbling, bit by bit.

The ancient spirits tell stories
and jokes and laugh and laugh.¹⁶

He contrasts the laughing, joking spirits of his ancestors with the lack of spiritualism in contemporary American society. The automatic tourist functions without the benefit of dreams or words and is heedless, unnoticing and uncaring.

The late Sarain Stump (Shoshoni, Cree and Flathead) also called on traditional myth and symbolism for much of his poetry. In the following poem he speaks of the meeting between Native and European cultures.

I was mixing stars and sand
in front of him
but he couldn't understand
I was keeping the lightning of
the thunder in my purse
just in front of him
but he couldn't understand
and I had been killed a thousand times

right at his feet
but he hadn't understood.¹⁷

stump, too, refers to the ethnocentrism of the invading society and how heedless of the feelings of a people with a different culture.

The above poets are representative of a growing body of literature. They represent a variety of cultures - Kiowa, Sauk, Fox, Blackfoot, Pueblo, Shoshoni, Cree, and Flathead - and are written by poets with varied life styles. Yet each poet is distinctively Native in his creative expression; a reference to the land or a closely related aspect of nature is found in every poem. As well, there is a close association with the spiritual world and powers of the supernatural demonstrating that traditional beliefs are still held dear by these Native poets.

IV. CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN PROSE

Young Native writers with a Western education are turning more and more to short story writing. These stories, like poetry, contain many traces of tradition, at times felt faintly in the background, at other times they are central to the story. Rosen's The Man to Send Rain Clouds is an excellent collection of short stories written by young Native writers from the southern United States - Navajo, Apache, Pueblo, Choctaw and Pawnee - and the themes have a striking similarity. The dominant theme is alienation from mainstream society and the authority figures that influence the lives of Indians. Leslie Silko refers to the authority of the church when she tells the story of the death of an old man; Simon Ortiz reveals the profound hatred of the police in "The Killing of a State Cop". Though fictional narrative is not a traditional Indian genre, contemporary writers are successfully dealing with a non-Native

world without losing sight of the traditionally organic view of existence which is the essential legacy each of these writers has inherited.

Three Native novelists have been widely acclaimed for their longer works; N. Scott Momaday was awarded the Pulitzer prize for House Made of Dawn (1968); Winter in the Blood (1974) by James Welch has been well received; and Leslie Silko's Ceremony (1977) has received critical acclaim. There are many similarities in these three novels. Fragmentation of thought and story is a common element. The emphasis is on event; where this event occurs in the book is not nearly as important as the event itself. In fact, early critics called Momaday's book "hazy" until they abandoned the concept of a linear time framework and recognized the unique aspects of the work. The recognition of thought and time is crucial to the understanding of reality; Momaday's writing in House Made of Dawn demonstrates this difference.

This is the story of Abel, a victim of war and a violent society that has left him sick and intent on destroying himself. It is also the story of Abel's grandfather, Francisco. Abel tries to integrate into mainstream society but in the end he finds himself only by finding his identity through his grandfather. Momaday has written the story in what has the appearance more than the actual form of a novel. He has created a bridge between different ways of being in the world and presents a cultural perspective not often found in Western literature. Linear time gives way to circular time; the protagonist moves in a different kind of zone from those found in narratives that have initial conflicts and climaxes. Integral to the book is the Navajo "Night Chant". Without some understanding of the ceremony much of the significance of the book is lost.

Silko's book, in many ways, is like Momaday's. Her hero, too, is alienated from society because of his experiences during a war that was not his war. Her book, too, is based on circular time: fragmentation results in a structure that is based on a series of events that depend on the solar year and on things with a reality different from Western understanding of time and events. Chronological time is unimportant. The hero of Ceremony is cured by his participation in a traditional Laguna ceremony performed by an old man and Silko intends the novel itself to be a curing ceremony, not just for Indians but for anyone who reads it. The novel incorporates traditional Indian reverence for the sacredness of the word, the land, the community; it affirms the need for an on-going participation in ritual as well as revealing a uniquely Indian mode of perception of the nature of reality and time. It is also a novel about change, not just in the ancient ceremonies that are basic to North American Indians, but also in the change in storytelling. This change is evident in the composition of the story itself when traditional poetry is included, yet this addition in no way detracts from what is essentially a contemporary novel. The ancient stories are incorporated as an integral part of the plot, for without the hero's belief in the traditional healing powers he could not have been cured.

James Welch's narrator in Winter in the Blood is so alienated from society that the author never does give him a name. The remoteness of the past, the sense of loss and of the hopelessness of receiving aid from supernatural sources are reflected and embodied in the fragmented narrative method. The shapelessness of the sardonic narrator's experiences speak for themselves in form as well as in content. As in his poetry, surrealism also influences Welch's novel. The hero of the story is an anti-hero who has been spiritually dead since the death of his father and brother; the spiritual coldness,

reflected in the title of the story, cannot be cured. Welch focuses his story around the ancient theme of the quest, and when the hero begins to search for his identity and roots, the traditional circle reaches completion. He learns the story of his grandmother and the identity of his grandfather; the reunion with his lost kin completes the quest and the circle of time is once more whole. Winter in the Blood differs from Momaday's and Silko's novels in that, though he uses pathos, it also offers humour - humour of a trickster-like nature that is richly comic.

Though best known for his prize winning novel, Momaday also wrote an autobiographical book, The Way to Rainy Mountain. In this book he seeks to place tribal literature in a historical setting by portraying it as three truths - that of tribal legend, that of philosophical meaning, and that of personal experience. In spite of the brevity of the book it offers examples of every major traditional and modern form of Native literature - descriptions of ceremonies and sacred objects, ancient myths, songs, and illustrations. He also offers some excellent examples of modern Indian essays, fiction and poetry. As the three voices merge toward the end of the book, the reader realizes how inappropriate a linear concept of time is to the reading of the book. There is a dynamic intermingling of the past and present, of cultural, personal, and spiritual experiences, and of the objective and the subjective feelings of the author. The reader begins to understand what Momaday means by the "miracle" of the Kiowa culture; the collapse of that culture and its persistence, the wholeness and the vitality which are renewed each time the imagination recreates ancient and recent pasts to illuminate the future.

Frank Waters' book The Man Who Killed the Deer is well worth reading, though it is not of the same calibre as the above novels. It, too, has a

truly Native theme: the importance of ritual, ceremony and community, but the time is linear and it does not incorporate ritual material. Because of his Western style the novel is frequently rejected as Native writing and its strengths are overlooked.

Hymeyohsts Storm's Seven Arrows is a controversial book in which it is most difficult to pinpoint his cultural sources. Purported to be Cheyenne, it defies all categorization as to theme and style. It includes many legends which bear little resemblance to traditional Indian legends of any tribe and the plot contains detailed explanations of these legends which run counter to traditional Indian customs. The primary purpose of the book is to instruct readers in the mentality of Indian tradition and so it is expository and didactic. Jamake Highwater points out that it is written about that tradition¹⁸ and so is not an extension of that tradition into a literary form. Storm's second book, Song of Heyaehkah, is a combination of the realism of Little Wolf and the white gold seekers, and the dazzling world of Little Wolf's wife, who is a shaman. The book largely follows a Western literary format and ritual material is used in a peripheral fashion.

The list of Native writers is brief; no doubt other books by American Native writers exist. The above have been selected for comment because they are most readily available in Manitoba bookstores and libraries.

V. CONTEMPORARY CANADIAN NATIVE LITERATURE

Generally speaking, Canadian writing is of a more simplistic nature than the works of American writers referred to earlier. Even so, the Canadian story-tellers and poets have a story to tell or comments to make about society,

which they do in a memorable and effective fashion, however, the body of Canadian literature is very small. Several memoirs are worthy of note and will be discussed in this section because they are currently being produced.

Vanishing Spaces, the memoirs of Louis Goulet, a Manitoba Métis, are told by Guillame Charette and translated from the French into English by Ray Ellenwood. Goulet was born in 1884 near Fort Garry and was truly a product of the "Old West"; he gives first-hand descriptions of buffalo hunts and the Riel Rebellion, but also tells anecdotes of everyday life of the era. The style is simple and colloquial, using oral narrative techniques of involving the readers as knowledgeable participants.

John Tetso's Trapping is My Life is a collection of short articles originally written for a Catholic journal. Though he wrote in fluent English, Tetso also played the role of the "storyteller" by involving the participants through asking their opinions and making informal observations. The stories reveal much about the life of a Slavey trapper, as well as Tetso's own philosophy of life.

Tom Boulanger's An Indian Remembers is written in a different style. He first presented his manuscript, tied with fish cord, to Adam Cuthand, a prominent Manitoba Métis. In the foreword Cuthand says,

It was with apprehension that I began to read the manuscript as the writer had limited formal education . . .

But he concludes,

His writing lacks fluency and correct sentence structure, but the weaknesses disappear as you begin to read this fascinating tale.¹⁹

Boulanger's work is truly oral narrative written down. His style is that of the oral performer who has captured and holds his audience. Meaning is always clear for the contemporary reader who slows down to accommodate the unusual wording. Boulanger recalls his marriage, one of the highlights of his life:

I was married in 1925 in Berens River. I had a very wonderful time having a partner in trapping, always going with me every year. I always had a lot of fur.²⁰

Boulanger demonstrates the tendency for Native writers to describe even moments of great emotion without much intensity of language, or to imply the emotional pitch obliquely rather than directly. Such understatement is not an indication of repression or absence of emotion, but it is evident that the narrator simply takes the emotion for granted and that the events speak for themselves, dramatically and emotionally.

Like Boulanger, Augusta Tappage, a Shuswap Indian from British Columbia, reveals a great deal of the essence of traditional story telling in her reminiscences in The Days of Augusta. Augusta's stories are personal memoirs told in narrative form, but on the printed page the editor has given them all the appearances of poetry.

The One They Took

They took one on me, the Welfare did.
They put him out at Horsefly
You see, this one I had was a likeable little fellow,
but he started taking fits.

Well, that woman came for him.
In a way I was kind of sorry
and I was kind of mad at that woman too.
I hated her. I told her,
"What makes you so important now?
Why now to be so important?
The minute I raise him
you come taking him away!"

I didn't want him to go,
But I guess she had orders from people.
You know how everything goes
in government offices.

I guess I loved him,
that little fellow.²¹

Augusta compresses a great deal of emotion into the matter-of-fact recital. Her great love for the child is simply expressed - "I guess I loved him" - as is her bitter resentment of the Welfare system summed up in, "Why now to be so important?" That Augusta's narrative was truly an oral performance is shown by the way she involves her readers with comments like

And you scrape it like this...

 They make a string out of it like this, see,

 It's easy to make a net!

Augusta is obviously demonstrating as she speaks and the editor has captured these moments superbly.

Some noteworthy biographies and autobiographies have been produced by Canadian writers. The stark realism of Maria Campbell's Halfbreed has had considerable impact upon readers. She tells of the life of a Métis child in Northern Saskatchewan and of the life of a Métis woman in the city. Her style is largely Western, but traces of her Native heritage are always present and are reflected particularly strongly in the first part of the book where she tells of her childhood. Like other traditional writers she frequently implies emotions rather than states them; when she does state them the terse, forceful language is memorable. She tells of the hard life of her grandmother,

She brushed and cleared the settlers' land, picked
 their stones, delivered their babies, and looked
 after them when they were sick. Her home was always
 open to anyone in the community who cared to drop in,
 but in the forty years she lived there no white
 people ever visited her home, and only three old
 Swedes came when we buried her.²³

All the agony, hurt and loneliness of her grandmother's life is compressed into these two dispassionate sentences. Ritual and community played an

important role in Maria's life and the loss of these supports contributed to her personal disintegration in the city. It is only when she remembers the teachings of her great-grandmother, Cheechum, that she is able to regain some stability.

Other biographies are of greater historical than literary interest - Chief Peguis and His Descendants by Albert Edward Thompson, Forty Years a Chief by George Barker, Thomas George Prince by D.B. Sealey and P. Van de Vyvere, I am Nokomis, Too by Patronella Johnston and Fifty Dollar Bride by Jock Carpenter. All add considerably to the body of information on Canadian Natives and are well written.

Few poetry books by Native poets have been published in Canada. Of special merit is Notice, This is an Indian Reserve, a collection of poetry mainly by Sheila Erickson, edited by Kent Gooderham. The book contains excellent photographs which enhance its value. Erickson's best known poem pleads for an Indian voice in Canadian literature.

don't rhyme the words too closely
 when you tell our story
 leave time and space for us to instill
 our bit of truth
 to add another line or word
 each man his own
 each nation its paragraph
 leave room for us to chant and mourn
 and mimic the roll of the buffalo herds
 or shake the fishskin rattle
 don't rhyme the words too closely₂₄

Erickson asks that Indians be allowed to interpret their own traditional beliefs which are so necessary for an understanding of contemporary Indians. In many of her poems she alludes to traditional beliefs and Native values. In "the holy women in the mountain" she combines tribal songs with the neon lights and the juke box music of the "skid row Mama", while in the following

poem, she mourns the death of tribal religion.

I hear the gods are crying in the night
 I hear they've been abandoned and alone
 it seems their glorious robes are melting
 and their light is dying down
 man the crystal ships we can't let them go
 they're sad and crying amongst themselves
 and wondering where to go
 their beautiful heads are going down
 bending with the loss
 butterflies look slightly dazed
 the sun is turning cold
 the trees in silent goodbyes
 are shedding leaves to mourn
 Orion-in-the-sky is dead
 no fawns are being born.²⁵

Through her imagery Erickson shows the inseparability of religion and the land; if the religion dies, so must the land.

Duke Redbird's poetic career seems to have been shortlived; he has not published any poetry since 1971. He was one of the earliest Canadian Natives to publish his work, his poems appearing in his biography Red on White by Marty Dunn and in Waubageshig's The Only Good Indian. Redbird wrote some moving poetry about his Indian heritage, but he is better remembered for his bitter protest poetry: the style is straight forward and unambiguous. He is best known for his poem "I Am the Redman" which ends with

I am the Redman
 I look at you White Brother
 And I ask you
 Save not me from sin and evil
 Save yourself.²⁶

Other books by Canadian Native poets exist but the above-mentioned are the most readily accessible. Poems by Rita Joe (Abenaki Press) by Rita Joe, a Micmac Indian, and Kalala Poems (Daylight Press) by Skyros Bruce, a Salishan poet, are both worthy of mention. A major problem for Native writers in Canada is that much of the work is published in limited editions by obscure

publishing companies. It is difficult to determine what has been published and often copies are not available.

Short story writers face the same problems as poets. Kenny has published simple, poignant stories and poems reflecting the conflicts of young Indians torn between the lure of the city and the security of the traditional reserve society in Indians Don't Cry. Basil Johnston first became known for his book Ojibway Heritage, a description of Ojibway life which includes some myths and legends. His short stories, by far his best work, appeared in Tawow magazine and are now available in Moose Meat and Wild Rice. He says of them,

While many aspects of Indian life changed over the years, the basic nature of the Ojibway of Moose Meat Point remained essentially the same. They were individualistic, resourceful, informal, proud, impulsive, imaginative, practical, independent, perceptive, patient, and above all possessed a wonderful sense of humour. . .

The white man also remained unchanged. Though he may intend good, the white man has too often allowed his sense of order, organization, superiority, his fondness for paper-work, efficiency, convention, ceremony, change, his penchant for formula, prescription, solution, and his haste, overbearing, force and decisiveness to negate his intentions.²⁷

It is the tensions and ridiculous situations that arise when two such diverse groups of people meet that provide Johnston with themes for his stories.

Johnston says the book is "intended primarily as an amusing account of Indian-White relationships"; in most of his stories he is highly successful. The style is Western but some understanding of Ojibway culture is essential in order to appreciate the rich humour in the stories. Both Native and non-Native readers laugh heartily at the ludicrous situations - but their reasons for laughing spring from different points of view. Johnston did not intend to accuse; the non-Native reader who finds the stories satirical and absurd

is misinterpreting the author's intent. Johnston's most recent book, Ojibway Ceremonies, combines the meanings and origins of Ojibway ceremonies with a fictitious account of life in a traditional Ojibway society. It is very simply narrated and lacks the depth and zest of his earlier works.

No Canadian novels of a calibre equal to House Made of Dawn, Ceremony, or Winter in the Blood have as yet been written, but there are some worth noting. Bearwalk was co-authored by Lynne Sallot and Tom Peltier; Peltier is an Ojibway Indian who has studied as a medicine man for nine years. The story is about a young Indian lawyer who has no knowledge of his heritage but whose family is cursed by the dreaded "bearwalk", an Ojibway belief in the power of evil in a person who has lost his place in harmony with his environment. Rituals are explained in the story but in an unconvincing and exploitive fashion. Though the book has considerable merit as a suspenseful thriller, the lack of depth in the presentation of traditional material is disappointing.

Beatrice Culleton's In Search of April Raintree has been written with devastating honesty, in many ways complementing Campbells' Halfbreed. It is an autobiographical novel that tells of the life of two Métis sisters; both books are outstanding in the contribution to feminist literature. In Search of April Raintree has a powerful message for its readers; child care services to Native people, racial discrimination and rape are dealt with in a direct but profoundly moving fashion. Although the uncomplicated narrative has some literary weaknesses, the book is a significant contribution to Canadian writing. Native readers are recognizing it as fiction expressing realities too painful to acknowledge in real life, whereas some non-Native readers are confronted with realities they do not wish to accept. April and

her sister are apprehended by a social worker because of their parents' drinking. April remembers,

I clung to my Mom as tight as I could. They wouldn't be able to pull me away... She [my mother] pushed me away. Into their grasping hands.... Frantically, I screamed, "Mommy, please don't make me go, Please, Mommy. We want to stay with you. Please don't make us go. Oh, Mom, don't." 28

The reader cannot help but remember that Culleton's story is largely autobiographical. Equally graphic is the rape scene, when April struggles against the rapist he snarls,

Hey, you guys, we're going to have to teach this little Indian some manners. I'm trying to make her feel good and she pulls away. The ungrateful bitch. 29

This, too, is autobiographical but the fictitious ending where the rapist is convicted did not have a sequel in real life. 30

That Canadian Native literature has not been developed to any appreciable extent should come as no surprise. It is only in the last few decades that Native culture, as such, has been recognized by formal educational institutions. Collection of traditional materials has not been carried out in the same exhaustive manner as in the United States. Young Natives themselves are showing an increased interest in learning about their cultures as is evidenced by enrollment in Native studies courses in high schools, colleges and universities. Youth-elder workshops are popular in all parts of Canada and numerous conferences on Native themes provide forums for discussion. With an unprecedented increase in Native students completing high school and enrolling in universities and community colleges, it is likely that an awareness of Native thought, manifested in literature, will increase dramatically in the next few decades.

NOTES

- 1
D. Bruce Sealey, ed. Famous Manitoba Metis (Winnipeg: Manitoba Métis Federation Press, 1974), p. 6.
- 2
A discussion of Pauline Johnson's place in Canadian literature and critical reaction can be found in Norman Shrive, "Whatever Happened to Pauline?" Canadian Literature, No. 13 (1962), pp. 25-38.
- 3
E. Pauline Johnson, Legends of Vancouver (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1920), p. ix.
- 4
Toronto World, Mar. 22, 1892 as quoted in Shrive, p. 30.
- 5
Ibid., p. 33.
- 6
Thomas E. Sanders and Walter W. Peek, Literature of the American Indian (Toronto: Collier Macmillan, 1973), p. 447.
- 7
Paula Gunn Allen, "The Psychological Landscape of Ceremony", American Indian Quarterly, 5, No. 1 (1979), p. 7.
- 8
Galen Buller, "New Interpretations of Native American Literature: A Survival Technique", American Indian Culture and Research Journal, 4, No. 1-2 (1980).
- 9
Shirley Hill Witt and Stan Steiner, An Anthology of American Indian Literature (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1973), xx.
- 10
Allen, p. 6.
- 11
N. Scott Momaday, The Gourd Dancer (New York: Harper and Row, 1975), p. 51.

12

Alan R. Velie, Four American Indian Literary Masters (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1982), pp. 36-40.

13

Ray Young Bear, Winter of the Salamander (New York: Harper and Row, 1980), p. 56.

14

James Welch, Riding the Earthboy 40 (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), p. 18.

15

Velie, pp. 81-83.

16

Alan R. Velie, American Indian Literature: An Anthology (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1979), 304.

17

Sarain Stump, There is my People Sleeping (Sidney, B.C.: Gray's Publishing, 1970).

18

Jamake Highwater, The Primal Mind (New York: New American Library, 1981), p. 110.

19

Tom Boulanger, An Indian Remembers (Winnipeg: Peguis Publishers, 1971), Foreword.

20

Ibid., p. 11.

21

Jean E. Speare, ed. The Days of Augusta (Vancouver: J.J. Douglas Ltd., 1973), p. 53.

22

Ibid., p. 59

23

Maria Campbell, Half-Breed (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1973), p. 3.

24

Kent Gooderham, ed. Notice, this is an Indian Reserve (Toronto: Griffin House, 1972), p. 40.

25

Ibid., p. 77.

26

Waubageshig, ed. The Only Good Indian (Toronto: New Press, 1970), p. 61.

27

Basil Johnston, Moose Meat and Wild Rice (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1978), p. 9.

28

Beatrice Culleton, In Search of April Raintree (Winnipeg: Pemmican Publications, 1983), p. 17.

29

Ibid., p. 141.

30

Author's comment: conversation with Beatrice Culleton at Brandon University, summer 1984.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

I. UNIQUENESS OF NATIVE LITERATURE

When literatures from various cultures are compared, similarities as well as differences will be found. A comparison of world mythologies reveals a similarity in archetypes and themes in them; how these archetypes and themes are translated into mythology creates significant differences in literature. Ancient European mythology, especially Greek, influenced the literature of Western society; Christianity was another major influence. Literary movements and schools of criticism have helped to keep these influences alive through the years, and it is against these themes and prototypes that Native literature has been judged - and found lacking.

Traditional Native literature was untouched by these Old World schools of thought and, therefore, the literature does not contain the referents familiar to scholars of Western literature. Yet the most common archetypal patterns found in all cultures are also found in Native literatures, though the forms have not always been recognized. They are, for example, manifested in the sacrificial death of the Ojibway mythical hero Mandomin, the rise and fall of the Aztec god Quetzalcoatl, and in the symbolic rituals of the Navajo or Zuni. A familiarity with the mythology of the various culture groups is necessary for an appreciation of the work. Contemporary Native writing consists of a merging of two components - traditional oral narrative and content combines with the English language and a Western style of expression to create a new kind of writing that is uniquely Native. The Native writer of today stands with one foot in each of two literary traditions.

Indians essentially do not have a history of written literature. Except for Mayan and Aztec works and some other rudimentary forms of record keeping, oral tradition was the sole means of transmitting and disseminating literature. The religious and artistic preoccupation of the Indian world went far beyond anything comparable in European experience. This is revealed particularly in the poetry which was an integral part of everyday life and was frequently associated with religious or magical ends. It was functional in that it had the power to control the positive creative principle in the world which was needed if anything was to be achieved beyond individual human strength.

Native mythology is unique in that it is still being told in Native languages and in English. Old stories are recounted and modified and new stories are created. The trickster, one of the most widely-distributed myths belonging to the oldest expressions of humanity, is still a vital component of modern Native mythology. Though the events may be modernized or changed drastically, the basic plot reasserts itself. The trickster is combined with modern technology to create a synthesis of two widely divergent cultures, but his role as creator/destroyer, giver/negator, one who plays tricks and is himself tricked still persists. Trickster tales are far more than entertainment; they still have a therapeutic effect. In many Native communities oral narrative continues to play a vital role.

Traditional Native poetry is unique and often requires some cultural information to make it comprehensible to the modern reader. Some specific aspects of older Indian poetry are found consistently in all cultures. Authorship went unrecognized; a poem was contributed to a culture as poetry was assumed to have been inspired by supernatural beings. Ancient poets had certain fixed and beautiful phrases which seemed so magic-working there was

no need to change them so they always stayed the same. The metaphor of dualism or halving is common in Indian literature; words or ideas are frequently presented in pairs. This led to verse construction that came from parallel phrasing or repetition; repetition with an increment led to rhythmic thoughts that gave a sense of completion in the way that rhyming words might in another language. Pairing of words was used in much of the poetry and ceremonial patterns were based on the four world directions. This rhythm was likely the most important element of the poetry, but much of it has been lost in translation. Personification is not present in the same sense as object, physical force or abstract quality has a spirit of equal value. Narrative verse is rarely found since prose was used for narrative purposes and only a few cases of historical chronicle exists; the majority of the longer poems are restoration rituals.

Certain conventions are becoming evident in Native American prose literature. The work is founded on Indian oral tradition and can be identified as such by the reverence for words, a sense of place and a dependence on that sense, a feeling for ritual, an affirmation of the need for community and a significantly different world-view. The novels are unique in their style and content: the emphasis is on the event. Where this event occurs in the book is not nearly as important as the event itself. This leads to a cyclical time frame instead of the more common linear time of Western literature. The organizational elements of conflict, climax and resolution are not commonly found; chronological organization is of little importance. There is a dynamic mingling of the past and present, the cultural and personal, the spiritual and the secular. The imagination illuminates the past, recreating it in the present to make new stories out of the old.

Precision of detail is a distinguishing characteristic of all Native writing and lends a particular vibrancy to the poetry. Contemporary poetry is sometimes difficult or obscure, as is much of that written by non-Native poets. Allusions are often personal rather than cultural; organization is associational rather than logical; many contemporary Native poets use surrealism in their work. The poetry utilizes aspects of oral narrative as poets draw on the old traditional songs as well as their own dreams, visions and experiences.

II. IMPORTANCE OF NATIVE LITERATURE IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

Native American literature provides a new experience in reading because new points of view provide new experiences. It often confronts the reader with history that is stark and unredeemable because historic treatment of Natives as well as other ethnic groups was often callous. By reading Native literature the reader is led to perceive beauty in places where it had not always been recognized. A particular difference from Western literature exists in the feeling for the land, especially when the land is portrayed in feminine symbols. Native fiction is rich in stories within stories, echoes of old chants, prayers, and incantations. Old people play a significant roll in that they are frequently seen as instructing and curing. New forms of language are created by a combination of languages. A different kind of humour, irony and understatement is found and there is participation in unfamiliar forms of spiritualism and in unfamiliar ceremonies.

Poverty and loss are fashionable motifs of modern literature but Native writing exists as replenishment by offering alternate modes of expression,

myths, metaphors, language and concepts. It introduces to the imagination the sensibility of others who perceive the world in their own way, but all are stimulating to mind and spirit. The reader lives in this sensibility as he reads, perhaps only partially, perhaps even uncomprehendingly, but always intensely. The best North American Native literature not only inspires but it also alters the mind.

If alienation is the underlying theme of modern North American fiction, and many critics agree that it is, then Native fiction instructs in the ways of communal life; it portrays a life of sharing and mingling. Frequently American heroes dream in isolation, wandering at home and abroad in search of rituals that will keep them sane and alive and give meaning to life. In Native fiction, however, heroes and heroines find such rituals by returning home where their ancestors wait to teach them healing ceremonies which can dispel isolation. Through these ceremonies they learn how to recover from despair induced by their encounters with the world beyond home. If North American literature tends to take its energy from an obsession with loss, then recovery gives Native fiction a glorious vitality. Its very emergence, that is, the growth of Native literature, constitutes an act of recuperation: there is a move toward the restoration of vigor and strength of a people who have been denied a rightful place in society.

A literary role, however, cannot be defined by ethnography alone. Where everything is accounted for by myth or prototype, the imaginative freedom of the writer is denied. There has to be an artistic identity beyond ethnography: there must be a recognition of how each writer adapts the Western literary forms and the language to the writer's particular vision as a Native writer in society. The question then arises as to whether a

work is authentically Native because it no longer represents traditional literature so there must be a recognition of change. The changing of a ritual can be viewed as an "adding to", not as a loss. Too often the "adding to" is seen in terms of the cultural group only, whereas in reality the process enhances not only the cultural group but mainstream society as well.

The themes of recovery and survival are complementary themes and are best exemplified in the novels of Momaday, Silko and Welch. All three feature a correlation between the world of human experience and the world of the spirit; the manifest world, one of conflict between non-Native and Indian values, gives way to the elemental and spiritual vision of the Indian. The protagonists in these works are alienated members of Native societies who are returned to spiritual health through what is essentially a religious conversion to tribal values. The authors look upon the natural world as all-inclusive, a fusion of natural, supernatural and human or social elements.

This religious element in American Native fiction is an idealized vision, both in the novelist's creation of a perfect community of mankind, and also in the spiritual healing of an alienated member of the community through visions, suffering, and ritual procedures. The outcast is caught between inherited values he cannot believe in and the world of the non-Natives which to him is alien and soulless. He is redeemed from spiritual death by being taught to understand the symbolic and latent elements of the world correctly. An ancestor or an old wise person engages the wounded hero in ceremonies that reunite him with his communal past, with the heritage that the novel recovers for him and for the reader. The reader, though perhaps not familiar with the culture, recognizes the individual strength and beauty of these novels, and participates in the common theme.

By including Native novels as well as other ethnic writing in our literature courses, we can capture what we have never had in traditionally limited literature courses, the richness of North American cultural diversity. Not only will students read new forms of expression but avenues, hitherto unexplored, will be opened for their own creative endeavors.

III. CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION OF NATIVE LITERATURE

Selection of materials suitable for literature programs for Grades VII to XII will require an awareness of the aspects that can be identified as being uniquely Native. An awareness of whether the author speaks from within the culture or as an outsider is one important feature. It is also important not to overlook literature that has been written by non-Natives who portray Native culture sensitively and accurately.

The following criteria are subjective but even such guidelines are, nevertheless, useful. Identification of translators who are considered reliable by critics will be helpful in selecting traditional materials. Some knowledge of Native culture is necessary in order to assess the historical, anthropological and ethnological aspects of the works; the reader must also recognize the wide differences in cultures. Comments by contemporary Native writers with respect to their own works have been useful in identifying what makes Native literature different from literature from Western culture. Above all, the works must fall within the categories classified as "literature", have something significant to say and have an artistic identity beyond ethnography.

1. Is the writer Native? This fact alone will not guarantee a good piece of literature but it will likely be written from a Native point of view.
2. If the writer is non-Native, is the work written from a Native point of view?
3. If the writer is not Native and the work is not written from a Native point of view, is an understanding of the Native point of view demonstrated? Or, does the work show a developmental process in understanding the Native point of view?
4. Has traditional myth and poetry been translated by a recognized translator? Translations done before the 1850s contain many inaccuracies. Works by John Bierhorst, Franz Boaz, Daniel G. Brinton, Natalie Curtiss, Frances Densmore, Paul Radin, Washington Matthews, Frank Russel, Herbert J. Spinden, Edward Sapir, and Leonard Bloomfield, or works quoted by any of the above, are acceptable to critics of Native North American literature.
5. If the translator is unknown, does the translation adhere to the authentic forms of traditional literature and avoid the obvious Western forms - for example, iambic pentameter and rhyme in poetry or a fairy tale format in myth?
6. Are the cultural referents in the translation realistic? That is, are European terms avoided that could not possibly have been in use at the time, for example, Christian terminology or technological terms?
7. Are ethnological facts accurate? Whether or not to accept inaccuracy will depend on the nature and importance of the inaccuracy; judgement will be subjective. For example, to attribute a Navajo curing ritual to Ojibway culture would be unacceptable but to have the trickster referred to as Nanabush in an area where he is normally referred to as Wesakechak might be overlooked because it would not change the essence or meaning of the legend.
8. Is it historically accurate? Care must be taken that common biases, omissions and stereotypes are not perpetuated. Again, the judgement may be subjective. For example, an inaccurate date or place name might be overlooked whereas reference to the superiority of European civilization would not be.
9. Are the differences between Indian cultures recognized? If a work is written from a Pan-Indian point of view, it should be recognized. Pan-Indianism refers to the belief that there are enough common elements in all Indian cultures that one point of view can be expressed for all.

10. Does the work meet the criteria of all good literature as having something significant to say; that is, does it have artistic merit?
11. Does the work fall within the categories of literature taught in Grades VII to XII: myths, poetry, oral narratives, memoirs, biography, autobiography, drama, short stories and novels?
12. In contemporary literature differences should be recognized between a traditional way of writing and Native writing in a Western style. Either one is acceptable; a Native writer's work should not be rejected as "un-Native" simply because the style is Western.
13. Contemporary writing may be characterized by all or some of the most readily identifiable attributes of Native writings: 1. sacredness of the word, 2. importance of Native ritual and ceremony, 3. importance of the community, 4. importance of an affinity with the land, 5. a world view significantly different from Western society.
14. It is recognized that many books will meet only some of the above criteria. In the following bibliography, comments will be made on the particular strengths and weaknesses of the selections.
15. As this bibliography will list books within the interest level of Grades VII to XII reading level will vary widely.
16. Where applicable the books will be graded according to reading level using the Fog Reading Index by Robert Gunning, Wilson Library Bulletin, November (1970).

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APPENDIX I

From Sanders and Peek, Literature of the American Indian, p. 105-107

Chant to the Fire-fly
(Chippewa Original)

Wau wau tay see!
Wau wau tay see!
E mow e shin
Tahe Bwau ne baun-e wee!
Be eghaun-be eghaun-ewee!
Wau wau tay see!
Wau wau tay see!
Was sa koon ain je gun.
Was sa koon ain je gun.

Literal translation

Flitting-white-fire insect! waving-white-fire bug! give me light
before I go to bed! give me light before I go to sleep. Come, little
dancing white-fire-bug! Come, little flitting white-fire-beast. Light
me with your bright white-flame-instrument-your little candle.

The authors maintain that such words as "insect" or "bug" in the literal translation serve the English version only nominally, for the connotative sense of the words reduces "insect" in many ways while "Wau wau tay see" does not. The Ojibwa recognizes the firefly's place in the scheme of things. The harsh designation involved in such words as "insect" and "bug" are meanings far removed from the intellectual and emotional response of the Ojibwa to the firefly he is addressing.

Literary Translation

Fire-fly, fire-fly! bright little thing,
Light me to bed, and my song I will sing.
Give me your light, as you fly o'er my head

That I may merrily go to my bed.
 Give me your light o'er the grass as you creep,
 That I may joyfully go to my sleep.
 Come, little fire-fly, come, little beast-
 Come! and I'll make you tomorrow a feast.
 Come, little candle that flies as I sing,
 Bright little fairy-bug-night's little king:
 Come, and I'll dance as you guide me along,
 Come, and I'll pay you, my bug, with a song.

This literary translation, by Schoolcraft, further compounds the semantic difficulties as European poetic conventions are used. The vocabulary, too, is not authentic - "bed" and "candle" are European concepts. Sanders and Peek say,

...it suffers from such English conventions as the pseudo-heroic couplets and ideas intruded in words used to flesh out the basic iambic pentameter lines. Exactly how the Ojibwa singers would make a feast for a firefly defies thought. The Native American trip to the sleep area may have been weary, glad, grateful or merely resigned, but he would no more turn sleepward "merrily" or "joyfully" than would his white counterpart. That the reality defying convention is ubiquitous in English poetry does not justify its inclusion in the Ojibwa poem. And nothing (in English or Ojibwa versification) could justify the artificial inversions that create the rhyme.

More Literal Literary Translation

Flitting white-fire insects!
 Wandering small-fire beasts!
 Wave little stars about my bed!
 Weave little stars into my sleep!
 Come, little dancing white-fire beast!
 Light me with your white-flame magic,
 Your little star torch.

This more literal literary translation avoids the most objectionable features of the first literary version. Sanders and Peek do not mention the author of this version but it can be found in Cronyn, credited to Schoolcraft. Sanders and Peek suggest a further improved version.

Fire-fly Song
(Ojibwa)

Flitting, darting white-fire!
Air-borne, roving white-fire!
Shine your light about my lodging,
Light the way to where I sleep!
Tireless, darting white-fire!
Restless, roving white-fire!
Guide me with your gleaming.
Guide me with your torch.

APPENDIX II

The following are two versions of the Ojibway legend of the origin of corn. Both are artistic, literary works and, although the theme is the same, different details are used to flesh out the stories. Schoolcraft's version utilizes a story-form familiar to a European audience and he prepares the readers for the supernatural events. Johnston, while also adopting a Western style, maintains more Indian characteristics in his use of repetition and lack of explanation of the supernatural.

From Schoolcraft, The Myth of Hiawatha and Other Oral Legends, pp. 99-104.

MON-DAW-MIN,

or

THE ORIGIN OF INDIAN CORN.

ODJIBWA.

In times past, a poor Indian was living with his wife and children in a beautiful part of the country. He was not only poor, but inexpert in procuring food for his family, and his children were all too young to give him assistance. Although poor, he was a man of a kind and contented disposition. He was always thankful to the Great Spirit for everything he received. The same disposition was inherited by his eldest son, who had now arrived at the proper age to undertake the ceremony of the Ke-ig-uish-im-o-win, or fast, to see what kind of a spirit would be his guide and guardian through life. Wunzh, for this was his name, had been an obedient boy from his infancy, and was of a

pensive, thoughtful, and mild disposition, so that he was beloved by the whole family. As soon as the first indications of spring appeared, they built him the customary little lodge at a retired spot, some distance from their own, where he would not be disturbed during this solemn rite. In the mean time he prepared himself, and immediately went into it, and commenced his fast. The first few days, he amused himself, in the mornings, by walking in the woods and over the mountains, examining the early plants and flowers, and in this way prepared himself to enjoy his sleep, and, at the same time, stored his mind with pleasant ideas for his dreams. While he rambled through the woods, he felt a strong desire to know how the plants, herbs, and berries grew, without any aid from man, and why it was that some species were good to eat, and others possessed medicinal or poisonous juices. He recalled these thoughts to mind after he became too languid to walk about, and had confined himself strictly to the lodge; he wished he could dream of something that would prove a benefit to his father and family, and to all others. "True!" he thought, "the Great Spirit made all things, and it is to him that we owe our lives. But could he not make it easier for us to get our food, than by hunting animals and taking fish? I must try to find out this in my visions."

On the third day he became weak and faint, and kept his bed. He fancied, while thus lying, that he saw a handsome young man coming down from the sky and advancing towards him. He was richly and gayly dressed, having on a great many garments of green and yellow colors, but differing in their deeper or lighter shades. He had a plume of waving feathers on his head, and all his motions were graceful.

"I am sent to you, my friend," said the celestial visitor, "by that Great Spirit who made all things in the sky and on the earth. He has seen and knows your motives in fasting. He sees that it is from a kind and benevolent wish to do good to your people, and to procure a benefit for them, and that you do not seek for strength in war or the praise of warriors. I am sent to instruct you, and show you how you can do your kindred good." He then told the young man to arise, and prepare to wrestle with him, as it was only by this means that he could hope to succeed in his wishes. Wunzh knew he was weak from fasting, but he felt his courage rising in his heart, and immediately got up, determined to die rather than fail. He commenced the trial, and after a protracted effort, was almost exhausted, when the beautiful stranger said, "My friend, it is enough for once; I will come again to try you;" and, smiling on him, he ascended in the air in the same direction from which he came. The next day the celestial visitor reappeared at the same hour and renewed the trial. Wunzh felt that his strength was even less than the day before, but the courage of his mind seemed to increase in proportion as his body became weaker. Seeing this, the stranger again spoke

to him in the same words he used before, adding, "Tomorrow will be your last trial. Be strong, my friend, for this is the only way you can overcome me, and obtain the boon you seek." On the third day he again appeared at the same time and renewed the struggle. The poor youth was very faint in body, but grew stronger in mind at every contest, and was determined to prevail or perish in the attempt. He exerted his utmost powers, and after the contest had been continued the usual time, the stranger ceased his efforts and declared himself conquered. For the first time he entered the lodge, and sitting down beside the youth, he began to deliver his instructions to him, telling him in what manner he should proceed to take advantage of his victory.

"You have won your desires of the Great Spirit," said the stranger. "You have wrestled manfully. To-morrow will be the seventh day of your fasting. Your father will give you food to strengthen you, and as it is the last day of trial, you will prevail. I know this, and now tell you what you must do to benefit your family and your tribe. To-morrow," he repeated, "I shall meet you and wrestle with you for the last time; and, as soon as you have prevailed against me, you will strip off my garments and throw me down, clean the earth of roots and weeds, make it soft, and bury me in the spot. When you have done this, leave my body in the earth, and do not disturb it, but come occasionally to visit the place, to see whether I have come to life, and be careful never to let the grass or weeds grow on my grave. Once a month cover me with fresh earth. If you follow my instructions, you will accomplish your object of doing good to your fellow-creatures by teaching them the knowledge I now teach you." He then shook him by the hand and disappeared.

In the morning the youth's father came with some slight refreshments, saying, "My son, you have fasted long enough. If the Great Spirit will favor you, he will do it now. It is seven days since you have tasted food, and you must not sacrifice your life. The Master of Life does not require that." "My father," replied the youth, "wait till the sun goes down. I have a particular reason for extending my fast to that hour." "Very well," said the old man, "I shall wait till the hour arrives, and you feel inclined to eat."

At the usual hour of the day the sky-visitor returned, and the trial of strength was renewed. Although the youth had not availed himself of his father's offer of food, he felt that new strength had been given to him, and that exertion had renewed his strength and fortified his courage. He grasped his angelic antagonist with supernatural strength, threw him down, took from him his beautiful garments and plume, and finding him dead, immediately buried him on the spot, taking all the precautions he had been told of, and being very confident, at the same time, that his friend would again come to life. He then returned to his father's lodge, and partook sparingly of the meal that had been prepared for him. But he never for a moment forgot the grave of his friend. He carefully visited it throughout the spring, and weeded out the grass, and kept the ground in a soft and

pliant state. Very soon he saw the tops of the green plumes coming through the ground; and the more careful he was to obey his instructions in keeping the ground in order, the faster they grew. He was, however, careful to conceal the exploit from his father. Days and weeks had passed in this way. The summer was now drawing towards a close, when one day, after a long absence in hunting, Wunzh invited his father to follow him to the quiet and lonesome spot of his former fast. The lodge had been removed, and the weeds kept from growing on the circle where it stood, but in its place stood a tall and graceful plant, with bright-colored silken hair, surmounted with nodding plumes and stately leaves, and golden clusters on each side. "It is my friend," shouted the lad; "it is the friend of all mankind. It is Mondawmin. We need no longer rely on hunting alone; for, as long as this gift is cherished and taken care of, the ground itself will give us a living." He then pulled an ear. "See, my father," said he, "this is what I fasted for. The great Spirit has listened to my voice, and sent us something new, and henceforth our people will not alone depend upon the chase or upon the waters."

He then communicated to his father the instructions given him by the stranger. He told him that the broad husks must be torn away, as he had pulled off the garments in his wrestling; and having done this, directed him how the ear must be held before the fire till the outer skin became brown, while all the milk was retained in the grain. The whole family then united in a feast on the newly-grown ears, expressing gratitude to the Merciful Spirit who gave it. So corn came into the world.

From Basil Johnston, Ojibway Heritage, pp. 35-38.

MANDAMIN

Zhowmin (Grape) was an orphan. His grandmother, Zhaw-B'noh-quae adopted and raised him.

When Zhowmin was about seven years old and ready to learn hunting and fishing he went to his uncles for instructions. Each day he learned from his uncles what would make him resourceful and be a good provider. He also learned to be a good warrior. From his grandmother, Zhowmin learned about the principles of life. To her the good life was not less important than the practical.

Every evening Zhaw-b'noh-quae told her grandson stories. Sometimes she told stories of acts of courage, generosity, fortitude, resourcefulness, patience, endurance, and perseverance; she sometimes related tales of the origin, purpose, and nature of things, and at other times she explained to the young boy about the laws that governed men's lives and conduct.

In the former accounts there were basic themes: "Always tell the truth," "respect your elders," "Honour our grandfathers;" "always be thankful for food, be it scarce or abundant;" "always be thankful for life;" "always be thankful for your powers, great and small," "seek peace;" "listen to your elders, and you will learn something;" "seek wisdom and you will do what is right;" "someday do something for your people." No matter how often Zhoumin heard these principles, he never tired of them. And because they were delivered with love, Zhoumin determined to live by these laws.

By the time Zhoumin reached manhood, his grandmother was very old and feeble. Just as she had looked after him, Zhoumin now looked after his grandmother.

Even though Zhoumin was now a man he listened to the tales recounted by his grandmother. One night after Zhaw-b'noh-quae had spoken of the "Four Hills of Life," she said, "I shall be going on a long journey, soon." Zhoumin listened, somewhat puzzled by her reference to a journey. The old lady continued, "After I leave, a stranger will come to you. Do what he says."

Zhoumin replied, "Yes, grandmother."

Before spring, Zhaw-b'noh-quae died. It was then that Zhoumin understood what his grandmother meant by a long journey. When Zhoumin and the people of the village buried Zhaw-b'now-quae among the pines four days after her death, her body faced the west, Man's Last Destiny.

Not long after Zhaw-b'noh-quae's death, a stranger arrived in the village and in a surly tone and petulant manner, demanded to know if there were any good men in the village.

At the demand the village elders consulted one another. They sent for Zhoumin and presented him as a good man to the visitor.

Zhoumin took the stranger to his lodge, for they were of the same totem and Zhoumin was bound to look after him as a brother. He fed the stranger and then they smoked. Only then did Zhoumin ask the stranger the purpose of his visit.

The stranger replied, "I have been sent to find a good man. But in all my years of quest, I have not yet found one among all the peoples I have visited. I understand from your reputation that you may be such a man. I hope for your sake and for the good of your people that you are a good man."

Zhoumin rather angrily countered, "You flatter me." He asked, "Who are you? Who sent you?"

The stranger answered. "I'm Mandamin (Food of Wonder). I was sent by Kitche Manitou. My purpose is to find a good man and to test his worth. I must therefore test your strength to learn whether you or your people are worthy. And the most fitting way to test your inner strength is through battle. Zhoumin! You must fight me to prove your merit. If you win, you live; if you lose, you die."

Zhoumin scoffed, "I don't have to prove myself to you or anyone else."

Mandamin appeared disappointed. He said, "If you do not wish to fight me, I will take your refusal as cowardice. Cowardice is tantamount to defeat. In either case, there is death and it matters little whether you refuse or accept the challenge. I will still live, but I must report to Kitche Manitou that I have not found a single good man among the Anishnabeg."

That his courage and worth were doubted mattered little to Zhoumin; but that the overall merit of the Anishnabeg was questioned angered him. Then Zhoumin remembered his grandmother's words, "After I leave, a stranger will come to you. Do what he says." Partly in anger and partly out of obedience, Zhoumin glared at Mandamin, "I am not afraid. I will fight," he growled.

"Good," Mandamin said, "Tonight we'll fight." Zhoumin and Mandamin went into the forest, selected a clearing for their battle and then stripped to the waist. First they circled one another, looking for a weakness and an opening. They then grappled. Equal in determination and strength they fought on equal terms; wrestling, punching, pounding, and twisting in order to gain advantage. One moment Zhoumin would knock Mandamin to the ground; the next, Mandamin would hurl Zhoumin to the earth. So the battle went all night until both warriors fell exhausted to the soil. Zhoumin and Mandamin, bleeding and bruised returned to the lodge to rest and sleep. They slept all day.

When they awakened, it was evening. Hungry, they made a meal and ate as if there was no enmity between them. After a smoke they went back to the forest clearing to resume their struggle. Again they fought and they fought like life-long enemies. Such was the violence of their struggle that they uprooted small trees and crushed all the grasses until only the sands remained. But in spite of all their efforts neither could overcome the other. Finally, weariness forced Zhoumin and Mandamin to suspend their mighty battle. Battered, cut, and wounded, the warriors returned to their lodge to sleep.

Weak and drawn from loss of blood, they woke up late in the afternoon, ate, and then rested to regain some strength. About midnight, they slowly made their way back to the battleground.

Once there, they fought as hard as their remaining strength enabled them. Arms were weak; legs feeble; only the knowledge that the loser was to die kept them going. Somehow, someway, during the struggle Zhoumin knocked Mandamin to the ground; and before the unfortunate stranger could rise to his feet Zhoumin struck him with his war club. As Mandamin slumped down, Zhoumin plunged his knife into Mandamin's back. Mandamin moved no more; he was dead.

Zhoumin was remorseful. He wept beside the body of the stranger. Then he sang song for him.

"I do not fear death
My time has come
I will walk the Path of Souls
Back to whence I came."

In sorrow Zhoumin picked up the body of Mandamin and took it to the burial place where he buried the body beside that of his grandmother. Immediately afterwards he went to a medicine man to whom he related the events of the previous three days.

But the medicine man didn't say much except, "It is good that you listened to your grandmother. Look after Mandamin's grave as you would your grandmother's."

Zhoumin did as instructed. Each day he went to the grave to bring offerings and to give prayers of thanks and sorrow.

Such was the way Zhoumin honoured the dead and obeyed his grandmother and the medicine man.

One evening in late spring Zhoumin, having just brought his offerings to the graves, noticed a strange plant growing in the very centre of Mandamin's grave. Never having seen such a plant before, he examined the plant closely, but for all his knowledge of plants, he was unable to recognize it. As soon as he returned to the village, Zhoumin ran to the medicine man's lodge to report the growth of the strange plant.

As it was then too dark, the medicine man and Zhoumin decided to inspect the plant the next morning. The next morning both went. The medicine man looked at the plant, smelled it, felt its texture, but he was unable to say what the plant was. He could only advise Zhoumin to look after the plant and the graves.

June gave way to July; the strange plant grew. July yielded to August; the new plant surpassed the height of man, as slender as a pine and crowned by a tuft of hair like a tassel.

Once more the medicine man inspected the new plant. In so doing he plucked open the leaves to determine whether the plant was good or evil.

The medicine man stripped open the wrappings until the kernels in their yellow were exposed. Deliberately, the medicine man took a kernel and placed it in his mouth.

Saying, "It is sweet, it is good," he handed a kernel to Zhoumin. Both were amazed.

The medicine man said to Zhoumin that the plant was "Mandamin, Food of Wonder. You have done a great service for your people. Be glad. You have not killed Mandamin; you have given him life in a new form. By his death, he has given life to the Anishnabeg, you and the people have been rewarded for your obedience. You have demonstrated the worth of the Anishnabeg."

APPENDIX III

From John Bierhorst, Four Masterworks of American Indian Literature

Fragment C/ A Cycle of Transformation in Quetzalcoatl is an interweaving of at least four separate traditions, bound together by the commonality of the savior and the pervasive symbolism of light. The hero, to begin with, is cast in the role of a culture-bringer, a discoverer of plants, gems and metals, and the originator of fine arts. (p.p. 9-10)

And also in this time he discovered great riches: jadestone, fine turquoise, and gold, silver, redshell, whiteshell, plumes of quetzal, cotinga, roseate spoonbill, oropendola, trogon, and blue heron.

And also he discovered cacao of various colors and cotton of various colors.

And truly in his time he was a great artisan in all his works..... (page 27)

The second tradition contributes the theme of the religious reformer, the model of chastity and penance, the abjurer of human sacrifice, who

preaches the cult of the supreme Spirit of Duality. But the jealous god Tezcatlipoca (the tutelary of night and the diviner of secret thoughts) contrives to make the hero both drunk and incestuous, effectively stripping him of his priesthood and causing his death. (p. 10)

Thuimecatl, and Toltecatl.....
 said, "Let us make pulque. We will have him
 drink it, to corrupt him, so that he will no longer
 perform his sacraments." (p. 29)

Their plan works, Quetzalcoatl is tricked into tasting the pulque and then becomes drunk.

And Quetzalcoatl said joyously, "Bring me my
 elder sister, Quetzatpetlal, that we may be drunk
 together... And at dawn they were
 filled with remorse, their spirits were heavy. (p. 33-34)

And when Quetzalcoatl's pages had sung, then
 he spoke to them:.....Give the
 command that a funeral urn be made." (p. 35)

A third tradition supplies the essential framework of the myth - the story of the personified planet Venus who inters the corpse of his murdered sun-father, proceeds eastward across the earth, dies and is transformed into the morning star (thus delivering the world from darkness). At the end the hero is identified with a particular aspect of Venus, the warlike vindicator whose "arrows" strike humankind generally, allowing the myth as a whole to be read as a vengeful triumph of light over dark. (p. 10)

And it is said that when he died he disappeared for
 four days. Then he dwelled in Mictlan, they say,
 And for four days he made himself arrows.
 And so in eight days he appeared, the great star.
 And they said it was Quetzalcoatl. Then, they
 said, he ascended his lordly throne. (p. 37)

APPENDIX IV

From Alan R. Velie, American Indian Literature, p. 96 and 135

An example of the beginning of the Delaware creation myth, complete with pictographs.



1. At first, in that place, at all times, above the earth.



2. On the earth was an extended fog, and there the great Manitou was.



3. At first, forever, lost in space, everywhere, the great Manitou was.

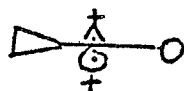


4. He made the extended land and sky.



5. He made the sun, the moon, the stars.

The ending, in retrospect, seems to foreshadow the future of the Delawares as the white men close in.



59. At this time, from north and south, the whites came.



60. They are peaceful; they have great things; who are they?

APPENDIX V

From Fowke and Mills, Canada's Story in Song, p. 112-113

La Bataille des Sept Chênes

Voulez vous ecouter chanter
Une chanson de vérité?
Le dixneuf le juin la bande des Bois Brûlés
Sont arrivés comme des braves guerriers.

En arrivant à la Grenouillère
Nous avons pris trois prisonniers;
Trois prisonniers des Arkanys
Qui sont ici pour piller notr' pays.

Etant sur le point de débarquer
Deux di nos gens se sont mis à crier:
Deux de nos gens se sont mis à crier:
Voila l'Anglais qui vient nous attaquer!

Tout aussitet nous avons dévieré
Nous avons été les rencontrer
J'avons cerné la bande des grenadiers
Ils sont immobiles, ils sont démontés

J'avons agi comme des gens d'honneur
J'avons envoyé un ambassadeur,
"Le Govenneur, voulez-vous arrêter
Un petit moment, nous voulons vous parler?"

Le Govenneur qui état enragé
Il dit à ses soldats "Tirez!"
Le premier coup, c'est l'Anglais qu'a tiré,
L'ambassadeur a manqué de tuer.

Le Govenneur qui se croit empereur
Il vent agir avec rigueur;
Etant parti pour nous épouvanter;
Il est trompé, il s'est fait tuer.

Il s'est trompé, il s'est fait tuer
Un' quantité de ses grenadiers.
J'avons tué preaque tout son armée
Rien qu' quatre on cinq se sont sauvés.

Si vous aviez un tous ces Anglais
 Et tous ces Bois-Brûlés après
 De butte en butte les Anglais culbutaient,
 Les Bois-Brûlés jetaient des cris de joie!

Qui en a composé la chanson?
 C'est Pierre Falcon, poète du canton.
 Elle a été faite et composée.
 Chantons la gloire de ces Bois-Brûlés!

The English version was translated by Edith Fowke and Allan Mills.

Falcon's Song

Say would you like to hear me sing
 Of a true and historic thing?
 The nineteenth of June our band of Bois-Brûlés
 Arrived like warriors, brave and gay.

When we arrived upon Frog plain
 Three Orkney men we did detain -
 These soldiers who had come across the sea
 All for to pillage our fair country.

Just as we were about to set out
 Two of our warriors gave a shout.
 They shouted out and cried "Alas, alack!
 Here come the Englishmen to attack!"

Quickly we reined our horses in
 All for to meet those Englishmen.
 We soon surrounded all their grenadiers
 Who stood quite still in the grip of fear.

As men of honor we acted then,
 And an ambassador we did send
 To ask the English governor to wait
 And talk with us ere it was too late.

But that bold governor, filled with ire,
 Ordered his men to open fire.
 Now comes the first volley - their muskets roar
 And almost killed our ambassador.

That governor thinks he's an emperor,
 Thinks he can act like a proud seigneur.
 He thought he'd drive away the Bois-Brûlés;
 For this mistake with his life he did pay.

For this mistake with his life he did pay,
 Most of his grenadiers we did slay,
 But four or five of them escaped that day,
 While all the rest to our guns fell prey.

You should have seen those Englishmen
 And our Bois-Brûlés right after them,
 Till one by one we did them destroy
 While our brave comrades shouted with joy.

As to the singer of this song,
 I am a poet named Pierre Falcon.
 'Twas I who wrote this song this very day
 To sing in praise of the Bois-Brûlés.

APPENDIX VI

From E. Pauline Johnson, Flint and Feather, p.p. 10-13, 92.

"The Cattle Thief," one of Johnson's best known poems, comments on the plight of the Indians in the West after the Saskatchewan uprising.

The Cattle Thief

They were coming across the prairie, they were
 galloping hard and fast;
 For the eyes of those desperate riders had sighted their
 man at last—
 Sighted him off to Eastward, where the Cree encamp-
 ment lay,
 Where the cotton woods fringed the river, miles and
 miles away.
 Mistake him? Never! Mistake him? the famous Eagle
 Chief!
 That terror to all the settlers, that desperate Cattle
 Thief—
 That monstrous, fearless Indian, who lorded it over
 the plain,
 Who thieved and raided, and scouted, who rode like a
 hurricane!

But they've tracked him across the prairie; they've
 followed him hard and fast;
 For those desperate English settlers have sighted their
 man at last.

Up they wheeled to the teepees, all their British blood
 aflame.

Bent on bullets and bloodshed, bent on bringing down
 their game;

But they searched in vain for the Cattle Thief; that
 lion had left his lair,

And they cursed like a troop of demons—for the women
 alone were there.

"The sneaking Indian coward," they hissed; "he hides
 while yet he can;

He'll come in the night for cattle, but he's scared to
 face a man."

"Never!" and up from the cotton woods rang the voice
 of Eagle Chief;

And right out into the open stepped, unarmed, the
 Cattle Thief.

Was that the game they had coveted? Scarce fifty years
 had rolled

Over that fleshless, hungry frame, starved to the bone
 and old;

Over that wrinkled, tawny skin, unfed by the warmth
 of blood.

Over those hungry, hollow eyes that glared for the sight
 of food.

He turned, like a hunted lion: "I know not fear,"
 said he;

And the words outleapt from his shrunken lips in the
 language of the Cree.

"I'll fight you, white-skins, one by one, till I kill you
 all," he said;

But the threat was scarcely uttered, ere a dozen balls
 of lead

Whizzed through the air about him like a shower of
 metal rain,

And the gaunt old Indian Cattle Thief dropped dead
 on the open plain.

And that band of cursing settlers gave one triumphant
 yell,

And rushed like a pack of demons on the body that
 writhed and fell.

"Cut the fiend up into inches, throw his carcass on the
 plain;

Let the wolves eat the cursed Indian, he'd have treated
us the same."

A dozen hands responded, a dozen knives gleamed high,
But the first stroke was arrested by a woman's strange,
wild cry.

And out into the open, with a courage past belief,
She dashed, and spread her blanket o'er the corpse of
the Cattle Thief;

And the words outleapt from her shrunken lips in the
language of the Cree,

"If you mean to touch that body, you must cut your
way through me."

And that band of cursing settlers dropped backward
one by one,

For they knew that an Indian woman roused, was a
woman to let alone.

And then she raved in a frenzy that they scarcely under-
stood,

Raved of the wrongs she had suffered since her earliest
babyhood:

"Stand back, stand back, you white-skins, touch that
dead man to your shame:

You have stolen my father's spirit, but his body I
only claim.

You have killed him, but you shall not dare to touch
him now he's dead.

You have cursed, and called him a Cattle Thief, though
you robbed him first of bread—

Robbed him and robbed my people—look there at
that shrunken face,

Starved with a hollow hunger, we owe to you and your
race.

What have you left to us of land, what have you left
of game,

What have you brought but evil, and curses since you
came?

How have you paid us for our game? how paid us for
our land?

By a book, to save our souls from the sins you brought
in your other hand.

Go back with your new religion, we never have under-
stood

Your robbing an Indian's body, and mocking his soul
with food.

Go back with your new religion, and find—if find
you can—

The honest man you have ever made from out a starving
man.

You say your cattle are not ours, your meat is not our
meat;
When you pay for the land you live in, we'll pay for
the meat we eat.

"Lullaby of the Iroquois" is included in many Canadian poetry anthologies
as well as the elementary school readers.

LULLABY OF THE IROQUOIS

Little brown baby-bird, lapped in your nest,
 Wrapped in your nest,
Strapped in your nest,
Your straight little cradle-board rocks you to rest;
 Its hands are your nest;
 Its bands are your nest;
It swings from the down-bending branch of the oak;
You watch the camp flame, and the curling grey smoke;
But, oh, for your pretty black eyes sleep is best—
Little brown baby of mine, go to rest.

Little brown baby-bird swinging to sleep,
 Winging to sleep,
 Singing to sleep,
Your wonder-black eyes that so wide open keep,
 Shielding their sleep,
 Unyielding to sleep,
The heron is homing, the plover is still,
The night-owl calls from his haunt on the hill,
Afar the fox barks, afar the stars peep—
Little brown baby of mine, go to sleep.

APPENDIX VII

Annotated Bibliography of Native Literature Suitable for Grades VII-XII
English

Ahenakew, Edward. Voices of the Plains Cree. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1973.

R.L. 7-8

Pages: 200

Stories and legends

Though written in 1923, this book was not published until 1973. It includes stories, memoirs and legends as told to Ahenakew by Chief Thunderchild. It also includes commentary by a fictitious character called "Old Keyam", who is actually the voice of Ahenakew.

Allen, T.D. ed. Arrows Four: Prose and Poetry by Young American Indians.

New York: Pocket Books, 1974.

R.L. 7-8

Pages: 171

Anthology

Based on a creative writing project in Indian schools throughout the United States this anthology includes poems, stories, memoirs and legends. The writing is by adolescents but much of it shows remarkable insight into universal aspects of life common to mankind. Most of the works show considerable influence of traditional oral narrative, both in prose and poetry.

Barclay, Byrna. Summer of the Hungry Pup. Edmonton: NeWest Press, 1981

R.L. 7-9

Pages: 303

Fiction - Non-Native author

This story is told in the first person by a Swedish girl from Northern Saskatchewan. She looks after an old Cree woman known as "Medicine Woman" who affectionately calls her "Other Granddaughter". It is an historical novel about the life of the Cree after the Riel Rebellion as told through the reminiscences of Medicine Woman. She remembers the abuse, hunger and degradation her people endured, but she also recalls the good times. The close relationship between Medicine Woman and the protagonist's Swedish grandmother is an outstanding example of the irrelevance of cultural differences when divergent groups recognize each other's needs.

Barker, George. Forty Years a Chief. Winnipeg: Peguis Publishers, 1979.

R.L. 7-10

Pages: 102

Autobiography

The story was originally told in Saulteaux and translated into written English. It tells of the life of George Barker from the Hollow Water Reserve in Manitoba. It tells of seventy years of trapping, hunting, fighting forest fires and of raising a family. It also tells of the role Barker played in Indian politics.

Bemister, Margaret. Thirty Indian Legends of Canada. Vancouver: J.J. Douglas Ltd., 1973.

R.L. 7-8

Pages: 153

Legends

Originally these legends were published in 1917. It contains a cross section of various Canadian Indian cultures though the tribe from which the legend comes is not always identified.

Bierhorst, John, ed. Four Masterworks of American Indian Literature. New York: Farrar, Strauss and Girous, 1974.

R.L. 12+

Pages: 351

Poetry

This book contains retranslated versions of the Aztec Quetzalcoatl, Mayan Cuceb, Iroquois Ritual of Condolence and Navaho Night Chant. Many earlier errors have been corrected though there are some inaccuracies in defining the "Ritual" as Iroquois. The foreword serves as an excellent introduction; every poem has a further explanatory introduction as well as end notes.

Bierhorst, John. In the Trail of the Wind. New York: Dell Publishing, 1971.

R.L. 9-12

Pages: 213

Poetry

This is a book of traditional Native poetry with an introduction by the author. Poetry from forty different tribes ranging from Eskimo to Aztec is found, including rare British Columbia tribes; some oratory is also included.

Blythe, Aleata E. The Ballad of Alice Moonchild - - - and Others. Winnipeg: Pemmican Publications, 1981.

R.L. 9-12

Pages: 57

Poetry - Non-Native poet

Alice Moonchild was the daughter of an Indian mother and a white father. Raised by the old man, Iaa, she was told that she, as a Halfbreed, had no parents - "You are you". The book contains poignant poetry about loss, childhood memories and a lost way of life.

Borland, Hal. When the Legends Die. New York: Bantam Books, 1963.

R.L. 7-9

Pages: 216

Fiction - Non-Native author

A Ute boy lives in the mountains with his parents until their death when he is tricked into attending a residential school by an elderly Indian, compounding his bitterness. He eventually becomes a rodeo rider known as "Killer Tom". Back in the mountains after an accident, he faces his bitterness and remembers the purifying rituals. This is a sensitive portrayal of a person caught between two worlds.

Boulanger, Tom. An Indian Remembers. Winnipeg: Peguis Publishers, 1971

R.L. 7-10

Pages: 87

Memoirs

The writer had very little formal education so the style lacks fluency and correct sentence structure. The book shows a large store of knowledge about animals and life on the trapline. Boulanger shows considerable insight into the workings of bureaucracies as well. There is a strong Christian influence in the book.

Campbell, Maria. Halfbreed. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1973.

R.L. 7-12

Pages: 157

Autobiography

Campbell tells what life was like as a Halfbreed child in northern Saskatchewan, and what it was like for a Halfbreed woman in the city. The story is bitter and starkly realistic. It also tells of the warmth, love and courage of the Halfbreeds. The reading level is low but content is suitable for older students.

Carpenter, Jock. Fifty Dollar Bride. Sidney, B.C.: Gray's Publishing, 1977.

R.L. 9-12

Pages: 159

Biography

This is the story of Marie Rose Smith, a Métis woman, as told by her granddaughter. Marie Rose was born at Fort Garry and her family followed the traditional buffalo hunt; she then married a Scandinavian rancher and much of the book tells of pioneer prairie life.

Carter, Forrest. The Education of Little Tree. New York: Dell Publishing, 1976.

R.L. 8-10

Pages: 283

Autobiography

Carter (Little Tree) was five when he went to live with his Cherokee grandparents. The book conveys Indian values in simple terms and also provides heartwarming and highly entertaining reading.

Charette, Guillaume. Vanishing Spaces: Memoirs of Louis Goulet. Winnipeg: Edition Bois-Brûlés, 1976.

R.L. 8-10

Pages: 177

Memoirs

This book contains memoirs of a prairie Métis as translated by Ray Ellenwood. Louis Goulet was born in 1859, when following the buffalo herds was a way of life, and he saw many changes in his lifetime. His memoirs are told with wit and humour, making many aspects of Canadian history alive in a particularly vivid fashion.

Clark, Ella Elizabeth. Indian Legends of Canada. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1960.

R.L. 7-10

Pages: 172

Legends

Thirty Canadian tribes are represented in this book. Clark's aim was to prepare a book for family and school use so all brutal and erotic themes are omitted. She also omitted most trickster tales in order to achieve a wider variety of subject matter. Though not truly representative of Native folklore, it is a useful collection.

Clay, Charles. Swampy Cree Legends. Bewdley, Ont.: Pine Ridge Publications, 1978.

R.L. 7-8

Pages: 95

Legends

The legends were told to Clay by a Swampy Cree Grandmother. Some are somewhat bowdlerized but the book is worthwhile as many of these legends have never been recorded before. The book has been reissued after its first printing forty years ago.

Clutesi, George. Son of Raven, Son of Deer. Sidney, B.C.: Gray's Publishing, 1967.

R.L. 7-8

Pages: 126

Legends

Clutesi tells legends of the Tse-Shaht Indians of British Columbia. The reading level is low and the introduction is particularly useful in its commentary on the role of legends in an Indian child's life.

Colombo, John Robert. Songs of the Indians, Volume I and II. Ottawa: Oberon, 1983.

R.L. 7-12

Pages: Volume I - 124

Volume II - 100

Poetry

Colombo has collected poetry from across Canada, much of which is not found in other collections. Volume I contains poetry from the Algonkian, Iroquoian, Athapaskan, Siuwan and Kootenayan linguistic groups whereas Volume II contains poetry from the Salishan, Wakashan, Tsimshian, Haida, Kuluskan and Chinookan groups. An introduction and extensive footnotes give valuable assistance with the interpretation of the poetry.

Craven, Margaret. I Heard the Owl Call My Name. Toronto: Pan Books, 1975.

R.L. 7-8

Pages: 133

Fiction - Non-Native author

A young Anglican priest, who does not have long to live is sent to an Indian village in the wilds of British Columbia. He comes to know and love the Indians who accept and love him as one of their own. The reading level is low but content is suitable for all grades.

Culleton, Beatrice. In Search of April Raintree. Winnipeg: Pemmican Publishers, 1983

R.L. 7-8

Pages: 228

Fiction

Though the reading level is low the subject matter is suitable for older students. Culleton deals frankly and honestly with pressing social issues of today. Through the experiences of two foster sisters she examines loss of identity, alcoholism, poverty and child care services. She also deals graphically with rape - the actual violence, the justice system and the effects on the victim. Good as well as depraved human beings are portrayed, and in spite of the stark realism and horror of the actual events, it is a novel of hope.

Cutler, Ebbitt. I Once Knew an Indian Woman. Montreal: Tundra Books, 1967.

R.L. 7-8

Pages: 69

Fiction - Non-Native author

The story is told from the point of view of a non-Native child in a Laurentian resort town. An old Indian woman is isolated because of her race, but the child does not see the racial difference and tells a memorable tale about a remarkable woman.

Day, A. Grove, ed. The Sky Clears: Poetry of the American Indians.

Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1951.

R.L. 9-12

Pages: 198

Poetry

More than two hundred traditional poems and lyrics from about forty different tribes, ranging from the Eskimoes to the Aztecs of ancient Mexico are included. Comprehensive comment and explanation is provided by the editor.

Day, David and Marilyn Bowering. Many Voices. Vancouver: J.J. Douglas, 1977.

R.L. 9-12

Pages: 98

Poetry

Thirty-four Canadian Indian and Métis poets are represented in this anthology. Some poems are based on traditional oratory, story telling and religion, some are political, and some are experiments with words and images.

Dempsey, Hugh A. Charcoal's World. Scarborough, Ont.: Signet Books, 1978.

R.L. 7-8

Pages: 169

Biography

In 1896 Charcoal shot his wife's lover, knowing it would lead to death by hanging. Burial in the ground, the Blood Indians believed, would confine the spirit to the underground forever. Charcoal turned "coyote crazy", terrorizing Indians and settlers alike in an attempt to kill an important person to send ahead as a spirit messenger. There is a great deal of suspense in this story as well as information about the Blood religious beliefs and the internal workings of the N.W.M.P.

Dunn, Marty. Red on White: The Biography of Duke Redbird. Toronto: New Press, 1971.

R.O. 9-10

Pages: 121

Biography

Dunn tells the story of Duke Redbird's life as told to him by Redbird himself. Redbird's poetry is included, as well as a great deal of commentary on the life of a contemporary Canadian Indian. Varied type, graphics and art work make this an unusual book.

Ellis, Mel. Sidewalk Indian. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1974

R.L. 7-8

Pages: 198

Fiction - Non-Native author

Charley Nightwind was raised in the city but when he inadvertently was caught up in a riot and hunted by police he sought refuge on the reserve of his ancestors. There he became involved in much broader issues, issues which had never concerned him before. This is a novel of suspense, fast-paced and exciting, with a spell-binding plot; but it also deals with the contemporary social themes of aboriginal rights and conservation.

Forer, Mort. The Humback. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd., 1969.

R.L. 7-8

Pages: 315

Fiction - Non-Native author

Though the reading level is low the interest level is suitable for senior students. It is the story about a Métis settlement in Manitoba; the outside world is hardly aware of its existence. It is a story of poverty and frustration but it is also a story about the love and care found in a small community.

George, Chief Dan. My Heart Soars. Vancouver: Hancock House Publishers, 1974.

R.L. 7-12

Pages: 95

Memoirs

These unique memoirs are told in poetic language by Chief Dan George. There are memories of his mother, advice to his grandchildren and general words of wisdom. The book is beautifully illustrated by Helmut Hirmschall.

George, Chief Dan. My Spirit Soars. Surrey B.C.: Hancock House, 1982

R.L. 7-12

Pages: 93

Memoirs

Like his earlier memoirs, these are also related in poetic language but the format is largely prose. The themes of respect for nature and the importance of children to the survival of a culture recur in the book. Helmut Hirmschall recorded the memoirs as Chief Dan George was nearing death. The illustrations are excellent; the book is important not only for Native content but also for the sensitive portrayal of old age and death.

Gooderham, Kent, ed. I Am an Indian. Toronto: J.M. Dent, 1969.

R.L. 9-12

Pages: 196

Anthology

Legends, memoirs, speeches, modern commentaries, and poetry, both traditional and contemporary, are included in this book. It is divided into culture areas from Canada's west coast to the east and north, with representative selections from each area.

Gooderham, Kent, ed. Notice, This is an Indian Reserve. Toronto: Griffin House, 1972.

R.L. 9-12

Pages: 83

Poetry

Poetry by Sheila Erickson, Leo Yerxa and Shirley Blatt are complemented with photography by Frederick Stevens. Exerpts from the Indian Act and other quotations all contribute to this contemporary comment on what it means to be an Indian.

Greene, Alma (Forbidden Voice). Tales of the Mohawks. Toronto: J.M. Dent, 1975

R.L. 7-8

Pages: 186

Myths and stories

Alma Green, a Mohawk Clan Mother recalls tales that are told on the Six Nations Reserve in Ontario. The world of the twentieth century and traditional communion with the natural world of the spirits are beautifully combined. Outstanding illustrations by R.G. Miller, a Cayuga-Mohawk Indian complement the tales.

Hale, Janet Campell. The Owl's Song. New York: Avon Books, 1974.

R.L. 7-9

Pages: 144

Fiction

Hale is a member of the Coeur d'Alene Tribe of Northern Idaho. The story is about Billy White Hawk, from the Benewah Reserve in Idaho, who leaves home to get an education in the city. Here he is faced with a cohesive Black culture group and finds no acceptance. With feelings of despair, he finally returns to reserve life and his own traditions.

Hubert, Cam. Dreamspeaker. Toronto: Clark, Irwin and Co., 1978.

R.L. 9-12

Pages: 137

Fiction - Non-Native author

This book contains two short novellas. Dreamspeaker is about a disturbed non-Native child who starts to find peace with an old Indian man and a deaf mute when government, bureaucracy intervenes and forces him into more acceptable surroundings; the results are drastic. Tem Eyos Ki and the Land Claims Question is a humorous story about life on a Nootka reserve as seen through the eyes of a twenty-two year old medicine woman.

Jenness, Diamond. The Corn Goddess. Ottawa: National Museum of Canada, 1960.

R.L. 7-10

Pages: 111

Legend

Jenness has selected tales of literary merit from every part of Canada in order to show regional similarities and differences. The book includes legends of the Iroquois, Ojibway, Sarcee, Sekani, Carrier, Coast Salish and Eskimo.

Johnson, E. Pauline. Flint and Feather. 1917, rpt. Don Mills: Paperjacks, 1972.

R.L. 7-10

Pages: 164

Poetry

This book is the complete collection of the poetry of E. Pauline Johnson as well as an introduction by Theodore Watts-Dunton and a brief biographical sketch.

Johnson, E. Pauline. Legends of Vancouver. 1911, rpt. Toronto:

McClelland and Stewart, 1961.

R.L. 7-8

Pages: 175

Legends

The book contains more than just legends of the Salish and Chinook Indians collected by Johnson. It also contains her commentary and the conditions surrounding the telling. Frequently, Indian life is highly romanticized. In some cases these legends are the only written version.

Johnston, Basil. Moose Meat and Wild Rice. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1978.

R.L. 9-12

Pages: 188

Short stories

A humorous collection of stories about life on a modern Ojibway Indian reserve. The stories are fictitious but highly realistic; there is considerable satire aimed at both Native and non-Native.

Johnston, Basil. Ojibway Heritage. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1976.

R.L. 8-10

Pages: 171

Variety

This book describes Ojibway culture; ceremonies, rituals, songs, dances and prayers are included. Numerous well written Ojibway legends are included as well.

Kenny, George. Indians Don't Cry. Oakville, Ont.: Chimo, 1977.

R.L. 7-10

Pages: 52

Short stories and poetry

This book contains short stories and poems by a young Ojibway writer who vividly portrays what it is to live in two very different worlds. Good and the bad aspects of his life are handled sensitively and realistically. It is also available as a play called "October Stranger".

Kinsella, W.P. Dance Me Outside (1977) and Scars (1978). Ottawa: Oberon Press.

R.L. 9-12

Pages: 158 & 154

Short stories - Non-Native author

Kinsella's books are about the Hobbema Reserve near Calgary. The reserve is a place of birth and death, of grief and laughter but the stories are above all funny. The absurdities of Indian-white relationships are laid bare in a refreshing and memorable fashion.

Kelly, Thomas P. Run, Indian, Run. Markham, Ont.: Paperjacks, 1972

R.L. 7-8

Pages: 144

Fictionalized Biography - Non-Native author

In June, 1906, two thugs were found murdered in the British Columbia interior. When Simon-Gun-a-Noot heard he was to be charged he took to the woods, though innocent. There was no justice for an Indian in whiteman's court at that time. Though a moving story chronicling much suffering, it is also humorous. Fast moving and action packed, it will appeal to reluctant readers.

Momaday, N. Scott. House Made of Dawn. New York: Harper and Row, 1968.

R.L. 10-12

Pages: 191

Fiction

This is the story of Abel, an American Indian who comes home from a foreign war suffering physically and mentally. Abel lived in two worlds, the traditional and the contemporary. Momaday's literary style reflects the differences in the cultures making the story somewhat difficult to read. Some knowledge of the "Navajo Night Chant" assists the reader in understanding this book.

Momaday, N. Scott. The Gourd Dancer. New York: Harper and Row, 1976.

R.L. 9-12

Pages: 64

Poetry

This is a collection of the poetry of N. Scott Momaday. The poetry is easier to read than much surrealist contemporary Native work and is outstanding for its imagery and symbolism. His poems contain powerfully stated abstract ideas as well as expressions of moral concerns.

Momaday, N. Scott. The Way to Rainy Mountain. New York: Ballantine Books, 1969.

R.L. 9-12

Pages: 119

Autobiography

Momaday combines essays, poetry, legends, memoirs, historical vignette modern commentary and art work to tell about Kiowa history and heritage and about his own life. The book has an unusual format but it is highly satisfying reading for senior students.

Mortimer, Hilda. You Call Me Chief. Toronto: Doubleday, 1981.

R.L. 9-12

Pages: 180

Biography

Combined with a biography of his life, this book is a commentary by Chief Dan George on the modern Indian dilemma as he saw it. The biographer shows excellent insight into the life of contemporary Indians.

Ray, Carl and James Stevens. Sacred Legends of the Sandy Lake Cree. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1971.

R.L. 9-12

Pages: 144

Legends

This book is a collection of Cree legends from Sandy Lake, Ontario. Included is a comprehensive commentary on the life and customs of the Indians by Stevens. Illustrations and translation are by Carl Ray, a Sandy Lake Indian.

Rosen, Kenneth, ed. The Man to Send Rain Clouds. New York: Vintage Books, 1975.

R.L. 9-12

Pages: 178

Short stories

Nineteen short stories by young American Indian writers from the southern United States are included. Authors represented are Leslie Silko, Simon Ortiz, Anna Lee Walters, Joseph Little, R.C. Gorman, Opal Lee Popkes and Larry Littlebird. There is an introduction by the editor and biographical sketches of the authors.

Ryga, George. The Ecstasy of Rita Joe and Other Plays. Don Mills: General Publishing Co., 1971.

R.L. 9-12

Pages: 236

Drama - Non-Native author

Of interest are The Ecstasy of Rita Joe, a drama about an Indian girl in the city and Indian, a drama about a transient Indian laborer. Rita Joe looks for work and acceptance in the city but only finds rejection and eventually death. Indian vividly portrays the anonymity of Indians in a bureaucratically controlled society.

Sallot, Lynne and Tom Peltier. Bearwalk. Don Mills: Musson Book Co., 1977.

R.L. 8-10

Pages: 213

Fiction

This novel is based on Ojibway reserve life. A young lawyer who has long forgotten his Native heritage finds his family cursed by the "bearwalk" when he returns to the reserve. It is a fast-paced novel of suspense. Peltier studied for nine years as a medicine man and the story is based on an actual incident.

Sanders, Thomas E. and Walter W. Peek. Literature of the American Indian.

Toronto: Collier-Macmillan, 1973.

R.L. 9-12

Pages: 525

Anthology

This is the most comprehensive anthology of North American Native literature available; both anthologists are Native. The book covers all aspects of Native literature from pre-Columbian sacred teachings to contemporary writing with comprehensive introductions to each topic. An abridged version is available which has fewer examples and which has omitted the chapter on biography and autobiography.

Sealey, D. Bruce and Peter Van DeVivere. Thomas George Prince. Winnipeg: Peguis Publishers, 1981

R.L. 7-9

Pages: 51

Biography

This is a biography of a veteran of World War II and the Korean War. Tommy Prince, a Saulteaux Indian from the Brokenhead Reserve in Manitoba was Canada's most decorated Indian soldier. This book tells of his distinguished war record and also about his life before and after his years in the service.

Shipley, Nan. Return to the River. Winnipeg: Peguis Publishers, 1976.

R.L. 9-10

Pages: 186

Fiction - Non-Native author

This is the story of a non-status Indian girl who hopes for a better life in the city when their traditional livelihood is destroyed by a dam in northern Manitoba. Winnipeg brings her nothing but grief. She returns to find conditions for her people becoming increasingly worse but she also finds hope for the future. Some of the author's biases are found in the story but they could well have reflected the thinking of Indians at that time.

Shipley, Nan. ed. Wild Drums. Winnipeg: Peguis Publishers, 1974.

R.L. 7-8

Pages: 78

Legends

These are tales and legends of the Plains Indians as told by Alex Grisdale of the Brokenhead Reserve in Manitoba. Reading level is low but material includes valuable insight into life in Southern Manitoba in the past; one story tells of historical events. An interesting biographical sketch of the narrator is included.

Silko, Leslie Marmon. Ceremony. Scarborough: New American Library, 1977.

R.L. 10-12

Pages: 274

Fiction

This is the story of a young Laguna Indian who returns to the reserve after serving in the Vietnam war, broken in body and spirit. Through ritual and ceremony he is helped to find his way back to health and his Indian identity.

Speare, Jean E. ed. The Days of Augusta. Vancouver: J.J. Douglas Ltd., 1973

R.L. 9-12

Pages: 80

Memoirs

Memoirs and commentary are by Augusta Tappage, a Shuswap Indian. Though told in prose narrative it has the appearance and rhythm of poetry. The book is enhanced by many excellent photographs.

Storm, Hyemeyohsts. Seven Arrows. New York: Ballantine Books, 1972.

R.L. 7-12

Pages: 731

Fiction, legends

The book is about the Cheyenne but the author seems to have drawn on many cultural sources. Legends, explanations of legends and fiction fuse into one continuous story with many levels of meaning. The fictional part presents a unique and wholly Indian perspective of the clash between Plains Indians and advancing settlers. Excellent photography and brilliantly colored art work make the book unusual.

Storm, Hyemeyohsts. Song of Heyoehkah. New York: Ballantine Books, 1981.

R.L. 8-10

Pages: 302

Fiction

Little Wolf is the sole survivor of a village massacre. He meets Estchimah, a female shaman; together they search for the meanings of life with the help of an older man, Crazy Dog. They are joined by white gold seekers; one leaves but the other two decide to learn the "Medicine Way". It is an engrossing book with beautiful illustrations.

St. Pierre, Paul. Breaking Smith's Quarter Horse. Toronto: McGraw Hill Ryerson Press, 1966.

R.L. 8-10

Pages: 164

Fiction - Non-Native author

This is the story of Smith, a poor rancher in British Columbia and Ol' Antoine, a Chilcotin Indian. There is poignancy as well as irony and humor in their relationship. They depend on each other, but never fully understand each other. It is based on a television script which launched the acting career of Chief Dan George.

St. Pierre, Paul. Sister Balonika. Agincourt: The Book Society of Canada 1969.

R.L. 7-10

Pages: 143

Drama - Non-Native author

This absorbing play takes place in a residential school for Cree children in Yukon Territory. Sister Balonika (Veronica) is a Cowichan Indian but does not speak the language of the children. She finds the rigid schedule of the school hard to follow, and because she fails to follow a routine procedure a tragic accident occurs. Excellent characterization makes this an outstanding library work.

Stump, Sarain. There is My People Sleeping. Sidney, B.C.: Gray's Publishing, 1970.

R.L. 9-12

Pages: 73

Poetry

This unusual book by the late Sarain Stump combines poetry and art work. The poetry is frequently difficult to understand and is illustrated, line by line, by the poet. Stump was a Shoshone, Cree and Salish Indian with little formal education.

Swartz, Herbert T. ed. Windigo and other Tales of the Ojibways. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1969.

R.L. 8-12

Pages: 40

Legends

The legends were told to the editor by Norval Morrisseau who also illustrated the book. Illustrations are in the traditional stylistic art form of the Ojibway and are done in two colors. Morrisseau lives on the Sand Point Indian Reserve in northern Ontario and interprets Ojibway learning and lore for Natives and non-Natives alike.

Tetso, John. Trapping is My Life. Toronto: Peter Martin Associates, 1976.

R.L. 8-10

Pages: 116

Memoirs

This book is a series of short articles by a Slavey Indian originally written for a Catholic journal. They tell about life on the trapline, the seriousness and the humor. The book also includes a great deal of Tetso's own philosophy of life.

Troendle, Yves. Raven's Children. Lantzville, B.C.: Oolichan Books, 1979.

R.L. 7-8

Pages: 211

Fiction - Non-Native author

Myths of the Tsimshian Indians are woven into the story of Satsum and Gyla. The village was destroyed because the men were no longer showing respect for the animals. The two children, the sole survivors, set out to recreate their culture and way of life; to do this they had to discover truths their elders had forgotten. Myth and reality are so skillfully interwoven they are hard to separate. It is an excellent example of how modern literature can evolve from oral tradition.

Underhill, Ruth Murray. Singing for Power. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976.

R.L. 9-12

Pages: 158

Poetry

Underhill collected traditional poetry of the Papago Indians of Southern Arizona. Much of the book describes the culture which assists in fully understanding the significance of the poetry.

Vanderburgh, R.M. I Am Nokomis, Too. Don Mills: General Publishing Co., 1977.

R.L. 7-9

Pages: 237

Biography

This is the biography of Verna Patronella Johnston, an Ojibway from the Cape Croker Reserve in Ontario. It tells of Verna Johnston's life on the reserve as a child and later as an adult. Emphasis is placed on her role as a foster mother both on the reserve and in Toronto. The book includes taped interviews and an anthropological discussion by the author.

Van Steen, Marcus. Pauline Johnson: Her Life and Work. Toronto: Hodder and Stoughton, 1965.

R.L. 8-10

Pages: 278

Biography

This book contains a biography of Pauline Johnson and much of her poetry. As well it contains six prose selections rarely found in print elsewhere. It provides insight into the life and times in which she lived but it is somewhat romanticized.

Velie, Alan R. ed. American Indian Literature: An Anthology. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1979.

R.L. 9-12

Pages: 352

Anthology

This anthology includes traditional literature, sacred stories, folk tales and songs. Traditional writing consisting of orations and memoirs is included as well as a good representation of contemporary writing. All literature comes from tribes in areas that are now in the United States.

Waters, Frank. The Man Who Killed the Deer. Richmond Hill, Ont.: Simon and Schuster, 1971.

R.L. 9-12

Pages: 217

Fiction

This is an easy to read book with an adult theme. Martiniano returned from the government school neither a white man nor an Indian; killing a deer without observing the proper rituals changes Martiniano's whole life. Waters conveys the importance of ritual and harmony in order for a person to live at peace with himself and the community.

Welch, James. Riding the Earthboy 40. New York: Harper and Row, 1976.

R.L. 10-12

Pages: 71

Poetry

This poetry is surrealistic and hard to understand. Welch draws on traditional material as well as wild associations based on his own visionary and dream experiences. Given cultural clues, however, it can be satisfying reading for senior students.

Welch, James. The Death of Jim Loney. Toronto: Fitzhenry and Whiteside, 1979.

R.L. 7-8

Pages: 179

Fiction

The reading level is low but the subject matter is more suited to senior students. This is the story of Jim Loney as he struggles with his loneliness and his painful past. There are people who love him and are willing to help him but his alienation from society is such that all their efforts are frustrated. It is a brilliant psychological novel whose chilling events lead inevitably to the death of Jim Loney.

Welch, James. Winter in the Blood. New York: Harper and Row, 1974.

R.L. 10-12

Pages: 176

Fiction

Welch, a Blackfoot writer, tells the story of an alienated young Indian and his search for his identity. The setting is in the Montana ranching country and the book deals with the life of contemporary Indians in an authentic fashion.

Willis, Jane. Geniesh: An Indian Girlhood. Toronto: New Press, 1973.

R.L. 10-12

Pages: 199

Autobiography

Jane Willis is a Cree Indian from the James Bay area of Quebec. She tells about her happy childhood on the reserve with her large loving family. Her document becomes increasingly angry and resentful as she tells about ten and a half years in an Anglican boarding school, a time during which she spent less than a year and a half with her family.

Witt, Shirley Hill and Stan Steiner. The Way: An Anthology of American Indian Literature. New York, Alfred A Knopf, 1973.

R.L. 9-12

Pages: 261

Anthology

Witt, an Iroquois Indian, wrote the introduction. The book contains stories, speeches, commentaries, humor and poetry by Native people. Not all selections can be classed as "literature" but all contribute to an understanding of Native literature.

Young Bear, Ray. Winter of the Salamander. New York: Harper and Row, 1980.

R.L. 10-12

Pages: 208

Poetry

Young Bear is a Sauk and Fox Indian. His surrealistic poetry is hard to understand since it combines place, dreams, symbols, emotions and moments in time in various ways. He draws on traditional and contemporary sources for his poetry.