TRICKSTER IN THE WASTELAND:
RACIAL MEMORY AND MODERNIST AESTHETICS IN THREE AMERINDIAN NOVELS

BY

REINHOLD KRAMER

A thesis
presented to the University of Manitoba
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in the

Department of English

Winnipeg, Manitoba

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ISBN 0-315-37154-4

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For Rita and Madeline

Special thanks to Dr. David Williams
for his excellent academic guidance.

ABSTRACT

T.S. Eliot's The Wasteland offers one of the governing images of the Modernist period in twentieth-century literature. For Eliot, the cultural aridity of western civilization ends finally in renewal from the Hindi East. "Trickster in the Wasteland: Racial Memory and Modernist Aesthetics in Three Amerindian Novels" explores what happens when the artist turns West, when the oldest American god, Trickster, penetrates that wasteland in three neo-modernist texts.

In The Double Hook, Sheila Watson's evasive trickster, Coyote, is one of the forces that keeps the novel's community apart, but in his sexual licence he also prefigures the author's fusion of community. Watson eventually grafts Coyote onto her white Christian myth at the expense of Amerindian racial memory. Conversely, the alienated trickster who narrates James Welch's Winter in the Blood matures into a distinctly Amerindian shamanic role, so that he is able to recover a home in the secular Montana wasteland. Brown, male, and American like James Welch, N. Scott Momaday becomes himself the Kiowa trickster, Saynday. In his poetic autobiography The Way to Rainy Mountain, Momaday finds a fictive tribal self which checks the Modernist artist's tendency towards self-sufficiency and which furnishes a precedent for Momaday's attempt to help

pull the Kiowa into a new cultural context.

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Introduction

> He must be aware that the mind of Europe--the mind of his own country--a mind which he learns in time to be much more important than his own private mind--is a mind which changes, and that this change is a development which abandons nothing **en route.**[1]
>
> -T.S. Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent"

One of the hallmarks of our literary century is pluralism. T.S. Eliot affirmed it near the beginning of the century in his critical writings, and, more importantly, in his poetic practice. Sheila Watson, James Welch, and N. Scott Momaday have, in the past 30 years, all shared Eliot's strong sense of debt to the mind of their own countries. Welch and Momaday--both brown, male, and American--have attempted to recover their Amerindian traditions while Watson, who is white, female, and Canadian, has made a different yet analogous attempt to recover her white tradition.

But even a "mind" which is held in common is a mind which changes. The three writers also share Eliot's modern feeling that he inhabits a wasteland. The distinction is that they begin their peopling of the wasteland with a figure who might have shocked Eliot, had Eliot spied him "coming along." With his penis slung over his shoulder in a box, the Amerindian trickster is not what one might find in

one of Eliot's poems, but he is one of the earliest and most durable gods of the North American place.[2] His presence in Watson's The Double Hook is a testament that the "mind of Europe" is "a mind which changes." His presence in Welch's Winter in the Blood and Momaday's The Way to Rainy Mountain bolsters the argument that nothing has been abandoned **en route.**

All three writers have had to assimilate the alien traditions which they found themselves heir to--Welch and Momaday by the exigencies of history, Watson by virtue of place. For Welch and Momaday, the new dominant culture cannot be ignored. As members of small Amerindian communities surrounded by a sea of white faces, white words, and white gods, any attempt to dismiss the influence of white thought would necessarily become a nostalgic attempt to hold on to what disappeared more than a hundred years ago. Because he is a Professor of **English**, Momaday's return to his Kiowa tradition immediately suggests his affinity with "the mind which changes" and "which abandons nothing."

Welch, by descent a Blackfoot Indian, senses with Momaday the absence of a vital language in the disappearance of those ancestors who provided a link to the prehistorical literature predating white American civilization. By trying to write their way out of a wasteland, Welch and Momaday imply that the sterile condition can be overcome in the

culture--through art. Since Momaday's poetic narrative is autobiographical, we know that the death of his grandmother literally sent him on the quest that inspired _The Way to Rainy Mountain_. The biographical details on Welch are not as well-documented; however, because the narrator of _Winter in the Blood_ is also set into motion by his grandmother's death, it is possible to posit at least a 'felt' parallel motivation in Welch.

But what precisely is it that Momaday and Welch hope to recover from their traditional myths? The use of 'white' literary structures confirms that their return to Amerindian myth is in no way a naive traditionalism. What is it about the appropriated mythical patterns that makes it so important for these writers to recover them? Specifically, what is it about the Amerindian trickster that makes him such an important literary figure in the new wasteland?

The problem in 'remembering' the grandmothers' oral traditions is what leads to the cultural cross-fertilizations: neither Momaday nor Welch simply mimic the mythical language that informed their ancestors, perhaps because both writers feel the weight of a white education. Both have to find a viable middle ground between the traditionalism of someone like Black Elk[3] and complete assimilation into the thought patterns of the dominant culture.

It is doubtful that Sheila Watson felt the same type of cultural alienation that informs Welch and Momaday, but she too has 'lost' a language and senses the need for a rejuvenation of her white Catholic myths. The secularization of Western Europe and North America has made a naive recuperation of her myth impossible, and her use of the trickster, Coyote, as a central figure in The Double Hook is at best a circuitous way of continuing in the biblical strain. As a school-teacher in British Columbia's Cariboo country, she was no less than a purveyor of the dominant culture's ideals; as an artist, however, her use of Coyote suggests her acknowledgement of Coyote's prior claim to the place.

If in literature "nothing is abandoned **en route**," then the thoughtful Indian writer can hardly ignore the mind of Europe. Neither can the thoughtful white writer in North America ignore the tribal and non-European literatures that have been published in this century. H. David Brumble has denounced such sacrilege committed against Indian myth by even well-intentioned outsiders,[4] while Patricia Clark Smith condemns the white use of Coyote and what she sees as "the poets' glib eagerness to fuse cultures, **all** cultures."[5] Smith's condemnation is a reasonable enough social response to white imperialism and may serve as a warning, but it suggests a cultural ghetto that T.S. Eliot, for one, was

determined to avoid. He called upon both European and Eastern traditions to compose his own way out of The Waste Land. Even Smith, in her written, English **analysis** of Coyote, is doing something to Coyote that would probably have made her ancestors uneasy, had they been able to imagine it. But the question that Brumble and Smith raise is nevertheless extremely important: is there a difference between the way a white outsider like Watson handles Amerindian materials and the way that insiders like Welch and Momaday do? At what price fusion?

Welch and Momaday, no less than the scavenging whites that Smith fears, seek fusion. They rely upon the oral mind for their stories even as they plumb the mind of Europe for aesthetics and form to order the tribal materials. The very decision to **print** their stories immediately separates them from their traditions. Welch's choice of the novel, in particular, may seem like a betrayal, since the novel, unlike poetry and drama, has no tribal past. Karl Kroeber articulates an obvious and yet essential problem when he asks "if any written text can accurately reproduce an oral recitation."[6] To expand Kroeber's question, can tribal materials be framed in European structures without distorting the materials?

A preliminary answer is, of course, no. Like all stories, myths get worn out and must be reinterpreted. When

dealing with transformations such as those that Welch and Momaday attempt, a more productive question is to ask what directions those reinterpretations take. Analyzing the Zuni story "of that which was the beginning," Dennis Tedlock notes that although the Zuni have a text that is fixed down to the last accent, they also recognize the necessity of, and provide for, multiple interpretations of that text. Interpretation for them involves "both a restoration of the text and a further possibility"; the Zuni story-teller "both respects the text and revises it" because he "must keep the story going."[7] Instead of allowing their stories to be interpreted and edited only by white ethnologists, Welch and Momaday take upon themselves the responsibility for remembering the old myths and for making them contemporary. To revise the myths entirely apart from the new dominant culture would be to ignore the forces that have left no Amerindian community untouched, to recreate little more than nostalgia. But do Welch and Momaday's revisions make sense in terms of the new cultural situations? And, closer to the quick, can their revisions likewise make sense of the new cultural situations?

Watson, Welch, and Momaday's attempted fusion of alien traditions may owe something to the modernist's determination to transcend historical time and space by means of the created artwork,[8] a determination which may

make it appealing to an Amerindian artist whose culture tends to "view space as spherical and time as cyclical."[9] And there are other things which could make modernist aesthetics appealing to the artist who is attempting to restore a mythical tradition. For the modernist, it is the artwork that is whole, and luminous, that completes reality, even if the world is poverty-stricken.[10] The same aesthetics can be seen in traditional Amerindian art, even if in somewhat different form, since the world was not traditionally seen as impoverished: "every story, every song, every ceremony tells the Indian that each creature is a part of the living whole."[11] The modernist wasteland is thus challenged by the grotesque but fully alive figure of Trickster, while the traditional Amerindian world-view is challenged by the modernist perception of a cultural wasteland which can only be redeemed through art.

How is it that art might redeem the wasteland? Eliot's modernist manifesto, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," posits an all-inclusive community of artistic works and suggests, thereby, a deep desire that art would form the basis for community. Though far removed from primitivism, this desire implies a way in which a modernist aesthetics needs an infusion of myth at the deepest level, especially since it is among tribal societies that art forms such an obvious basis for community. But how do Amerindian

traditions then affect the modernist faith in words and notions of the god-like, impersonal artist?

The argument that follows tries to show that Watson, Welch, and Momaday perpetuate the modernist faith in art, but also that they make that faith conditional upon their recieved traditions. All three writers allow their "remembered" traditions to alter their aesthetics, but all three, nevertheless, use memory in pluralistic ways. Watson allows Coyote, who cannot be separated from his Cariboo country ground[12] an uncomfortable place in her white myth, while Welch and Momaday allow modernist aesthetics, as part of their new cultural identities, to impinge upon their received Amerindian myths.

[1] T.S. Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," in Criticism: The Major Texts, enlarged edition, ed. Walter Jackson Bate, (1917;rpt. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1970), p.527.

[2] See Paul Radin, The Trickster: A Study in American Indian Mythology, (New York: Shocken Books, 1956), p.19,164.

[3] See The Sacred Pipe: Black Elk's Account of the Seven Rites of the Oglala Sioux, ed. Joseph Epes Brown, (Baltimore: Penguin, 1953).

[4] H. David Brumble, "Anthropologists, Novelists and Indian Sacred Materials," Canadian Review of American Studies, 11, No.1(Spring 1980) 31-48.

[5] Patricia Clark Smith, "Coyote Ortiz: **Canis latrans latrans** in the Poetry of Simon Ortiz," in Studies in American Indian Literature, ed. Paula Gunn Allen, (New York: Modern Language Association of America, 1983), p.194.

[6] Karl Kroeber, "An Introduction to the Art of Traditional Indian Narration," in Traditional Literatures of the American Indian, ed. Karl Kroeber, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1981), p.2.

[7] Dennis Tedlock, "The Spoken Word and the Work of Interpretation in American Indian Religion," in Kroeber, p.48.

[8] Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane, "The Name and Nature of Modernism," Modernism: 1890-1930, Bradbury and

McFarlane eds., (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1976), p.51.

[9] Paula Gunn Allen, "The Sacred Hoop: A Contemporary Perspective," in Allen, p.7.

[10] Modernism, p.25.

[11] Allen, p.8.

[12] See Sheila Watson, "What I'm Going to Do," Open Letter, Third Series, 1(Winter 1974-75), 181-83, as quoted in Sheila Watson and "The Double Hook," ed. George Bowering, (Ottawa: Golden Dog Press, 1985), p.15.

Chapter One

Community at All Costs: The Transformation of Coyote's Language in The Double Hook

When Sheila Watson speaks of the importance of Cariboo country in her only published novel, she sounds as if she is speaking about divine election: "I didn't choose it, it chose me."[1] As a white "foreigner" in the North American place, she must have sensed that her god, Christ, was also a "foreigner" because she relies upon Coyote, the local god of Cariboo country, to preside over The Double Hook. The secularization of Europe, along with the initial inability of the old god to inhabit the new place, creates the cultural wasteland that dominates the early parts of her novel.

The literal creek that winds through the community is "drying away,"[2] but more importantly, the characters are often described in terms of drought and they also see themselves in such terms. The defiant nature of Mrs. Potter's fishing--"she **would have** drawn a line with the barb when the fire of righteousness baked the bottom" (p.20)--suggests a spiritual mindset that is inimical to growth or change. Early on in the novel, Ara announces Mrs. Potter's presence--"she's here"--then sees only "the padded imprint of a Coyote's foot" (p.35). Kip also identifies Coyote with Mrs. Potter, seeing "Coyote carry her away like a rabbit in

his mouth." The two are linked because they share a power of repression, a power which is not overthrown by James in his murder of his mother. Instead James becomes like her--Coyote is incarnate in an attitude, not in a single person.

Coyote's repression is his negative side, but Watson still finds him necessary. As the god of her new place, he allows Watson to speak in terms which are native to the place. Since Coyote is Trickster, mythologically-speaking the earliest figure for God and man,[3] one would expect language to be used by Coyote and by the characters as a tool in the process of differentiation, a tool by which the immature figure gains self-knowledge in the confrontation of self with an image of the self. This does happen in The Double Hook; on the level of character and structure, Coyote grows up and his human counterparts learn to speak an authentic language. But language is also used evasively in the novel as a tool for self-indulgence.

In Amerindian myth, Coyote evades knowledge and communal responsibility for much of his story. His actions are self-centred, his trickery mainly intended to get himself food or women.[4] Coyote's language is connected to forgetting, darkness, sleep, and death: "In my mouth is forgetting/ In my darkness is rest" (p.29). Each state involves varying degrees of unconsciousness, and each is to some degree 'extra-lingual.' Since almost every character

"under Coyote's eye" (p.19) partakes of his repression and resistance to self-knowledge, Coyote is to some extent the projection of the characters' spiritual condition.

Coyote often speaks the words of biblical myth, but the words are used to divide his subjects through fear, to keep the community apart, and to subvert authentic communication. Stephen Putzel has decisively shown how most of Coyote's words are taken from the Old Testament[5] --and these words become significant in assessing the change that the Amerindian Coyote undergoes. Speaking to Felix Prosper, Coyote uses words similar to those of Jahweh in Jeremiah: "Those who cling to the rocks I will bring down/ I will set my paw on the eagle's nest" (p.24).[6] To Ara Potter, Coyote announces his servant Kip in words like the ones in Isaiah that Jahweh speaks: "Who is blind, but my servant?"[7] To Greta Potter, Coyote appears as the lover in the Song of Solomon, of whom the woman says "His left hand is under my head and his right hand doth embrace me."[8] Speaking to James, Coyote again relies on Isaiah's God for briars and thorns, holes in the rocks and caves of the earth.[9] But Coyote's words only contain 'sleeping' myth--myth whose true end is forgotten by the manipulator who is the basis of much of the failed and repressed language among Watson's characters. He must change if the community is to see anything but the worst side of Jahweh in his "wasteland"

speeches of punishment and exile. Coyote's ethic of separation has its definitive being in Mrs. Potter. Along with the Widow, she represses the sexuality of James and Lenchen, and rules, as Coyote does, by fear. William Potter--"The rest is woman's business" (p.83)--and Greta--"stairs... separate you from things" (p.46)--speak for their mother's selfish instinct to keep people apart.

Although Ara makes the connection between Mrs. Potter and Coyote, her own fear keeps her in their power. Fear displaces the meaning of Ara's language, so that the metaphors she uses to describe the landscape describe instead an animal: the valley has a "mouth" and the cottonwoods "twisted feet" (p.35), the hills have "bones" (p.21) or "flat ribs" (p.35), and are "humped" (p.53) against a raw-skinned (p.36) or "rawhide" (p.35) storm sky. Early on, Ara creates a hierarchy of power to explain her own denial of any responsibility for the community's wasteland. She searches for water, but the creek flows "this way and that at the land's whim" (p.22), while the land is Coyote's "pastime" (p.22). Ara's conception of the powers above Coyote is closely attuned to her own lack of self-worth: "Even God's eye could not spy out the men lost here.... there were not enough people here to attract his attention" (p.22-23). Her conception of Coyote's near-omnipotence over his landscape, combined with the language

she uses to describe that landscape, suggest that Coyote is a figure for Ara's fear.

Lenchen Wagner also unconsciously fashions into an animal the same storm that Ara describes, but Lenchen is much more specific in her imagery:

> In the sky above evil had gathered strength. It took body writhing and twisting under the high arch. Lenchen could hear the breath of it in the pause. The swift indrawing. The silence of the contracting muscle. The head drop for the wild plunge and hoof beat of it. (p.41)

The image she employs is that of either a horse or a bull, not surprising considering that her recalcitrant lover, James Potter, is described as a horse when he murders his domineering mother--"He'd thrown fear as a horse balks. Then he'd frozen on the trail" (p.43)--and as a "stallion" (p.27) in his relationship with Lenchen's would-be seducer. Kip also enjoys the storm as he would a stampede: "the light stampeded together and bawling.... The white bulls of the sky shoulder to shoulder" (p.36). Lenchen, by calling the storm-horse or storm-bull "evil," seems to repudiate the eros of Kip and even of James. But Lenchen is described as "a colt too quickly broken" (p.40). Her sexual relationship with James, along with her wordless cowering before him and Kip, suggest instead that she too is ruled by Coyote. She fears her own sexuality,[10] is only able to confront that fear in metaphor, and even then, she imagines rather than articulates the metaphor.

More than Lenchen, Ara is uneasy with sexuality. Ara's fear of infertility is projected as a concern about the dryness of the landscape. When her husband, William, calls her to bed, reminding her of the times that she eagerly called for him to come, Ara is busy pumping water. She argues with William about the creek: "It couldn't rise, William would say; but she'd felt it rise" (p.33). Early on, she chooses water as a metaphor for death--"Death rising to the knee"--and takes the metaphor a level higher so that death is situated about the genitals--"Death rising to the loin" (p.21). Almost every commentator has noted the close connections between The Double Hook and T.S. Eliot's The Waste Land. But it is Ara, not any other character, who is most like the speakers in Eliot's poem; it is Ara who fears "death by water."[11] Eliot's somewhat forced dismissal of sexuality as an enlivening force, whether in Sweeney and Mrs. Porter, in the "lovely woman" who "stoops to folly,"[12] or even in the hermaphrodite Tiresias, finds its parallel in Ara's fear.

To a lesser extent, the Widow Wagner also feels ambivalent about sexual contact. Her complaints are occasioned by her looking "At the dry parcel which marriage with Wagner had given her" (p.80). The Widow's unwillingness to acknowledge in so many words Lenchen's pregnancy suggests a denial of sexuality which is amplified

by Watson's repeated use of the designation "Widow Wagner" for one who has steeled herself to remaining husbandless. Still her words of reproof--"fat pig of a girl" (p.29)--imply both her knowledge of Lenchen's pregnancy and her angry unwillingness to speak that knowledge. The Widow's repression of the issue carries over to Lenchen who tightens the belt around her expanding waist (p.30). The Widow's constant repetition of "Dear God" and her "wailing on God" (p.124) reveal that she, like Coyote, is not ready to take responsibility for her family.[13]

William's dryness and complicity in his family's wasteland cannot be ignored either. William's language is littered with clichéd aphorisms and truisms: "A man does what he can" (p.53); "It's curious... how a man lies down in the ground at last" (p.60); "There's never just one wasp in a wasp's nest" (p.83); "A hammer never hits once.... It gets the habit of striking" (p.113). His emphasis on words like "straighten" (p.74), "order" (p.75), and "sense" (p.76) suggest an artistic impulse gone too far on the rational side. His proverbs are sleeping language. Like most proverbs they contain germs of truth, but William is unconscious of exactly how they apply to him. He says "It's always when a man sleeps that his barn burns down to a fistful of ash" (p.52). The burning of his mother's house says pretty clearly that his language, like Coyote's,

"sleeps."

William is more concerned about dryness in the landscape than in the drought closer to him: "The creek'll be dry as a parched mouth. The earth... won't have enough spit left to smack its lips" (p.33). He even leads "a horse out to water" (p.53), but will not enact the cliché for his wife.

Despite William's complicity, Watson makes Ara's fear of dryness primarily Ara's responsibility. Before Ara can begin to assert herself, she must let go of self-pity. She berates William for pitying her while, at the same time, she leaves her thoughts in "the dry hay" and on the "dry" ground, so that when an owl passes by she converts its hoot into "Weep-for-yourself" (p.53). Since the owl is the harbinger of death among many Amerindian tribes, it would appear that Ara is justified in her self-pity; however, not until she admits that "there's a sort of dryness settled on **us** like dust" (p.75), not until she admits at least partial responsibility for her own drought-stricken cosmos, can she explicitly tell William about her bitterness at "what loving never gave me" (p.76), and lay aside her barren fear that William has been unfaithful.

In fact, Ara is at first less a prophet than a detective in the novel. Her comments at the end of Part One are less worthy of one who can search out the intertwined and hidden

communal roots of a crime than of one who believes that she is innocent, that a single causal thread runs through events, and that the discovery of that thread will neatly resolve all contradictions:

> it's easy enough to find out if Ma's here, Ara said. All we've got to do is call her. All we've got to do is look.... How could we both have seen her? Ara asked. How could we have seen her at both our places? (p.46)

Like Ara, Heinrich Wagner needs to recover the power of authentic speech. It is hard to tell whether, in Part One, Heinrich's inability to confront James is due to fear of James or fear of words. Although he is bold enough to prevent James from closing the door, he is not bold of speech. His repeated generalities--"I'm come to tell you" (p.45)--turn first to silence before they turn to evasions. Instead of telling James that Lenchen has disappeared, Heinrich says, "your Ma was out in the storm" (p.45), avoiding the issue and falling back upon Coyote's pre-expressive "darkness" which he had "tried to hold... to him" (p.44).

In Part Two, Heinrich is no more successful with his intended words. Again he means to make James speak and even imagines their conversation, wondering what to do if James should admit to his paternity, but he does not follow through and puts the conversation off until "tomorrow" (p.54). Again he attempts to hide in a kind of

psychological sleep. Even though he hears James leaving for town, he tries to think "that he'd heard nothing" (p.71).

James presents a more complex case. He needs to find words to move beyond the suspended "silence" (p.43) of his home, words transcending the everyday and the denotative:

> When they spoke they spoke of hammers and buckles, of water for washing, of rotted posts, of ringbone and distemper. The whole world's got distemper, he wanted to shout.... He had to speak. He had to say to Greta: I'm through. I'll take the girl, and we'll go away... (p.43)

Because he does not say the words, he does not act, but puts his horse back in the barn.

However, he does not only need to move towards articulation; he needs to stop using both silence and words as tools for self-indulgence. James blames Kip, his mother, Greta, and even Angel for trying to catch him "in the pits and snares of silence" (p.42), but he uses silence himself to ward off Heinrich and employs an argumentative trick--"It's always Kip, Kip, Kip" (p.46)--to silence Ara.

James distorts the meanings of words and uses them in Coyote-like fashion for selfish purposes. When Lenchen comes to James's forbidden door, he complains of a lack of "peace" (p.63). Of course "peace" is hardly the proper designator for what he wants--he wants to maintain the strict compartmentalization of his life, with his house (kept by Greta) in one place and his mistress in another.

Moreover, it is "by James's word" (p.19) that Mrs. Potter is pushed down the stairs, and the precise words he uses--"This is my day" (p.19)--have an eerie resemblance to those of his suicidal sister, Greta: "This is my house" (p.47). James wants to avoid the succession, to isolate himself in time by ignoring his child and doing away with his parent, unaware that he is imitating his hated mother who "turned" her flesh "from others" (p.21).

Greta, while resembling James in some ways, is far less conscious of the significance of her words. Although James uses words to gain the ends he desires, he does recognize the ironies in his speech. He parries the inquiries into the whereabouts of Mrs. Potter with "She'll come back," and adds "She always comes back" (p.46). James clearly understands the irony of being more haunted by his mother after her death than before, even though the irony is not intended to be recognized by the rest of the company. Greta, on the other hand, misses the irony of her stated position: "I don't like a linoleum. It's smooth like ice, but you can't tell when it's been eat away underneath" (p.33). Literally, she disparages what she thinks of as Ara's ostentatious kitchen (p.52). Figuratively, however, the words suggest the way she is herself eaten away by years of covert rebellion.

When Greta does speak with intended irony, her irony turns back on her. "The thing about stairs is that they separate you from things" (p.46), she says, wilfully concealing her mother's body overhead. But her separation of public and private meanings bespeaks a deeper separation of self from community, a separation which grows out of her mother's repressive power. Paradoxically, she has not, except in the most literal sense, been separated from her mother.

Greta partakes of Coyote's repression because her imagined separation is self-centred. Like James, Greta signifies "isolation" when she uses the signifier "peace" (p.66). Her language seems self-centred--"my house" (p.32,43,47), "my place" (p.37), "my post... my catalogue" (p.41), "my life" (p.42), "I want this house to myself" (p.42), "I give the orders here" (p.47)--and she even seems possessive about her tea. Watson may be using the Coyote myth to overturn Judeo-Christian ideas about a separate elect or about the separation of self from world. Greta's attempt to live separately is harmful and illusory. Even more than James, she unwillingly and unknowingly imitates their dead mother: "Now Greta'd sat in the old lady's chair" (p.43). Greta condemns her mother's lamp-lighting, but takes over the old lady's manner without assuming her purposes: "I light the lamps in this house now" (p.37).

Felix's language also proclaims a self-centred disjunction between word and thing. The 'Ave Maria' in his thoughts is only a potential, not a spoken blessing of Lenchen. When he says to her "you're welcome until it's over" (p.40), it is evident that he means "I'll put up with you" because he immediately fixes the time of her departure. For all of his careful thought, he is unable to express what he really means: "I've got no words to clear a woman off my bench" (p.51). The words he finally does use-- "**pax vobiscum**"-- are borrowed from his father's Catholic tradition and imply a potential community. However, since Felix means "leave me alone" rather than "go in peace," they are used in hypocritical fashion so that Felix remains in selfish separation.

Coyote's desire to be separate is more blatantly present in Theophil. Theophil recognizes the duplicity of his 'shoo-it-out-the-back-door' metaphor, but his rudeness has no latent meaning: "You best move on" (p.56). Theophil is quick to judge the speech of others. He calls Kip "nothing but a go-between" (p.78), and, when Felix borrows words from The Lord's Prayer to try to bring Angel back, Theophil treats Felix's words as if they are mere form: "the priest taught me the same way he taught you" (p.79). But Theophil has forgotten, or at least ignored, some of what he has been taught. When Felix says "Forgive us our trespasses,"

Theophil cynically adds, "And lead us not into temptation" (p.78), skipping "as we forgive those who trespass against us."[14] Although Theophil pin-points the problem in Angel's speech, he does it from such postulates so as to reveal his patriarchal grammar of power:

> You used to listen and learn from me, Theophil said. Now you just tell. Right from the squeak of dawn. Telling. Telling. A man would be hard pressed to wedge a word into the silences you leave. (p.73)

Theophil expects to be the one who does the telling and anything else that needs to be done--"I bring back all that's needed here" (p.56)--including rudely chasing Kip out of the house with words.

Kip's attitude towards language is perhaps the most interesting because it is the least rigid. As messenger between James and Lenchen, Kip is not afraid of words or of word-play:

> How do you know it was James sent words? Kip asked. I didn't say James's words.... Supposing James did send words, Kip said. What do you think he said? (p.62)

But neither is Kip afraid to shape his words to selfish purposes. Despite articulating James's responsibility for his doings, Kip does not assume responsibility for his own words or actions. He hints to Lenchen that if she gives him what she gave James, he will tell her the all-important words.

As a go-between, as one who does not fear sexuality, Kip

is a potential mediator for the the divided community; but early on in the novel he is as selfish a meddler as his master Coyote. Kip appears as an animal--James challenges him with "smell me out" (p.67), Kip lifts "his face windward like an animal" (p.72), and, like the Shuswap Coyote, Kip is not very careful with his eyes.[15] Even though he brings James and Lenchen together and objectifies in language some of Coyote's many shapes--"Fear" (p.61), "the dog" (p.61)--Kip still plots, like self-centred Coyote, to catch all the glory for himself.

In naming Kip "Fool" (p.72), Felix forces Kip to notice how much he is like Coyote, and unwittingly echoes Kip's earlier thoughts which Kip cannot fail to recognize: "Coyote plotting to catch the glory for himself is fooled and everyday **fools** others" (p.61). In Coyote or Trickster story cycles, the undifferentiated figure begins to see himself, and so begins to be differentiated. Although Watson has professed doubt as to whether she would use the Coyote figure if she rewrote the novel,[16] it would be hard to imagine a more appropriate or archaic figure than an Amerindian trickster around which to structure something that "is above all a story about 'the coming of the Word,' a dramatization of the beginnings of language and cultural order in a primitive people."[17] Trickster is "the oldest of all figures in American Indian mythology" and "the symbol

which Trickster embodies is not a static one. It contains within itself the promise of differentiation, the promise of god and man."[18]

Kip has always consciously known about the archetype's "darkness" (p.61), but he does not really admit its presence in himself until after he is blinded: "I kept at him like a dog" (p.133). Even after he makes a "fool" out of himself to explain his injury--"I was just riding along and fell into a bed of prickly pear" (p.120)--Kip still retains traces of Trickster's hunger, fearing "a whole nestful of beaks open and asking" (p.133).

But Kip is not alone as Coyote's dupe. Ara connects the people in the hills to the "six-score thousand persons in Nineveh" (p.33), persons who, according to Jonah, "cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand."[19] Since Trickster is undifferentiated, his body parts function as separate units, unaware that they form parts of the same body. This leads to some bizarre results such as are documented in the tales about Trickster's right hand fighting with his left.[20] In Theophil, the body parts too are separated: "It's not always right for the mouth to say what the eyes see" (p.56). And Theophil cannot comprehend the existence of the larger body, the human community. Instead of moving into the promise of his name--God-lover--he does not even love men and women, let alone God. Since

he plays card games like Patience which only require one player, and since he does not care "to get mixed up with others" (p.56), he finally does end up alone.

It is significant, therfore, that Theophil denies the existence of Coyote: "I don't set no store by Coyote.... There's no big Coyote" (p.57). Because Theophil represses knowledge of the "big Coyote," and admits only the existence of literal and lower-case coyotes, the "big Coyote" has his being in Theophil.

Greta too desires separation. She imagines her suicide as an elopement, but it really is her ultimate separation from the community. Her irritation at not being married has produced the hardness, but not the beauty of a 'pearl,' one of the possible roots for her name. It may not be Greta's fault that she has "never bred" (p.54). But bitter against all men (p.37), she substitutes "power" (p.66) for sexuality, a response that denies the other possible root of her name, 'grace,' and adds to the repressed sexuality that is "dynamite under her skirt" (p.73). Once she loses control, it is the denied sexuality that takes over so that she imagines Coyote as her bridegroom come from the Song of Solomon: "His left hand is under my head and his right hand doth embrace me." Of course he does not mention the next verse which would only increase the irony: "I charge you... that you stir not up, nor awake my love."[21]

Greta's fate is partially a result of her denial of memory. Just before her suicide, she wants "her voice to shatter all memory of the girl" (p.85), the syntax suggesting that it is not just memory of Lenchen that she wants to destroy. And, at this point, Greta has already subtly distorted her memories of Angel's and William's voices.

James, meanwhile, seeks a lesser sort of separation by escaping to town. Here, Watson's repetition of her **dramatis personae** implies that the town too is under Coyote's eye. Of the two hundred people living in the town, only six are named in the new **dramatis personae**, suggesting that the townspeople are less differentiated than those in the hills where twice as many are immediately named.

Much more than the dry hills, the town is a wasteland, Watson's version of Eliot's "Unreal City."[22] "Set in a waste of sand," the town contains "A crisscross of streets and alleys leading out to nothing" (p.92). There are a number of poorly-defined characters in town, and even those who are well-defined are seen in poses reminiscent of Coyote's forgetfulness: "Shepherd... was asleep" (p.92); "James.... saw Bascomb... sitting vacantly" (p.93).

Instead of finding a more vital and freeing language in the town, James finds nothing but debased versions of the

people in the hills. Pockett, who seems to be on intimate terms with William, uses "tautological, uncommunicative"[23] proverbs that say even less than William's. Like Kip, Traff walks silently (p.99) and becomes a go-between for James, but Traff is only in it for the money. Lilly, trading her body for money, only parodies Lenchen's affection. Felicia shares the same nominal root as Felix, but she has lost all connection with the original meaning of her name. 'Fleece ya' is the appropriate pronunciation of her name. However, in keeping with the determined corruption of her name, one of the girls calls her "Fleeza" (p.105), removing the last trace of 'blessing.'

The townspeople use language to manipulate others for personal gain, thus refining Coyote's techniques. Shepherd, the game warden, knows that Traff intends to fleece James, but does not intervene because he grants Traff's assumption--"It might as well be me as someone else" (p.102). Lilly projects a caring conversational attitude until she gets James's money. Pockett's sudden use of the diminutive, "Bill" (p.96), just like Traff's use of "Jimmy" (p.105) is designed to steer James towards his counter. At the bank Bascomb is more subtle, calling James Mr. Potter, but his motive is the same. On the other hand, James does not need to devalue the names of Pockett or Traff because Watson does it for him. Traff approaches 'trash'; sounded

backwards it is 'fart.'[24] And Pockett's name is diminished by Watson's suddenly persistent reference to its more mundane signification (p.99,100,103).

The debased language is most clearly seen in the parrot, who imitates human language without the understanding that should accompany it. The parrot serves as an index to the town's language because he seems more perceptive than the humans, noticing the entry of James and Traff into the bar before anyone else. As James imitates the parrot's "drinks all round" with "make it a double all round" (p.100), and begins to hold a serious conversation with the parrot, he seems to lose ground to Coyote. It comes as no surprise that, when he is with Lilly, his words no longer mean what they signify: "Go away, he said, putting his own hand on her arm" (p.108).

James instinctively learns to speak the self-seeking language of the town, with its emphasis on "cash" and "ownership rights" (p.96). But the debased version of community allows James to objectify his own actions: "All he'd done was scum rolled up to the top of a pot" (p.99). James recognizes his own attempted isolation from debt, guilt, and help in these parodies and laughs when Traff and Lilly laugh at the trick they played on James, because he sees then his own foolishness, mirrored as if by art. James's eventual denial of cash transactions in Part

Five--"a debt is a sort of bond" (p.121)--suggests his awakening sense of resposibility for Lenchen and the child.

At the same time, Felix begins to sense a growing debt to his father's words. Kip's pain immediately pulls Felix into action, but Felix feels bankrupt of words--"What could he say" (p.78)--even after he acknowledges a bond to and responsibility for Kip. Instead of continuing in the old "indifference" (p.40) to his father, Felix remembers his father's words and borrows them as the basis for his own first struggling words in the novel: "Peace be with you, he said. Angel took a step forward. Forgive us our trespasses, Felix said" (p.78).

Heinrich's movement into speech seems likewise to depend upon his memory of one of William's proverbs which Heinrich directs at his mother: "A man needn't hang himself because he's put his neck through a noose in the dark" (p.71). Heinrich knows William's voice well (p.81), but he needs to, and does, append his own words: "What will you do if I bring the girl back?" (p.71) He does not need, so much, to use his voice "like an ax" (p.82) to cut down the divisive wall, as to tell the community what is on his mind--"Lenchen's gone from home" (p.83). In the end he even dares to tell James, if slightly obliquely (p.131).

Instead of silencing Heinrich, James blunts the original

meaning of his first name. The novel has been called "a paradigm of decreation,"[25] but it is only the early James--'Jacob' or 'the supplanter'--who destroys life and usurps the words of others. Though he supplants his mother on the first page of the novel, he cannot deflate her repressive force and replace her until he acknowledges his child in Part 5. James's announcement that there will be no stairs in his new home suggests a departure from the philosophy of separation that has ruled the Potters and suggests a recovery of the philosphy of relation. By admitting the child to the succession, James forms the "new herd" which William says is "not bound to the old one" (p.82), and sees the necessity for one day himself moving aside. The ending is qualified in that the child will put on suffering, but at least the child is acknowledged and James allows Lenchen to assert herself in naming the child. His willingness to bridle his tongue, to "stand silent" (p.127) if necessary, transforms him in Part 5 into the New Testament James.[26]

Coyote, both in James and others, is thus translated into a distinctly Christian context. A recovery of the collective memories stored in biblical myth is as important in The Double Hook as the recovery of personal ancestry and personal memories. Watson's characters eventually recognize the implications of their biblical language and recover the

"sleeping" or repressed myths.

The Widow Wagner attempts to use Psalms 68:5--"Father of the fatherless. Judge of widows" (p.55)--to establish that she has been wronged and will be vindicated. "Fatherless," however, contains an unintended reference to her coming grandchild, and the very next verse in Psalm 68 attacks the Widow's attitude: "God setteth the solitary in families: he bringeth out those which are bound with chains, but the rebellious shall dwell in a dry land."[27] The portion that the Widow appends instead--"Death, and after death the judgement" (p.55)--is also divorced from its original context inside of Christ's sacrifice.[28] Since at this point the Widow refuses to make any sacrifices for the child, she edits out the words that do not suit her, all the while anticipating that the judgement will turn back upon herself and immediately preparing her excuse: "Dear God, she said. The country" (p.55).

That the Widow has recognized the futility of her excuse is evident in the terms she uses when she finally does make the necessary room for the "new herd." She speaks of "Forty years in the wilderness" (p.116), admitting in her metaphor that her time in the desert, like that of Israel, was self-imposed. Up to this point, the Widow has lived yearning for the past, hoarding the heirlooms that connected her to her ancestral past. She exorcizes her fear and prepares for the

future[29] by knitting a baby's singlet, adding her own memento to the accumulated memories. Her use of the word "children" (p.119) implies that she is making room for more than one child. Her questions, "what shall I say? What must I do?" (p.124) not only echo the words of Nicodemus, but also point to the fading of her blame-assigning language. She occasionally reverts back to it--"If there's trouble... it won't be of my making" (p.130)--yet in the end she silences Angel's nagging and acknowledges the necessity of stepping beyond past strictures.

Ara too recovers a biblical language as a basis for her prophecy. When Ara finally does speak her prophecy--"Everything shall live where the river comes, she said **out loud**" (p.114)--she heralds her own renewal as much as the renewal of the community. Not everything lives. The townspeople, living at the edge of the river are not receptive to renewal. Neither is Greta. The power of language is such that Ara's bones, not Greta's, are enlivened. Ara sheds any connection that her name may have had to 'arid.' Her appropriation of the words of Ezekiel[30] reveal a movement away from the attitude of Jonah who was eventually willing to prophesy disaster, but unwilling to prophesy life.

The words of Ezekiel also reveal Ara's ability to let the imagination act upon the seeming wasteland. Instead of

taking the landscape as it has been given to her, she transforms it in vision. Ara actually sets herself against the witnessed destruction, prophesies against the evidence. Her consequent willingness, in Part Five, to drive a team of horses suggests a growing mastery, not only of the animals, but also of self. More immediately upon her prophecy, she questions her early hierarchy of power; she sees a 'lower-case' coyote, and, without dismissing the "big Coyote," begins to comprehend how the landscape can magnify his kind of fear-inspiring language. Ara still hears his final words, but by subjecting the god of the place to her prophetic racial memory, she moves out from under his domineering speeches.

It is not just Ara's God that is "only a step from the Indian's Coyote" (p.77); Watson associates Jahweh with "thundering" and with "darkness" (p.20), words that are part of Coyote's vocabulary and essence. In hearing thunder, Ara hears Coyote's voice (p.35-36). Watson does not need to distort the Old Testament but merely fixes upon those portions which describe Jahweh in terms of darkness and thunder,[31] those portions which approach natural religion.

But when Coyote says "Happy are the dead" (p.115) to Ara at the beginning of Part 5, his power depends more than ever on distortion, since the congruent scripture in Jeremiah says that exile is worse than death.[32] Coyote's final words

contain echoes of Psalm 40, substituting "soft ground" (p.134) for "rock,"[33] and of Psalms 8 where God has "put all things under his feet."[34] The birth of the literal child heralds the birth of a community into which even Coyote is bound. The sexual fusion of James and Lenchen is the precursor of the fusion of people into a community where words are related to the things that people do for one another--the child's name not only carries the connotations of its Latin root, but also speaks of what the other Felix did for Lenchen. Even Coyote announces how people are related to one another and how the forces of separation are defeated in his last Messianic prophecy.[35]

And yet the birth of community and communication in the **wordless** Word suggests a deep uneasiness about art and language. Language alone is not the answer. Watson does not deny her modernist ancestor, T.S. Eliot, but moves beyond his literary denial of life. Eliot returns to the ascetic traditions of Augustine or even Buddha, and takes only the dry bones from Ezekiel. His Fisher-King fishes "with an arid plain behind"[36] him, much like Mrs. Potter. Watson, on the other hand, transforms both Mrs. Potter and Eliot into welling literary and ancestral sources, so that the new fisher, Felix, stands with his community at the intersection of word and world.[37]

But on the level of myth, fusion does not really take place. Watson does not set the two mythic traditons on equal terms as Barbara Godard implies.[38] Watson transforms Coyote into the beginnings of the New Testament God. Monkman explains this by saying that Coyote always was just a "meddler,"[39] Putzel by saying that in the Amerindian tradition Coyote often matures and that here he is allowed "a transformation he never quite made in the Thompson tales."[40] It would be more accurate to say that Coyote is **dragged** into a new context by the settlers, specifically by Ara. By recognizing Coyote's changing dramatic role in the text, it becomes more difficult to simply equate the author with her metonymic Trickster, as George Bowering does.[41] It also becomes difficult to equate Old Testament Jahweh/Coyote with the Messiah/Culture Hero.

Watson also differentiates and separates white and Amerindian cultures, by leaving behind Coyote and other forms of "primitive" thinking. The myth of Coyote is congenial to her inherited myths precisely because it is a myth about the growth of self-knowledge and responsibility. It is not by chance that in Amerindian tales the same person is often the Trickster and Culture-Hero.[42] But transforming Coyote into a messiah is certainly an imposition upon Amerindian myth. The novel that we have from Watson shows that she is not as tentative or as qualified in her

appropriation of an alien tradition as Bowering claims.[43] Watson recklessly transforms Coyote into the Messiah, and native myth into white.

Coyote is allowed an identity, but only for a time. Watson eventually uses the fear and repression that she finds in an Amerindian figure to redeem her 'white' myth. Even the Amerindian commonplace of the owl's cry heralding death is transformed when Felix becomes an owl, shedding his body to witness the new Nativity (p.126). Watson finally does do violence to Amerindian Coyote in her modernist attempt to fuse two mythical traditions that have little in common.

[1] "What I'm Going to Do," p.15.

[2] Sheila Watson, The Double Hook, (Toronto: McLelland and Stewart, 1959), p.19. All further references to this work will be made within the text by page number.

[3] Radin, p.126, 168.

[4] See Radin or James Teit, Traditions of the Thompson River Indians of British Columbia, (1898; rpt. New York: Kraus Reprint Co., 1969).

[5] Stephen Putzel, "Under Coyote's Eye: Indian Tales in Sheila Watson's The Double Hook," Canadian Literature, 102 (Autumn 1984), 7-16.

[6] "Thy terribleness hath decieved thee and the pride of thine heart, O thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, that holdest the height of the hill: though thou shouldest make thy nest as high as the eagle's, I will bring thee down from thence, saith the Lord." Jeremiah 49:16, Bible, King James Version.

[7] Isaiah 42:19.

[8] Song of Solomon 2:6.

[9] "And the loftiness of man shall be bowed down... they shall go into the holes of the rocks and into the caves of the earth, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his majesty, when he arises to shake terribly the earth." Isaiah 2:17-19. "And they shall come, and shall rest all of them in the desolate valleys, and in the holes of the rocks and upon all thorns, and upon

all bushes.... All the land shall become briars and thorns." Isaiah 7:19, 24.

[10] As the German diminutive of 'Helene,' meaning 'light' or 'torch,' the name carries with it the sexual connotations provided by a more famous Helen. The fact that it is a diminutive suggests something of Lenchen's child-like fear.

[11] T.S. Eliot, "The Waste Land," Collected Poems 1909-1962, (London: Faber & Faber, 1974), p.64.

[12] "The Waste Land," p.72.

[13] See Teit, p.21-24. Coyote makes a son and then tricks him into leaving so that he can have his son's wives.

[14] See Matthew 6:12.

[15] Franz Boas, Indianische Sagen von der Nord-Pacifischen Kuste Americas, (Berlin: A. Asher & Co., 1895), p.8. Coyote loses his eyes while throwing them up in the air.

[16] "What I'm Going to Do," p.15.

[17] Barbara Godard, "'Between One Cliche and Another': Language in The Double Hook," Studies in Canadian Literature, 3(Summer 1978), 149-65, as quoted in Bowering, p.165.

[18] Radin, p.164, 168.

[19] Jonah 4:11.

[20] Radin, p.8.

[21] Song of Solomon 2:6,7.

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[22] "The Waste Land," p.65, 71.

[23] Godard, p.166. Pockett says "Business is business. A joke's a joke. A place for everything and everything in its place" (p.96).

[24] Bowering, "Sheila Watson, Trickster," in Bowering, p.107.

[25] Robert Kroetsch, "Death is a Happy Ending: A dialogue in thirteen parts," from Figures in a Ground, eds. Diane Bessai and David Jackel, (Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1978), p.208.

[26] See James 3.

[27] Psalms 68:6.

[28] Hebrews 9:26-28 reads "...he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgement: So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many..."

[29] The literal German meaning of 'Wagner' is 'wagonner,' while Heinrich means 'home ruler.' As such, the fact that the Widow does not drive her wagon in the end (p.124,128) suggests that she is allowing others to take over her ruling position. A more interesting connotation is provided by the syllable 'wag,' which is German for 'dare.' 'Wagner', therefore, becomes 'one who dares'--a name into which the the Widow and her children grow.

[30] See Ezekiel 17:11-12, 37:4-7, 47:9,

[31] See Deuteronomy 4:11-12, 5:22-23. Psalms 18:9-13, 97:2. 1 Kings 8:12. In an interesting Shuswap parallel, Coyote tries to take the place of the sun, but fails. See Boas, Indianische Sagen, p.5.

[32] "Weep not for the dead, neither bemoan him: but weep for him that goeth away: for he shall return no more, nor see his native country." Jeremiah 22:10.

[33] "He brought me up... out of the miry clay and set my feet on the rock." Psalm 40:2. Watson's ending retains the threat of sinking.

[34] "Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength... Thou hast put all things under his feet." Psalms 8:2,6.

[35] "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light... for unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder." Isaiah 9:2,6.

[36] "The Waste Land," p.79.

[37] Watson does not give preference to either language or act is because she has been seeking fusion of the two all along. The omnipresent metaphors in her prose involve fusion as well--of language and thing. And the fusion of poetry and prose that almost every critic has noted is again part of this same enterprise. The title of the novel itself enforces the dualities even as it insists on oneness.

[38] Godard, p.165.

[39] Monkman, p.68.

[40] Putzel, p.15.

[41] Bowering, p.189.

[42] See Franz Boas, "Introduction," in Teit, p.4.

[43] Bowering, p.105.

Chapter Two

Trickster and Shaman:
Self and Ancestor in Winter in the Blood

No less than the characters in The Double Hook, James Welch's nameless Blackfoot narrator is separated from any meaningful form of community. When he says, on the first page of Winter in the Blood, "the Earthboys were gone,"[1] he means not only that the people who farmed his mother's acreage before him have disappeared, but also that he himself has lost the vital connections to his predecessors and to the sun-burnt earth around him. Shortly thereafter, the narrator's "homecoming" makes it obvious that he is isolated in even more immediately painful ways:

> Coming home to a mother and an old lady who was my grandmother. And the girl who was thought to be my wife. But she didn't really count. For that matter none of them counted; not one meant anything to me. And for no reason. I felt no hatred, no love, no guilt, no conscience, nothing but a distance that had grown through the years (p.2).

Although he insists that he hardly regrets his distance, he does come home and spends much of the narrative searching the bars of Havre for Agnes, the vanished "wife" who he says doesn't matter. And, although it may initially seem that the disappearance of the Earthboys has little to do with Agnes's disappearance or with the narrator's alienation from his family, the narrative moves in such a way that until the narrator recovers his lost ancestors, he cannot psychically close the distance that keeps him apart even from his own

central self: "But the distance I felt came not from the country or people; it came from within me. I was as distant from myself as a hawk from the moon" (p.2).

Welch's wasteland is less literary than Watson's, growing more directly out of his experience as an Indian in a white world. Welch recognizes that alienation doesn't just happen to whites: "I can remember being in classes and the teacher would say to somebody, 'Now you're an Indian. You have a special relationship to the land--' or whatever and immediately that person would shrink down in his seat."[2]

Welch's wasteland, however, does become literature and is redeemed in artistic terms. The Earthboy cabin is described as "a bare skeleton" (p.1) and the tumbleweeds are "stark as bone" (p.1). Although Winter in the Blood begins in summer, even summer is a formidable foe, ranging from sucking quicksand when the slough is softened with rain water to dessicated wasteland. At the beginning of the novel, there has been "no rain since mid-June" and the earth is "crumbled into powder" (p.14). The beating sun--traditionally the sustainer of life for the non-agricultural Blackfeet,[3] --works, as it does in T.S. Eliot's wasteland, as an indicator of the narrator's spiritual dryness. Like Eliot's first speaker, the narrator at one point blames his condition on the landscape: "It could have been the country, the burnt prairie beneath a blazing sun, the pale

green of the Milk River valley, the milky water of the river, the sagebrush and cottonwoods, the dry, cracked gumbo flats" (p.2). The Indian narrator needs to re-envision the land in order to overcome his alienation.

One of the sources of the narrator's alienation is that his old culture is disappearing, leaving him adrift in a soul-less modern world. He belongs to a "lost generation," much like his prototype Jake Barnes in Hemingway's The Sun Also Rises.[4] Many commentators have noted Welch's indebtedness to Hemingway.[5] Welch's narrator is involved in a "wasteland" quest much like Jake, but if Jake feels lost, how much more so is Welch's narrator, who finds out that he owes his hospital job to the color of his skin rather than to his ability. Whenever the narrator enters the white world, he feels that profound sense of homelessness that attends much cross-cultural experience: "Again I felt that helplessness of being in a world of stalking white men. But those Indians down at Gable's were no bargain either. I was a stranger to both and both had beaten me" (p.120).

The other source of his alienation is his unwillingness to know himself. This ignorance contributes towards Andrew Horton's identification of the narrator with the Amerindian trickster.[6] A. Lavonne Ruoff suggests that the narrator's namelessness is connected to Blackfoot reticence about mentioning their names.[7] But his namelessness may have more

to do with his not-totally-differentiated, child-like state, and with the fact that the all-important task of acquiring a name is in process, as it is in Welch's poem "Toward Dawn:" "Today I search for a name."[8] Understanding the meaning of what people call him is one of the most important tasks of Trickster.[9] In an earlier version of the novel, the narrator says "No wonder I forget my name. Names are unimportant."[10] In Blackfoot custom names are of central importance. The narrator's confusion about his name, made implicit in the published version of the novel, simply means that he has not yet been significantly initiated.

The narrator has not yet been initiated because he is caught between two worlds. He neither approves of the Catholicism of his mother, Teresa, nor does he feel quite comfortable with his grandmother, who still retains the traditional tribal hostilities. Teresa's befriending of a priest who refuses to set foot on the reservation seems to the narrator to be a sell-out of Indian values and the narrator treats Teresa accordingly: "I never expected much from Teresa and I never got it" (p.21). Teresa distances herself from her Blackfoot past by accepting the dominant culture's analysis of the situation: "'That's another thing the matter with these Indians.... They get too damn tricky for their own good'" (p.30). Welch's cross-cultural experiences must have initially spurred a desire to look for

external causes for the narrator's ills. The original title of the novel--"The Only Good Indian"[11] suggests criticism of a white society which holds that "the only good Indian is a dead Indian." Although Teresa is no saint, and does have a bitter streak in her, she often bears the brunt of the narrator's cynicism, occasioned by his inability to make good in the white world.

The narrator feels slightly more at home in the Indian world that his grandmother represents. At the outset of the novel, his memory of the previous night is incomplete--"My right eye was swollen up, but I couldn't remember how or why" (p.2)--and he is unable to remember the details of his father's death: "'Memory fails'" (p.19). But, even though the narrator does not understand why his Blackfoot grandmother should be hostile towards the Cree Agnes, those hostilities call to his mind intimate memories of Agnes (p.22), and, not long afterwards, evoke the old stories of pre-reservation days that his grandmother told him and his brother, Mose. All that the reader hears from the grandmother is an "ai, ai" (p.11) and the squeaking of her rocking chair. But during the narrator's memories, the old woman's past (the narrator's lost culture) begins to come alive; it is in these memories that the possibility of overcoming his alienation exists. In order to give up being servant to the memory of death, he must remember the source

of his connection to the place and to the living.

Still, those early memories have very little effect in releasing the narrator out of his isolation from self and community. He still lacks "significant initiation,"[12] a lack which Mircea Eliade says is a hallmark of the modern world. Without initiation, the narrator cannot appropriate the sacred myths that informed his ancestors and gave them a place in the world. By the end of Part One of the novel, the narrator's consciousness of his Indian past only expresses itself in negative ways, allowing him to feel "vaguely satisfied" (p.59) when he rips up the priest's letter to Teresa, allowing the narrator to continue to project his own unresolved conflicts onto his mother, Teresa.

At the root of the narrator's self-justifying bitterness is an immediate ancestor, his dead father, First Raise. Not only was the dead father the first to raise the narrator, but the father still exerts a powerful original influence over him. He blames his father's aimlessness, his father's always being "in transit" (p.21) on Teresa, thereby creating an escape for himself. If First Raise has had to repeatedly leave home because of Teresa's bitterness, why shouldn't the narrator try a similar escape? His history is a repetition of the father's circling, again and again drifting from home before the ties that bind draw him back again and again. As

acerbic and self-righteous as she is when she speaks, Teresa is also astute enough to utter the connection between father and son: "You must have mixed him up with yourself" (p.18).

The unresolvedness of First Raise's story--was he pointed home or away from home when they found him in the snowdrift?--helps to keep the narrator from resolving his own familial conflicts. Welch uses the narrator's doubt to imply that Teresa deludes herself into thinking that First Raise was on his way home, but Welch will not divulge what actually happened. As well, First Raise neither carried out his romantic dream of hunting elk in Glacier National Park, nor did he stay home to raise his sons. Since the narrator imitates his father, the narrator cannot close First Raise's story and is haunted by the spectre of his father's unresolved thirsts. For much of the novel the narrator is, in effect, possessed by the restless soul of his father: the narrator is unable to integrate those parts of First Raise's soul that would help him gain a psychic wholeness and is unable to release the parts that led First Raise towards psychic disintegration.

Lame Bull, who marries Teresa near the beginning of the novel and who tells Beany that he is "trying to be a good father" (p.76), presents the narrator with a possible adoptive parent, a possible release from the first father. As his name implies, Lame Bull is squat and powerful, and

proves to be crafty as well, more than a match for the less wilful Indians that he so despises. The first part of his name implies that he, no less than the narrator, has been hamstrung by his cultural situation. The narrator's lame leg suggests an Oedipal conflict, and connects the "accident" of his spiritual impotence to the culturally-determined "accident" that emasculates Hemingway's Jake Barnes. Lame Bull suggests to the narrator a way of becoming his mature self by assuming responsibility for what he can control--his own actions.[13] Although Lame Bull gets drunk, he never lets alchohol interfere with his farming. By sheer obstinacy and productive anger, he avoids the ditches that seduced the dreaming philosopher First Raise.

Lame Bull is nevertheless incapable of becoming the narrator's second father because he makes Indians to blame by making himself white and consequently better than his kinsmen. The first father defines the child's sense of "place," a sense which Lame Bull violates. Lame Bull is Lame Bull because he has lost any sense of a sacred landscape; he only sees the land in terms of self-interest: "'Looks pretty good, huh?' Lame Bull was referring to the rain and the effect it would have on the new growth of alfalfa" (p.39). Lame Bull is a development of the title character of Welch's poem "The Wrath of Lester Lame Bull," where Lame Bull's anger against the hostile wilderness

becomes laughable. In the novel, Lame Bull is much more complex. The narrator hates to admit that despite Lame Bull's short-comings, Lame Bull is nevertheless a potent character: "The summer nights came alive in the bedroom" (p.23). In order to keep what is valuable in First Raise, the narrator for a time denies kinship to Lame Bull (p.56). Whatever aimlessness First Raise has left the narrator with, at least he has also left him with a respect for a sacred land. Even though First Raise seems to have betrayed the dream of recovering lost freedom by hunting for elk, the dream still forms a narrative instant of the lost father's link to the land.

The lost father is one of those "Earthboys" who have disappeared. And the narrator has lost whatever ancestral languages could allow him to communicate with the animals to help him find his patrimony in the place his father left him. The narrator knows his predicament, although at first he doesn't quite know how to overcome it: "I stopped at an advertisement for a fishing lure that called to fish in their own language. I tore the coupon out. Maybe that was the secret" (p.12). That there are fish in the Milk River who will not bite seems separate from the narrator's main problem until the narrator calls Agnes "a fish for dinner, nothing more" (p.22), and until he remembers that in his grandmother's story the medicine man who prophesied the

coming of white soldiers was called "Fish" (p.35). The hint is that the narrator needs to learn how to talk to animals in the way that a medicine man or shaman does before he can communicate with Agnes, with his father, and with his own truest self.

The character in Winter in the Blood who displays this shamanic ability to talk to the animals and to live in harmony with the land is Yellow Calf. Yellow Calf talks mostly with the deer, but also with other animals. That ability also connects Yellow Calf to the mythic model of Na'pi, the Blackfoot trickster/creator, of whom G.B. Grinnell says "all things he had made understood him when he spoke to them--the birds, the animals and the people."[14] Walter McLintock echoes this original easy communication between people and the animals that the shaman recovers: "At one time animals and men were able to understand each other. We can still talk to animals, just as we do to people, but they now seldom reply, excepting in dreams."[15] Significantly, Mircea Eliade sets Amerindians apart from other archaic societies because among North American Indians these secret languages are not in the hands of the few--everybody shamanizes and the difference between the layman and the shaman is one of degree rather than of quality.[16] Yellow Calf, despite his shamanic ability, is not especially cognizant of the changes that take place over a mere 20

years. He is unaware of First Raise's death and keeps a 1936 calendar on his wall. But this may be due less to ignorance or confusion than to his shamanic faith in the "vital world of the dead"[17] and his inhabiting of mythical rather than historical time. Much later in the novel he says, "To an old dog like myself, the only cycle begins with birth and ends in death" (p.158).

Despite whatever confusion Yellow Calf seems to exhibit, he attends to the roots of the narrator's alienation. At the beginning of the novel's second section, when the narrator feels most dead, when he is even less able to remember the events of the previous night than he was at the beginning of the first section, he goes to visit Yellow Calf. Having ripped up the priest's letter to Teresa (and thereby showed that he is unwilling to acknowledge his relationship to his mother), the narrator feels like a man who has no soul. "Soul loss"[18] is the main psychic disease that the shaman cures; the loss occurs when the ancestors aren't properly appeased--properly kept and properly released. Of shamanic initiation, Eliade says, "The souls of the ancestors often take a sort of 'possession' of a young man and then initiate him. Resistance is unavailing."[19] The narrator is clearly in this state--he feels distant from his surroundings and yet is possessed by his ancestors. He has lost his father and yet First Raise

lives through the narrator's lifestyle; he feels estranged from his mother and yet Teresa haunts him in his dreams. The narrator may well be unwittingly undergoing the personal crisis that precedes shamanic initiation.[20]

The difference in Yellow Calf, the difference that makes him a successful shaman, is that Yellow Calf "controls his 'spirits.'"[21] Having left home once to flee the U.S. Army with the rest of his Blackfoot band, he knows enough not to leave again. Instead of following the band to the newly-created reservation, he stays on as a provider for Standing Bear's widow, choosing the family and the spirits that chose him. He obfuscates any distinction as to the relative importance of the dead or the living by not revealing whether he means his dead parents and sisters or his adopted wife when he gives his reason for staying in Gros Ventre country: "My people were here" (p.153).

Yellow Calf resolves his crisis by centring himself in the place where he provided food for Standing Bear's widow. The shaman is above all a well-centred person. He may border on neurosis during his crises, but he "cannot become a shaman until he has resolved this crisis."[22] Since he must interpret for others the demands of the ancestors he mediates between what often are opposing forces. To do this he must have recourse to his own centre and to a cosmic "central axis."[23] This access usually takes the form of a

tree, a mountain, or a pole-star--in short, some feature of the landscape beyond man. Yellow Calf's ability to talk to the animals suggests that his centre is in the place where his people wintered for the last time in the old way.

The manner in which the narrator describes a magpie shows that he is not completely alienated from the place he is in and not completely removed from Yellow Calf's shamanic language. Yellow Calf listens to "two magpies argue" (p.70) the same way that he listens to the deer talking; the narrator, meanwhile, employs traditional literary techniques by using a magpie's feet as a simile for his grandmother's hands (p.34), but he progressively gives the magpie human qualities. A magpie squawks when the narrator is unable to catch any fish (p.7), a magpie seems to "stop and jump straight up" (p.29) when Lame Bull punches Raymond Long Knife, and a magpie becomes almost human after Bird and a cow sink into the mud near the end of the novel: "his metallic awk! awk! was almost conversational" (p.172). Behind the reticence of white aesthetics is Welch's Amerindian investing of personality in the non-human world:

> I just thought of this kind of old person, you know, who kind of comes over to see what's going on. So I kind of gave him some human qualities in a sense. I was thinking of him as something more than a bird.[24]

Of these sentient additions Bill Bevis says that Welch keeps "a simple Hemingway sentence," but that he adds "the

surreal or irrational image."[25] Yellow Calf uses the deer to dramatize the narrator's problem for him. The difference between the way that Welch personifies and the way that personification is ordinarily handled is that Welch does not use it **exclusively** as an index into the psyches of his characters. Nor does Welch deanthromorphize as a realist writer would. The magpies' argument and conversation suggest hidden springs in another world because they often have no direct connection with the narrator's state of mind.

The beginnings of the narrator's recourse to another world follows the shamanic pattern of ecstatic vision and traditional instruction in the "mythology and genealogy of the clan"[26] set down by Mircea Eliade: first the narrator has an alchohol-induced dream in which he recognizes the mythic identities of several of the people around him, and then Yellow Calf performs the tutelary function. How much the narrator understands of his own dream is not clear. Because of his lost language, the narrator's mouth in the dream is "hollow and dry" (p.52); but he is not as independent and distant from others as he imagines in his waking life. He is pursued by "ghosts.... wanted men with ape faces" (p.52) who abuse the women in the dream--the "rainbow trout" girl (p.52), Teresa, and a barmaid--and who perform an operation which causes the narrator's guts to spill out of his mouth. This ability to envision his own

death is something that is peculiar to the shaman,[27] but even more importantly, the narrator becomes, in his dream, one of the abusive wanted men with Teresa hanging upside down from his belt. The narrator is forced, momentarily, to see Teresa as a victim as much as a victimizer, and as a life-giver--with the pet duck, Amos, waddling out from between her legs--as much as the murderer of Amos. The dream ends with the narrator about, but unable, to remember the death of his brother Mose. Na'pi, the Blackfoot trickster, implies that it often takes dreams to bring forth the contents necessary for consciousness: "Something will come to you in your dreams... That is how the first people got through the world, by the power of their dreams."[28] To bring these unconscious recognitions into consciousness is difficult, and the task falls to Yellow Calf to give the narrator a rhetorical education into the nature of the narrator's illness before Yellow Calf can begin the specifically shamanic education.

During the narrator's first visit to Yellow Calf, Yellow Calf begins with self-directed ironies that force the narrator into self-examination: "It's easier to keep it sparse than to feel the sorrow of possessions" (p.66), Yellow Calf says, before insisting that he, though blind, needs a car. The crux--"one wouldn't have to depend on others" (p.66)--has little to do with possessions per se,

but explores the narrator's desire to distance himself from others, and alerts the reader to the narrator's ominous direction when he jumps at the chance of getting a free car from the airplane man. Similarly, by playing along with the narrator's sexual innuendoes before saying "Who's alone? The deer come... I can understand most of them" (p.67), Yellow Calf explores the narrator's exclusive reliance on sex as a relational bond. The episode with Malvina exposes this just as well: the narrator has no idea how he came into bed with her because when his cock functions, his eyes don't. Malvina's room, a perfumed cocoon edged with the faint smell of whiskey, suggests a similar dichotomy in her. And the narrator's surprise at her rejection of his advances in the morning shows that he still has not learned to see with his whole being or to be related by more than his phallus.

Yellow Calf uses the deer to expose the narrator's inner dichotomy and unwillingness to take responsibility for his present life. Yellow Calf says that the deer talk mostly "about the days gone by. They talk a lot about that. They are not happy.... The earth is cockeyed" (p.68). Yellow Calf's thrice-repeated pun not only fuses traditional images for unreason (the phallus) and reason (the eye), but it also opens the heart of the narrator's problem: the narrator has been alternately confusing his cock and his eye with his

central self. Yellow Calf, even more than First Raise, knows the importance of the land in relation to self. The earth is "cockeyed" and in fundamental opposition to mind, as Yellow Calf says, but Yellow Calf is far from mourning that. He talks with the animals and lives in rhythm with the land. But the narrator does not want to concede Yellow Calf's axiom--"Don't you see? If I believe you, then the world is cockeyed'" (p.69)--because if he admits that the landscape is beyond his control, then he must begin to take responsibility for that which **is** under his control.

The running controversy about the narrator's age--Lame Bull and a storekeeper refer to the narrator as a child even while the narrator insists that he is thirty-two--calls to mind not only the Amerindian trickster tradition, wherein the trickster harbours child-like hungers and audacious demands in the body of an old man or animal, but also the **Bildungsroman** tradition, wherein the hero's adolescence is gradually transformed into maturity. Paul Radin's description of the trickster sounds like an index to the narrator's personality: "living in his unconscious, mentally a child," resistant "to attaining sexual maturity.... his hungers, his sex, his wandering, these appertain neither to gods nor to man."[29]

In Winter in the Blood the narrator's wanderings seem in large part to be guided by his bodily hungers. Although he

goes to Malta and Havre searching for Agnes and his stolen possessions, he finds himself in bed with the barmaid, Malvina, and Marlene respectively--in each case unable to remember how he got there. This sexual hunger, along with the thirst that keeps driving him to bars, makes it very difficult for him to become civilized, to live peaceably in any community. As Radin soberly puts it, "he cannot himself reduce his large and amorphous genitals to their normal human size."[30]

But the narrator is not totally undifferentiated. The true trickster in the novel is the airplane man, whom we meet in the first extended bar scene before the narrator's meeting with Yellow Calf. Like the narrator, the airplane man is on the run from home, but the airplane man is a much darker version of the same archetype--almost the narrator's shadow. His seemingly hilarious inability to recognize the barmaid, before the narrator, days later, uncovers the incest--"she claimed she was your daughter's sister" (p.101)--suggests both the unconscious stupidity of the trickster and the slyness of one who takes refuge in chaos. Karl Kerenyi's connection between the "stupid phallus" and the "sly phallus"[31] is evident in the airplane man's "good old-fashioned sentiment" (p.96). Ostensibly the airplane man cannot see the contradiction between sexually abusing his daughter and buying her a teddy-bear; in truth, he

simply pretends not to see. His "sentiments" are archaic indeed, reaching back into the primeval sexual darkness where male and female, but little else, has been differentiated.

For the trickster, even laughter and pain are never far removed from one another,[32] and the narrator, when he wanders with the airplane man, comes to face that uneasy juxtaposition; he knows about the pain and sees the other dimension on a urinal wall: "the joke's in your hand" (p.92). The airplane man's "escape" from his wife seems innocuous at first: "do I look like the sort who would run out on a wife and two beautiful daughters?" (p.45) But there are unexplained violent undercurrents that add a sharp edge to his humour--he mentions that his wife is dead and the barmaid says "Our cat smothered my baby sister. He lay on her face one night and she couldn't breathe" (p.49).

Paul Radin calls the trickster the earliest figure for God and man.[33] The airplane man functions to show the narrator one possible mythical self, and the chaos that the airplane man causes in the bar scene may be the "retrogression to Chaos"[34] that precedes creation, the symbolic death that heralds the initiate's resurrection to a new mode of being. Even before the narrator matures and consciously rejects the airplane man as an inaccurate image of himself, he recognizes the airplane man as trickster in

dream-time: "the man who had torn up his airplane ticket... was now rolling in the manure of the corral, from time to time washing his great pecker in a tub of water" (p.52). Once the narrator begins to see the extent of the airplane man's desire for isolation ("Alone--that's the beauty of it" p.94) the narrator begins to be differentiated from his shadow and needs a proper mirror for himself:

> I had had enough of myself. I wanted to lose myself, to ditch these clothes, to outrun this burning sun, to stand beneath the clouds and have my shadow erased, myself along with it.... I walked down the street, out past the car lots, the slaughterhouse, away from Havre. There were no mirrors anywhere (p.125).

The longing for annihilation in these, the last lines of Part 2, is belied by the narrator's motion. He immediately returns to the ranch because the form of initiation that Eliade talks about cannot happen without community; the narrator's true "Havre" lies among his kin, living and dead. Welch probably cut "Home... was no longer a sanctuary"[35] from the finished version of the novel because for the narrator home does become a sanctuary, though never a womb. Home provides a place where the narrator can exorcize his most troublesome personal ghost before he goes on to find the community of the ancestors. The narrator cannot make sense of, cannot even bring himself to remember, the death of his older brother Mose until he returns home in Part 3 of the novel to find that his grandmother has died.

Even when the grandmother's death jogs the narrator's memory, he alternately blames winter, his horse, the spinster cow, and himself for Mose's death. The alien aspect of the landscape is most in evidence during winter, especially during "that winter" when the narrator and Mose were up against something much bigger than themselves. From his grandmother's stories, the narrator knows that after the disappearance of the buffalo, winter kept the Blackfeet on the edge of starvation and drove them over the brink in 1883-84. Winter's whiteness also connected it (for the Blackfoot) to the white man and to the starvation enforced by the whites (who drove cows across one of the Blackfoot reservations while the natives starved).[36] The reason for the narrator's inability to speak animal languages may be his inability to accept the alien aspect of the landscape as it manifests itself in Mose's death. However, the reduction of the narrator's vocabulary to a repetition of "what use" (p.146) means that the narrator is accommodating himself to the inarticulate landscape: "no one answered, not the body in the road, not the hawk in the sky or the beetle in the earth" (p.147). In the words of the title, winter enters the narrator's blood.

The narrator has also blamed Bird, his cow horse for taking him away from Mose's side during the crucial moments on the highway. The first real flowering of Blackfoot

culture occurred when the tribe acquired horses and became feared raiders on the plains. Despite carefully designating Bird's age at 23 (p.71-2) Welch describes Bird as "an old war pony" (p.63). Bird's instinctual betrayal parallels the way that the horse betrayed the Blackfeet into believing in their own invincibility. The narrator eventually frames an imaginative narrative around Bird, describing Bird's castration and subsequent breaking as the beginnings of Bird's "knowledge of death" (p.145). In this way, the narrator is able to exonerate Bird: "You reacted as they trained you" (p.146).

But the narrator is not able to create the narrative about Bird until his grandmother dies because, until then, he cannot see the necessity for death. Early in the novel Teresa tells the narrator "your grandmother deserves to be here more than your wife" (p.22). The narrator's seeming agreement is betrayed immediately by his memories of Agnes and more profoundly later on by his attempt to bring Agnes back. The tone-setting account of a hunt in Sports Afield also emphasizes the necessity of natural succession:

> I reread the one about three men in Africa who tracked a man-eating lion for four days from the scene of his latest kill-- a pregnant black woman. They managed to save the baby, who, they were surprised to learn, would one day be king of the tribe. They tracked the lion's spoor until the fourth day, when they found that he'd been tracking them all along. They were going in a giant four-day circle. It was very dangerous, said McLeod, a Pepsi dealer from Atlanta, Georgia. They killed the lion that night as he tried to rip a hole in their tent.

(p.12)

The complete memory of Mose's death returns just after the narrator digs his grandmother's grave. It returns at that moment because the narrator then both understands why his grandmother must die and sees the nature of his own succession.

The memory of Mose's death at the end of Part Three is still not enough, however, to allow him to forgive the cow or to absolve the narrator of the guilt he feels at his own role in that scene. The reader, knowing that the narrator was only twelve years old, forgives him more readily. But the use of conditionals in the narration of the scene ("I couldn't stop.... I couldn't raise his head.... I couldn't have seen it" p.142) implies that the narrator cannot--he has never accepted his own powerlessness. Requisite to his self-forgiveness is a more creative understanding of his own helpless position.

The understanding comes by means of further education in the person of Yellow Calf and by means of a battle to pull a cow out of a slough. Yellow Calf begins the specifically shamanic education during the narrator's second visit by reminding the narrator that even shamans do not have final power over death: when the narrator says "I thought the animals were your friends," Yellow Calf replies that "Rattlesnakes are best left alone" (p.150).

Yellow Calf also tells the narrator the old stories of pre-reservation days. Because Yellow Calf's stories go beyond and do not exactly match the grandmother's accounts, they serve to prod the narrator's unconscious knowledge of Yellow Calf's relationship to him. The grandmother's story ended with the Blackfeet "being driven 'like cows' to the reservation" (p.157) while she stayed among the Gros Ventre. Yellow Calf's story continues on into the starvation winter that followed. By letting the narrator know that, he, Yellow Calf, was also Blackfoot and that he too stayed among the Gros Ventre, Yellow Calf gives the narrator the information with which to deduce the narrator's genealogy.

Yellow Calf even helps to "place" the narrator in the past. He brings back an ancestral concept not for its own sake, but to show the narrator a way of understanding his own helplessness. A long discussion revolves around the bad medicine that almost caused the grandmother's starvation in the pre-reservation days and the narrator begins to imaginatively place himself in the Blackfoot world-view: "I tried to understand the medicine, the power that directed the people to single out a young woman, to leave her to fend for herself in the middle of a cruel winter" (p.155). The unfairness of making her the tribal scapegoat dramatizes for the narrator the way he has made his mother the scapegoat for First Raise's death and hints at the way he blames women

in general for the unlucky "cow" who caused Mose's death. His grandmother's exile stirs him out of the self-pity of his own isolation: "How could she survive alone?" (p.156) And the narrator takes Yellow Calf as a mythical model because he recognizes that Yellow Calf did not use "bad medicine" to justify inaction or isolation.

The Blackfeet used their understanding of "bad medicine" to ostracize the grandmother; Yellow Calf uses this ostracision to re-define the nature of Blackfoot heroism by crossing the distances between himself and the narrator's grandmother. Already in his poetry, Welch dismissed the traditional heroism: in "Christmas Comes to Moccasin Flat" the warriors are "face down in wine sleep"[37] and, in "Blackfeet, Blood and Piegan Hunters," Welch wants to

> Let glory go the way of all sad things
> Children need a myth that tells them be alive,
> forget the hair that made you Blood.[38]

Made obselete by the coming of the white man, tribal jealousies seem dated and humorous in the narrator's grandmother. And in Yellow Calf, Welch opens up new possibilities for a heroism which is not directed against other human beings the way that the older heroism was. His decision to support the dead Standing Bear's wife (the narrator's grandmother) after the tribe deserts her is based upon his valuation of home above bad medicine. His interpretation of the tribal ills--"we were punished for

having left home" (p.153)--may be illusory, but it allows him to maintain a long obedience in his new role as provider.

A. Lavonne Ruoff has rightly identified Yellow Calf with the mythical model of the "creator-trickster" or "trickster-holy man"[39] called Na'pi (Old Man) by the Blackfeet. To begin with, Yellow Calf is not introduced immediately by name to the reader, but as "the old man" (p.64). The old man's ambivalence about his name--"I'm called many things but that one will do" (p.64)--and the narrator's uneasiness--"How can I be sure you aren't all the way dead and are only playing games" (p.67)--imply a dimension to Yellow Calf that isn't logically explicable. Trickster is humanized in the context of native culture in a way that he is not in Watson because of the religious and literary roles that she forces him into. Welch imitates Blackfoot myth in making his trickster a creator.

The exaggerated news of Yellow Calf's death also parallels the Blackfoot myths explaining Na'pi's disappearance. G.B. Grinnell mentions two instances of these myths: the Blackfeet tell that Na'pi stopped to rest, turned to rock, and "after he had rested, he went on northward."[40] The rocks remain as eternal landscape, but Na'pi moves along separately from them. The Blackfeet also tell that glacial marks were made by Na'pi sliding,[41] thus

connecting Na'pi to that other eternal thing, winter. In Welch's version of the myth, Yellow Calf is similarly linked to the timeless winter--his heroism springs out of a terrible winter and it was during winter that First Raise took the narrator to see Yellow Calf to reaffirm the unspoken blood connection.

But Yellow Calf is not as ambiguous as Na'pi, and as shaman, hearkens back more to the creative side of Na'pi. He is, in effect, the trickster matured into shaman, not, as in Watson, into Christian Messiah. Trickster still retains his cunning, but uses it for purposes other than self-gratification. He uses it to provide meat for a deserted woman and then to educate the narrator in the narrator's illness. His last joke--the decision not to reveal that he is the narrator's grandfather--turns, like the early trickster jokes, against himself.

But it is a life-serving joke for the narrator; by not telling the narrator the narrator's genealogy, Yellow Calf submits to the possibility that his devotion to the grandmother could go unrecognized. Even during most of their second meeting, the narrator still believes that Yellow Calf maintains a "distance" (p.151). The narrator does eventually, after Bird farts, make the connection, but by putting the onus of making connections on the narrator, Yellow Calf allows the narrator to move from intitiate to

man, from pupil to shaman.

There is one irony, however, that the narrator does not completely understand. Yellow Calf, when he hears of the grandmother's death, makes oblique reference to the most celebrated Blackfoot myth, the myth of Star Boy. Instead of answering the narrator's question about his grandmother, "Why did she stay?", Yellow Calf draws the icon of the myth: "He busied himself scraping a star in the tough skin of earth. He drew a circle around it and made marks around it as a child draws the sun. Then he scraped it away with the end of his stick and raised his face to the thickening wind" (p.154). Star Boy or False Morning Star starts off as Scar-face, a young man who desires a beautiful girl, but who must lose his scar in order to get the girl. He goes to the house of the Sun and after some testing he is made whole--among other things he becomes the shaman who brings the Sun Dance to the Blackfeet.[42] There is more than a hint that Yellow Calf sees his life as an attempted imitation of that myth, and that with her "star quilt" (p.34), the grandmother saw it as well.

The narrator may not consciously know the Star Boy myth, but he does know it in the **person** of Yellow Calf. He does know what Yellow Calf did and attempts to do the same with the Cree Agnes. Adoption of women from other tribes, Grinnell tells us, was possible among the Blackfeet.[43] The

narrator imitates Yellow Calf in forgoing the traditional right of a Blackfoot male to mutilate an unfaithful wife.[44] And Yellow Calf imitates the actions of Na'pi, who started the Blackfeet living in families.[45] Na'pi too is a matured trickster. It was Na'pi who armed the Blackfeet so that they could hunt the buffalo, and while it is true that Na'pi brought about death, his reason is less suggestive of a shell or a stick game than of a cosmic rhetorical education: "that they may always be sorry for each other."[46] The Blackfoot writer thus proves to be "sorry" as well for his Trickster/Culture Hero in a way that the non-Indian Watson cannot be.

The discovery of compassion in mortality is what happens also in Bird's fart; it spurs the recognition of relatedness. Just as Na'pi uses the buffalo chip (whether it sinks or floats) as an index to human mortality, Welch uses Bird's fart, "that one instance of corruption" (p.158), to bring to seed Yellow Calf's shamanizing and to awaken the ancestors in the narrator: "we shared this secret in the presence of ghosts.... there were others, so many others" (p.159).[47]

The narrator finally realizes his relatedness to Agnes and decides to pursue her. Although Ruoff claims that Agnes would be completely inadequate as a wife,[48] the burden of Yellow Calf's story is that the hunter's faithfulness

matters more than the merits of the grandmother. As in his poem "You Gone, The King Dead," Welch uses the male-female relationship as harbinger of the male's dependent state. In the poem the woman signals the end of the speaker: "lifts a finger to my brain/ signals I am dead."[49] But Yellow Calf provides a story that the immature narrator can appropriate for his dilemma. Yellow Calf never completely closed the distance between himself and the narrator's grandmother, never tamed the woman, but he did venture, again and again to cross the distance. In fact, the distance from Agnes is necessary to allow the narrator to forget his phallus for a moment: "her black eyes... held the promise of warm things, of a spirit that went beyond her miserable life of drinking and screwing and men like me" (p.113). And aesthetic distance is necessary for consciousness and for artistic creation. A Blackfoot proverb suggests as much: "Which is best the heart or the brain? The brain is. The heart often lies, the brain never."[50]

The only place that the distance is closed for Yellow Calf is in the narrator. The narrator, the seed of both Yellow Calf and the grandmother, fuses the two of them. Similarly, the narrator's distance from Agnes cannot be closed by one person subsuming the other. Yellow Calf's situation (among the Gros Ventre but not of them, near the grandmother but not her husband) makes sense of the

narrator's feeling that he exists between two worlds. Complete reconciliation is not yet possible--what is needed is a myth that allows for both aesthetic distance and for the occasional crossing over into the "other" world.

To remain in the "other" world would be to break all illusions in a way that Welch implies is impossible. It is not even a real woman to whom the narrator wants to return--he has already transformed her into a character in a book: "the memory was more real than the experience" (p.22). Since memory involves the image-making factor, Agnes is closer to Jung's anima for the narrator than to a real woman: "every mother and every beloved is forced to become the carrier and embodiment of the omnipresent and ageless image which corresponds to the deepest reality in man. It is his own, this perilous image of Woman... she is the solace for the bitterness of life. Simultaneously, she is the great illusionist."[51]

Teresa, on the other hand, never allows for complacent image-making because, unlike Agnes, she has not disappeared. Though Amos waddles out from between her legs in the narrator's dream, she also reminds the narrator that she is the one who had the nerve to kill Amos for supper. She, like Lame Bull, pays homage for the moment to white culture; unlike Lame Bull, however, she is rarely undercut by the narrative. She remains powerful throughout. The narrator

needs both the unassimilable mother and Agnes. The initials of the other women that the narrator sleeps with (Malvina, Marlene, the barmaid from Malta) all suggest the narrator's obsession with mother. Agnes, since she belongs to another tribe, allows the narrator a way past the strictures of the enclosing mother. Agnes may even be one of the missing Earthboys: all the Earthboys have died "except for a daughter who had married a man from Lodgepole. She could be anywhere" (p.1). The connection is certainly tenuous, but is hinted at structurally because the Earthboy woman goes missing just before word of Agnes's desertion comes.

The tension between Teresa and Agnes is the tension between realism and romance, between the chaotic contingent world and the created artwork that Welch alludes to in the variant stories about First Raise and in the novel's epigraph:

> Bones should never tell a story
> to a bad beginner. I ride
> romantic to these words,
> those foolish claims that he
> was better than dirt, or rain
> that bleached his cabin
> white as bone. Scattered in the wind
> Earthboy calls me from my dream
> Dirt is where the dreams must end.

The romantic and the dirty are always double-edged for Welch--the dirt that the narrator "ends" in as he tries to pull the cow and old Bird out of the slough, drives home the greediness of the landscape; but the incident also contains

images of birth.

Yellow Calf's education allows the narrator to reclaim the ancestors, the earthboys, and it is only after the education that the narrator immerses himself in the earth. Early on in the novel, the narrator wrestles an unweaned calf from her mother, but he himself is not weaned until he actually sinks into the earth. At the moment that the narrator curses the land it becomes important and he is most alive--as if the only thing that the land will not repay is apathy. The passionate involvement in the death-dealing land is finally what drives into the narrator the realization that he cannot stand alone, a realization that comes even as he curses his kinsmen: "Goddamn Ferdinand Horn... together we could have gotten this damn cow out" (p.169).

The narrator equates the cow with the "wild-eyed spinster" that caused Mose's death: "I had seen her before, the image of catastrophe, the same hateful eye, the long curving horns" (p.166). Though he curses her several times, his struggle to save her means that he has forgiven her. In forgiving her, he forgives his mother whom has blamed for "killing" his father, and so makes it possible to forgive the wild Cree girl.

In the struggle to save the cow, the narrator feels with

his body what his mind has already understood--that death is necessary--"the pressure of the rope against my thigh felt right.... It was all so smooth and natural I didn't notice that Bird had begun to slip in the rain-slick dirt" (p.171). The narrator literally becomes an Earthboy, is transformed, both in the figurative death and in telling the story as the three unquoted lines preceeding Welch's epigraph (from the poem "Riding the Earthboy 40") indicate:

Earthboy farmed this land
and farmed the sky with words
The dirt is dead. Gone to seed.[52]

The promise inherent in "Gone to seed" is a far cry from Malvina's repetition of "that was a long time ago" (p.79,81).

Dirt, in the form of Bird's fart, also provides the narrator with his visionary insight. Welch prepares for this by having the narrator take "a leak" (p.1) in the opening sentence of the novel and by similarly reducing the grandmother just before the narrator tells her triumphant story: "the girl... would have laughed to see my mother hold the tiny body over a bedpan, to hear the small tinkling of an old lady as she sighed with relief" (p.34). The fart allows the narrator to see both the dirty, even alien **reality** of the past and the **romance** of the present; at the moment of the fart, Yellow Calf becomes the fusion of the narrator's wished-for version of the ancestor (the chief

Standing Bear) and the dirty version (Doagie the half-white drifter). Yellow Calf's name, as much as the narrative outcome,[53] connects Winter in the Blood to the mythos of spring--spring is when the buffalo calves are yellow. His name also recalls the Blackfoot myth that explains the existence of the Lost Children (our Pleiades). These children were lost from a Blackfoot camp because they had no yellow calf skins to clothe themselves in and had been taunted by the children of wealthier parents. The consolation for the poor children was that they became stars which are not seen in spring, but come out in autumn.[54] For Yellow Calf there were consolations during the starvation winter of 1883-84, and for the narrator there are consolations for his psychic winter.

It is against the whiteness of winter that the human figure most stands out. The formal choices become very important here. Welch uses winter as a formal background for the deaths of First Raise and Mose, thereby highlighting these two central narrative sections:

> Was it a shoe sticking up, or a hand or just a blue-white lump in the endless skittering whiteness? I had no memory of detail until we dug his grave, yet I was sure we had come upon him first. Winters were timeless and without detail, but I remembered no other faces, no other voices. (p.19)

But the choice is not merely aesthetic--Welch borrows the Indian custom of the winter count, the formal decision made

long ago by the plains artists who told their people's history on the skins of teepees in terms of winters. Against the background of winter, where even a hand or a shoe stands out, how much more the starvation of kin or the death of a father. And against the first-person narrator's distance from those about him, his intimate memories of Mose and First Raise stand out.

Winter in the landscape is gradually revealed as a coldness in the self which keeps other people at a distance. The narrator at one point feels "the kind of peace that comes over one when he is alone" (p.123), but he feels it after he has slapped Marlene several times. What he learns from the story of Yellow Calf's winter, however, makes the title, Winter in the Blood, an index to the old man's warmth of spirit. Although in another poem Welch says that "winter in the blood is one sad thing,"[55] the narrator's early psychic winter becomes an index to his movement into spring as he mourns his grandmother and decides to humanize his pursuit of Agnes.

At the grandmother's funeral in the Epilogue, the narrator is no longer distant. Bill Bevis said to Welch that the movement of white novelists is one of "spiraling outwards from a centre in widening circles." Of Welch's novel he says "the action is spiraling back inwards towards

home to stay there. Sometimes it seems a sort of doom to stay there."[56] The controversy about the aesthetic meaning of the ending[57] may mean that the comic or tragic modes are not expansive enough to include Winter in the Blood. One thing is certain--the narrator does come home, though his homecoming doesn't take the form of a marriage (the ultimate closing of distance). The tentativeness of his relationship to his "wife" leaves a chasm between him and the Star Boy myth; the retrospective ironies are directed by the narrator against himself. By throwing the pouch into the grave, he gestures towards his lost tribal past, but here too there is no grand reclamation of the past. He doesn't dominate the home but stands beside the lately-unacceptable parents.

Teresa and Lame Bull never do see their way back into their Blackfoot heritage and nevertheless remain idiosyncratically alive at the funeral. The way that the narrator draws them there--humble and earthbound--suggests that he is able to recognize their common humanity. The humour in the passage--the gaudy coffin, the grave so short that Lame Bull has to jump on the coffin to get it to fit, Teresa's skinny legs--works to humanize rather than to undercut the actors.

In keeping them as they are, the narrator is able to release whatever tyranny he felt that they had over him; in unwittingly keeping his grandparents' myth he is able to

relocate the centre of self in it; and in keeping the landscape as it is--chaotic, dangerously alive--he is able to accept it as "other" and yet as related to him. No longer does self-pity form the basis for his understanding of the cosmos. He wilfully ignores the ache that Don Kunz calls the narrator's "own personal wounded knee."[58] Having risked his life in the slough, he takes his place among the mourners.

What Welch's ending does, in effect, is to affirm the individual's identity in relation to his ancestors. But Welch as novelist is in much the same position between white and native worlds as is his narrator. The parallels between Welch's novel and The Sun Also Rises suggest that Welch relies on Hemingway's analysis of the modern wasteland. Stylistically, Welch's clipped dialogue, making more use of implication than of statement, owes a lot to Hemingway. The anarchy of the bar scenes, particularly where the airplane man is concerned, likewise owes much to the frivolity of Hemingway characters like Mike Campbell. Desirability and promiscuity connect Brett Ashley to Agnes, but the most important parallel is between Jake Barnes and Welch's narrator.

Welch's narrator, as psychically impotent as Jake is a literal steer, does not rest in the self-pity that Jake's cynical devotion to Brett and jealous distortion of Robert

Cohn betray. Welch appends a Part 4 onto Hemingway's three parts, wherein the narrator, with the help of Yellow Calf is able to see the irony of his own position, to pity those about him, and to regain touch with the earth. The truth of Bill Gorton's joking comments about Jake--"you don't understand irony. You have no pity.... You're an expatriate. You've lost touch with the soil. You get precious"[59] --is upheld by Jake's unwillingness to forgive or pity Cohn. The airplane man, who shares Bill Gorton's affection for stuffed animals, says to Welch's narrator: "Trouble with you is you don't appreciate good old-fashioned sentiment" (p.95-6). His kind of sentiment is ironic, of course, but the narrator who lacks pity learns to sympathize and forgive like Hemingway's Gorton does: "'I feel sorry about Cohn,' Bill said. 'He had an awful time.'"[60]

It would seem that the wasteland which opens _Winter in the Blood_ is no more culturally determined than the wasteland which Jake Barnes inhabits. Welch, like Hemingway, holds men and women responsible for their own spiritual condition in spite of hard times. And Welch, who concludes his story with the cycle of generation, finds an aesthetic ancestor in Hemingway to complement his understanding of his own past. All that Welch's tribal ancestry[61] vouchsafes him is a few worn-out myths. But myths have no meaning until they are given breath in the

story of now. Neither do Amerindian myths have the benefit of thirty printed centuries of fictive play,[62] of word patterns and of narrative voices. If he is at all interested in aesthetics and form, the writer coming out of an oral culture must wander in the hypothetical (but necessary) distance created by white aesthetics and search for a critical school that is congenial to his story. In Winter in the Blood, Welch is much less conscious about his aesthetics than was Sheila Watson, writing fifteen years earlier. Nevertheless, Welch utilizes a modernist aesthetics in order to return to Blackfoot myth and uses it in such a way that the alien tradition of the novel brings Blackfeet myth, revitalized, into a new context. He does not so much desert the oral tradition as insinuate it into another form.

The myth of Star Boy that Welch approximates takes the form of a vision quest. Welch has said that "right now it's almost impossible to have a real, honest vision quest,"[63] but the structure of the narrative and the way that the narrative rather than any human actor imitates the myth, suggests that Welch, like Watson, has placed a Modernist's faith in art--the faith that "art alone can redeem the world of contingency"[64] --to do what can no longer be really done.

[1] James Welch, <u>Winter in the Blood</u>, (New York: Harper & Row, 1974), p.1. All further references to this work will be included in the text by page number only.

[2] Bill Bevis, ed. "Dialogue with James Welch," <u>Northwest Review</u>, 20(1982), 170.

[3] Walter McLintock, <u>The Old North Trail</u>, (1910; rpt. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1968), p.85. The Blackfeet pray to the sun to see them through winter.

[4] Ernest Hemingway, <u>The Sun Also Rises</u>, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1926), epigraph.

[5] Welch in Bevis, p.179.

[6] Andrew Horton, "The Bitter Humour of <u>Winter in the Blood</u>, <u>American Indian Quarterly</u>, 4(1978), 132.

[7] A. Lavonne Ruoff, "Alienation and the Female Principle in <u>Winter in the Blood</u>," <u>American Indian Quarterly</u>, 4(1978), 121.

[8] Welch, <u>Riding the Earthboy 40</u>, (New York: Harper (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), p.40.

[9] Radin, p.14.

[10] Welch, "The Only Good Indian," in <u>American Indian II</u>, ed. John R. Milton (Vermillion, S.D.: University of South Dakota Press, 1971), p.56.

[11] Welch, "The Only Good Indian," p.25.

[12] Mircea Eliade, <u>Rites and Symbols of Initiation</u>, trans. Willard R. Trask, (New York: Harper & Row, 1958),

p.ix.

[13] In reply to Bill Bevis's statement about the narrator's limited options, Welch counters by mentioning "self-limiting worlds." Welch in Bevis, p.169.

[14] G.B. Grinnell, Pawnee, Blackfoot and Cheyenne, (1913; rpt. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1961), p.120.

[15] McLintock, p.476.

[16] Mircea Eliade, Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy, trans. Willard R. Trask, (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1964), p.300.

[17] David Williams, "The Indian Our Ancestor: Three Modes of Vision in Recent Canadian Fiction," Dalhousie Review 58(Summer 1978), p.310.

[18] Eliade, Shamanism, p.300.

[19] Eliade, Shamanism, p.82.

[20] Eliade, Shamanism, p.xii.

[21] Eliade, Shamanism, p.6

[22] Eliade, Initiation, p.89.

[23] Eliade, Shamanism, p.259.

[24] Welch in Bevis, p.180.

[25] Welch in Bevis, p.180.

[26] Eliade, Initiation, p.87.

[27] Eliade, Initiation, p.89.

[28] Grinnell, p.123.

[29] Radin, p.133, 142, 168.

[30] Radin, p.142.

[31] Karl Kerenyi, "The Trickster in Relation to Greek Mythology," in Radin, p.182.

[32] Horton, p.132.

[33] Radin, p.168.

[34] Eliade, Initiation, p.xiii.

[35] Welch, "The Only Good Indian," p.56.

[36] Welch in Bevis, p.172.

[37] Welch, Earthboy, p.26.

[38] Welch, Earthboy, p.36.

[39] Ruoff, p.109, 120.

[40] Grinnell, p.120.

[41] Grinnell, p.124.

[42] Grinnell, p.140-47, and McLintock, p.491 ff.

[43] Grinnell, p.118.

[44] McLintock, p.185.

[45] McLintock, p.346, 440.

[46] Grinnell, p.121.

[47] For Welch, the collective of ancestors is of prime importance even in his poetry: "Let me... stand winter still and drown in a common dream." (Welch, Earthboy, "Dreaming Winter," p.7.) "I am no longer/ proud, my name not strong enough to stand alone." (Welch, Earthboy, "Plea to Those Who Matter," p.34.)

[48] Ruoff, p.114.

[49] Welch, Earthboy, p.60.

[50] G.B. Grinnell, p.147.

[51] Carl G. Jung, "Aion," trans. R.F.C. Hull, in Psyche and Symbol, ed. Violet S. de Lazlo, (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Co., 1958), p.11.

[52] Welch, Earthboy, p.32.

[53] See Horton, p.137.

[54] McLintock, p.490.

[55] Welch, Earthboy, "In My Lifetime," p.27.

[56] Bill Bevis, p.175.

[57] American Indian Quarterly, 4(1978), is devoted entirely to Winter in the Blood, and the attitudes towards the ending of the novel are as various as the contributors: Alan R. Velie (p.141-147) calls the novel comic; Nora Baker Barry (p.149-157) maintains that it takes the form of elegy; Andrew Horton (p.131-139) identifies what he sees as Welch's "bitter humour;" and Carter Revard (p.162), I think correctly, insists that the novel is neither comic nor tragic.

[58] Don Kunz, "Lost in the Distance of Winter: James Welch's Winter in the Blood," Critique: Studies in Modern Fiction, 20, No.1 (1978), p.93.

[59] Hemingway, p.114-115.

[60] Hemingway, p.222.

[61] Welch may even, in Winter in the Blood, be rewriting his own ancestry. His father was Blackfoot, and his

mother Gros Ventre--exactly opposite to the ancestry of First Raise and Teresa. American Indian II, p.53.

[62] Alan Velie in "A Discussion of Winter in the Blood," eds. Peter G. Beidler and A. Lavonne Ruoff, American Indian Quarterly, 4(1978), 162.

[63] Welch in Bevis, p.171.

[64] David Williams, "'Looking into a Void': The Clash of Realism and Modernism in As For Me and My House," Canadiana: Studies in Canadian Literature, eds. Jørn Carlsen and Knud Larsen, (Aarhus, Denmark: Canadian Studies Conference, University of Aarhus, 1984), p.29.

Chapter Three

The Way to Rainy Mountain: Myth, History, Autobiography, and the Shamanic Artist

Like James Welch, N. Scott Momaday has written a novel in which an Indian finds himself caught between two cultures for a long, painful time. In Momaday's House Made of Dawn, the alienated protagonist, Abel, almost fails to understand and find life in his native heritage. Although the novel bears some formal equivalents of modern alienation and is less straightforward in time sequence than Winter in the Blood, House Made of Dawn nevertheless employs a recognizably traditional narrative structure. However, in his next work, The Way to Rainy Mountain, Momaday is at once more traditional--returning to the community of Kiowa myth--and more experimental--jettisoning older narrative structures in search of a poetic narrative[1] that would allow author and reader to move beyond social history into a regained mythical consciousness.

Historically The Way to Rainy Mountain precedes Winter in the Blood by five years. Nevertheless, it is of special interest because in it Momaday is far more explicitly concerned with exploring an aesthetics which can legitimize the shamanic act in a modern, secular world. Mircea Eliade has noted that poetic creation is closely parallel to shamanism,[2] and by focussing on the poetic act as a way of

regaining the lost myths, Momaday builds an aesthetic-shamanic bridge between the two cultures, a bridge that Sheila Watson can only hint at thematically. As in Winter in the Blood, the death of the narrator's grandmother in The Way to Rainy Mountain jogs both personal and racial memories, allowing the narrator to recover his lost culture, his ancestral past; unlike Welch's novel, however, the myths are not subsumed in the narrative--they are made self-consciously to stand out. And, unlike Watson's novel, the alien tradition (in this case white aesthetics) is not entirely subsumed under the inherited. Momaday does succeed in his attempted fusion.

Momaday utilizes a doubly tripartite structure to portray the narrator's alienation and subsequent closing of the psychic distances. On the one hand, Momaday frames his 24 chapters in a traditional narrative pattern around a journey: the first section is called "The Setting Out," the second "The Going On," and the third "The Closing In." On the other hand, Momaday's three selected voices in each chapter, rather than narrate the events of the journey, speak a Kiowa myth, an historical interpretation or gloss, and an autobiographical validation of the myth. To look upon any one section as definitive of Momaday's vision is to ignore the interplay between sections and to misread the poetic narrative. Kenneth Fields, who reads The Way to

<u>Rainy Mountain</u> as elegy,[3] focuses on the tragic possibilities inherent in the "Introduction," "The Closing In," and on the ways in which the emphasis on the past distances one from the myths.

The pre-requisites for elegy are certainly present: the death of the grandmother, an historical fall that results in alienation, and an alien landscape have created a cultural wasteland for the narrator. But there are other elements that are powerful enough to expand the poetic narrative far beyond the wasteland implied in "elegy." Momaday's interest in naming, his interest in the power of language and imagination to reshape events, and the way he structures the book cause even the grandmother's death, together with history and landscape, to be transformed by his vision.

The death of Momaday's grandmother, Aho, serves at once as a personal way into the myths and as a symbol for the present cultural wasteland, for all that Momaday has lost of traditional Kiowa culture. It was with his grandmother that Momaday saw, for the only time, the most sacred emblem of Kiowa worship, the Tai-me bundle. Aho's cultural moment spans from the time before the encroachment of white civilization to the end of Plains horse culture: "As a child she had been to the Sun Dances; she had taken part in those annual rites, and by them she had learned the restoration of her people in the presence of Tai-me."[4] Her

memories, however, go back even further, back to before the Kiowa came upon the Oklahoma plains: "Although my grandmother lived out her long life in the shadow of Rainy Mountain, the immense landscape of the continental interior lay like memory in her blood. She could tell of the Crows, whom she had never seen, and of the Black Hills, where she had never been" (p.7). By means of the racial memories preserved in oral culture, Aho contains the whole tribal journey from the mountains that Momaday is attempting to retrace.

Although she provides the personal basis for Momaday's journey, it often seems that in mourning Aho, Momaday mourns the disappearance of an entire way of life. Many of the autobiographical fragments look backwards to a vital time long past--"Years ago..." (p.104). The fragments involve events surrounding Mammedaty (Momaday's grandfather), Aho, or Momaday's father--"When he was a boy, my father went..." p.46; "when my father was a boy..." p.64--rather than events in the recent past. The memory of a boy eating a raw calf's liver comes from Momaday's childhood: "once when I was a small boy..." (p.31). Even the repeated use of the word "once" in these sections (pp. 14,40,49,52,67,99) suggests important but irretrievable and unrepeatable events. These elements could easily bolster Fields' comments upon <u>The Way to Rainy Mountain</u>: "The dominating feeling of the passage,

in fact of the whole book, is nostalgia, the desire for what cannot be had."[5]

The personal is not the only plane of nostalgia in the work. Aho's death is closely connected to the end of Kiowa religion: when Aho goes to see the Tai-me keeper's wife, Tai-me falls for no discernible reason. In a sentence following Momaday's assessment of the effect upon Aho of witnessing the disappearance of Sun Dance culture--"without bitterness, and for as long as she lived, she bore a vision of deicide" (p.11)--he mentions the effect of Aho's disappearance upon himself: "Now that I can have her only in memory, I see my grandmother in the several postures that were peculiar to her" (p.11).

Corresponding to Aho's death is the reduction of those things to which her presence gave life. The same "sense of confinement" (p.83) that Momaday felt when winter forced him indoors is repeated upon the death of Aho. Her house, made expansive in the summer by her own warm presence, by her many visitors, and by the sounds and breaths of summer, is reduced for Momaday to "a funeral silence... the endless wake of some final word. The walls have closed in upon my grandmother's house. When I returned to it in mourning, I saw for the first time in my life how small it was" (p.13). The smallness and lifelessness are immediately reinforced by Momaday's sighting of a cricket: "My line of vision was

such that the creature filled the moon like a fossil" (p.14). The poem that Momaday closes The Way to Rainy Mountain with--"Rainy Mountain Cemetery"--may suggest that Aho's death impedes Momaday's vision in the same way that the cricket appears to: "The wake of nothing audible he hears/ Who listens here and now to hear your name" (p.119). Because Momaday listens so carefully for his grandmother's name, he may be unable to hear other, more lively sounds.

Like Grandmother Spider who raised the Half-Boys (the Kiowa culture heroes), Momaday's grandmother has served as a surrogate mother. But her earlier presence is a reminder of the myth that explains Kiowa alienation from the most worshipped feature of the landscape--the sun. In the myth, the sun's wife leaves him to return to her people. Since the sun is already characterized as "a god" and as "the oldest deity" (p.8), Momaday's statement that "One day she had a quarrel with the sun, and the sun went away" (p.29) adds discord to the autobiographical sunset that causes a hallowed silence in the land (p.61). The divorce myth also reinforces the loneliness that Momaday calls "an aspect of the land" (p.5) and that he invokes in Chapter 15 as a wasteland background for Kotsatoah, a Kiowa who was almost 7 feet tall. The disappearance, then, of even the surrogate mother becomes the logical extension of the "descending pitch" (p.12) of Aho's prayers.

The disappearance of Aho also suggests one possible paradigm for the decline of Plains horse culture that the U.S. Army helped to bring about. This central and elegiac factor in Kiowa history is, for Momaday, a possible end of the cultural journey that brought the Kiowa to the Great Plains. Momaday connects the horse to the Kiowa understanding of self: "They acquired horses, and their ancient nomadic spirit was suddenly free of the ground" (p.7). After reciting, in Chapter 7, the myth wherein Sun Boy throws up a ring which falls and cuts him in two, allowing Sun Boy to see himself externalized for the first time, Momaday tells of Mammedaty's owning of horses and implies that the day that "Mammedaty got down from a horse for the last time" (p.39) has an untold significance. Even one of Momaday's poems, "Plainview II," contains the repeated chant "I remember my horse" before the speaker makes the difficult distinction: "A horse is one thing/ An Indian is another."[6] In Chapter 18 of The Way to Rainy Mountain Momaday is less oblique, quoting James Mooney on the way that the horse transformed the Plains Indian into a hunter who no longer had to constantly worry about subsistence, and into a raider, for whom, as Momaday puts it in the Introduction, "warfare... was preeminently a matter of disposition" (p.6).

The identification of horse with self, which in Mammedaty

continued long after the Kiowa golden age, lends a heightened import to the description, in Chapter 19, of "Horse Eating Sun Dance (1879--when the Kiowa had to slaughter their horses to survive) and to Momaday's recounting (in Chapter 20) of Gaapiatan's 1861 sacrifice of a horse to ward off smallpox. These historical sections, coming at the beginning of "The Closing In," serve as a comment upon far more than just the loss of a mode of life. They involve the destruction of an ingrained idea of the self. For one locked into the superseded conceptions of self, all that is left is "the affliction of defeat, the dark brooding of old warriors" (p.6). The destruction does not only come from the outside, from white civilization, but also from within. Mammedaty's anger at a horse balking at a gate in Chapter 22 deceives him into shooting an arrow at it; he not only accidentally kills the wrong horse, but symbolically maims himself as well.

From the outset, it is clear that the disappearance of the buffalo holds similar elegiac possibilities, because, like the horse, the buffalo was more than just an animal:

> There came a day like destiny; in every direction, as far as the eye could see, carrion lay out in the land. The buffalo was the animal representation of the sun, the essential sacrificial victim of the Sun Dance. When the wild herds were destroyed, so too was the will of the Kiowa people; there was nothing to sustain them in spirit (p.1).

Momaday stresses the spiritual sustenance provided by the

buffalo far above its food value.[7] Again Momaday hints at Kiowa involvement in their own buffalo-carrion wasteland by the way he juxtaposes the mythical and the historical. He recounts the myth of the buffalo with steel horns, a mythic symbol for the pre-horse days when the hunt was still dangerous. In the myth the Kiowa hero is barely able, with the help of medicine, to kill the buffalo. Immediately following is an account of the people of Carnegie, Oklahoma riding down a buffalo, "a poor broken beast in which there was no trace left of the wild strain" (p.74). The horse that freed the Kiowa from the earth also helped them (in concert with the other Plains tribes and whites,) to wipe out the life-giving herds.

It is possible, in this manner, to read Kiowa history as little more than decline. Many Kiowa did read it as such, imagining the Leonid meteor shower as emblematic of their cultural decline: "Tai-me had been stolen by a band of Osages... and in 1837 the Kiowas made the first of their treaties with the United States. The falling stars seemed to image the sudden and violent disintegration of an old order" (p.114). By not mentioning the slaughter that took place when Tai-me was stolen,[8] Momaday again puts the emphasis not on physical death but on the effect that the loss of a vital symbol of faith has upon the psyches of the survivors.

Nevertheless, as close as the meteor shower comes, it is not merely elegy because, by fitting the happenings in the night sky to their own situation, the Kiowa do what Momaday says was a characteristic of their golden age: "they had dared to imagine and determine who they were" (p.2). It is certainly possible to imagine oneself as a victim and to create a conception of self that leaves room for a permanent sense of loss, but here too Momaday moves beyond the nostalgic possibilities inherent in elegy, saying that the golden age of Kiowa culture "is within the reach of memory still" (p.115).

What Momaday finds in the old myths and even in history is not a sense of an irretrievable past, but of a past that is alive in language. Momaday goes so far as to ascribe an independent reality to language: "A word has power in and of itself" (p.42). The past can be drawn upon if the proper attention is given to words and names. Momaday's use of the word "once" in the autobiographical sections must be balanced against his use of the words "even now" (p.31) and "now and then" (p.34,83), the latter of which unobtrusively captures Momaday's sense of the timelessness of Kiowa myth. Momaday even redeems the word "once" in the last chapter of his poetic narrative:

> Once in his life a man ought to concentrate his mind upon the remembered earth, I believe. He ought to give himself up to a particular landscape in his experience, to look at it from as many angles as he can, to wonder

about it, to dwell upon it. (p.113)

The verb "ought" pulls the sentence towards the future, but the context of the passage--Momaday is, at that point, still in the process of concentrating on the remembered earth--puts "once" into the timeless present.

Momaday achieves the same bursting into the present with his movement across verb tenses. In Chapter 1, he says "I remember coming out upon the northern Great Plains" before switching his description into the present tense--"at first there is no discrimination in the eye" (p.19). In Chapter 19, he speaks of riding a horse as a boy before again moving into the present and counterpointing the earlier note of self-maiming: "I know the living motion of a horse" (p.91).

A couple of the myths that Momaday narrates dwell upon the power of words to shape events. When, in Chapter 8, the twins or Half-Boys are trapped in a smoky cave by a giant, they remember some words that their grandmother told them--"**thain-mom**, 'above my eyes'" (p.41)--and are able to keep the smoke above them to prevent suffocation. They confront danger with language in the same way that the Kiowa verbally confront a storm (p.65), and in the same way that Momaday remembers his grandmother using the word "**zei-dl-bei**, 'frightful'" as "an exertion of language upon ignorance and disorder" (p.43). In all three cases, language is exerted upon the landscape in a way that suggests that the speaker

knows of some sentient, though unseen and unnamed force which understands the purport of his words, but which will not answer.

The most interesting and clearly elucidated case of this use of language is contained in the account of the arrowmaker in Chapter 13. The arrowmaker hears someone outside his tent and speaks calmly in Kiowa in order to discern between friend and foe: "If you are Kiowa, you will understand what I am saying, and you will speak your name" (p.62). In "The Man Made of Words," a discussion of the making of The Way to Rainy Mountain, Momaday delineates the arrowmaker's situation:

> of the ominous unknown he asks only the utterance of a name, only the most nominal sign that he is understood, that his words are returned to him on the sheer edge of meaning. But there is no answer, and the arrowmaker knows at once what he has not known before; that his enemy is, and that he has gained an advantage over him. This he knows certainly, and the certainty itself is his advantage.[9]

Like the arrowmaker, Momaday puts his deepest faith in words. The autobiographical sections of Momaday's poetic narrative are where the possibilities for failure are the greatest and where Momaday puts himself in the balance, trying often, with his own words to revitalize the myths that have preceded the autobiography. For example, after the myth of the Kiowa "coming out," he describes his own "coming out" onto the plains in the late spring as an event

of great moment. After the myth of the sacred marriage between a Kiowa woman and the sun (in the form of a redbird), Momaday describes his own sighting of a redbird. In most cases, Momaday avoids both sentimentality and arrogance in his own additions by replying to the myth with some precise observation of the landscape, of Aho, or of Mammedaty. By phrasing the myth into his own experience, Momaday too dares to imagine who he is in relation to his tribal past.

The power of the imagination to shape even tragic events is also evident. It is the arrowmaker who must do the naming, who must convert the "ominous unknown" into the "nominal unknown" (p.119). By speaking, the arrowmaker discloses the force outside as enemy, and knows, then, where to aim his arrow. In the autobiographical portion of the same chapter, Momaday names his own enemy: "There, at dawn, you can feel the silence. It is cold and clear and deep like water. It takes hold of you and will not let you go" (p.64). But the silence, even the silence that Aho's death brings, is not tragic because the power of naming is enough to move beyond the deathly silences. In the poetic endpiece, "Rainy Mountain Cemetery," Momaday plays upon the ambiguities of the silence after Aho's disappearance as he struggles to remember her in her name.[10]

The ambiguities begin in the first line of the poem--"Most is your name the name of this dark stone" (p.119). The literal meaning--'your name now consists almost entirely of what is written on this gravestone'--is belied by the syntax which expands Aho's name to "Most." As soon as he speaks of the derangement that death causes, Momaday also mentions the "nominal unknown" as a resting place for mind, positing thereby a named collective of ancestors; when, therefore, he introduces the qualifier "audible" to the next line--"the wake of nothing audible he hears"--the implications are that the listener has penetrated beyond the senses to that unknown place, where the "nothing" is becoming discernible.

Kenneth Fields, with good reason, implies that Momaday is "obsessed by forces he cannot fully apprehend."[11] But in the second stanza, Momaday turns, as he so often does, back to sense-apprehension. He redeems the ambiguity of the first stanza by enlisting 4 lines of landscape (sun, plain, and mountain) on the side of the name and against the last solitary line--"death this cold, black density of stone." Although the ominous silence is not broken, the noonday sun erases the shadow that the name, carved into the headstone, creates.

The poetic form is no less witness to the imposition of human symmetry upon the unknown. Each line contains exactly

10 syllables, and the rhyme scheme, **ababc d(or a off)edeA**, which pits "stone" (**a**) against "moon" and "noon" (**d**), ends in perfect symmetry upon the first rhymed word. "Stone" may be an ominous word to end upon, but the perfection of the rhyme and the artistry involved, even in carving a headstone, serve to mute any coldness by calling attention to the stone as artifact and reminder of the grandmother.

The grandmother's name itself is, of course, no less important, especially since, as Maurice Boyd puts it, "Kiowa names were sacred designations of being."[12] In Kiowa, "Aho" means "thanks"[13] and in many ways the entire poetic narrative is Momaday's way of thanking Aho for passing on the sacred stories.

The root of the tribal name-- "**Kwuda**, 'coming out'"--(p.17) is important as well, and even more clearly paradigmatic for <u>The Way to Rainy Mountain</u>. The name helps prevent the tribal journey from being read as a fall. Instead it helps Momaday to name the journey as being "from a sunless world" and "toward the dawn" (p.7). Momaday stuctures the poetic narrative so that "The Closing In" is as visionary as "The Setting Out" or as "The Going On."

Although the first chapter of "The Closing In" does open with buffalo skulls, instead of becoming the tragic culmination of "The Setting Out," it involves the winning of

freedom and horses out of captivity and death. The resonances in "The Closing In" are set up in a way which points to a new beginning rather than an end. Instead of mechanically following his pattern of myth, history, and autobiography, beginning at Chapter 21 the personal accounts of Mammedaty and Aho are absorbed into the mythic. Momaday transposes the phatic convention of the oral myth-teller, "you know" (p.17), into his story about Mammedaty's medicine vision of the head of a little boy (p.97). The "little boy" may even be the grandson who will make Mammedaty's name go on being well-known.

Aho and Mammedaty, in Chapter 21 and following, become all things to Momaday, the personal connections to all that is contained in the oral tradition. These now overt attempts to see mythic significance in the personal memories of the grandparents climax in Chapter 24 where the mythic section, about a woman buried in a beautiful dress, contains the seed of the personal--Momaday knows that if he looks eastwards from his grandmother's house that the grave will be in his field of vision. Here the historical section deals with the beauty of Aho's mocassins--at once an artifact and a personal reminder of Aho--and the autobiography aspires not just to evoke a personal response to the landscape, but seeks to find its place in the Kiowa tradition, to add incrementally to "the remembered earth."

The reader is thus forced to re-imagine the meaning of the title, "The Closing In," because this portion of the narrative works **against** a sense of confinement. It is ultimately more than just a journey into the interior, working rather like a camera 'closing in' on some remembered detail or artifact, a gradual focussing in of energies upon the way that the oral tradition comes alive in this or that individual. In fact, it works simply as another 'coming out.'

There is another suddenly expansive vision that Momaday provides by means of his structure. In his acknowledgements, he thanks the kinsmen who recounted the old stories for him, but the prime or first source of the stories must have been Aho. It is Aho's death that starts Momaday in his effort to remember the long-past. As well, the reader hears a number of intimate stories about Mammedaty, Momaday's grandfather, and the reader naturally assumes that the relationship between Mammedaty and Momaday must have been as intimate as that between Aho and Momaday. However, in the Epilogue, the reader discovers that Mammedaty died before Momaday was born (p.115), and realizes that Aho must have been the mediator between the two, the one who kept the grandfather alive in story for Momaday. Coming in this way, the news of Mammedaty's death becomes cause for wonder rather than for a sudden ache of loss.

There is still a sense of loss in The Way to Rainy Mountain. Momaday states that he hopes to remember "a time that is gone forever" (p.2), but he classes this time between the powerful forces of landscape and imagination: "the journey is an evocation of... a landscape that is incomparable, a time that is gone forever, and the human spirit, which endures (p.2). In "The Setting Out," it is not until the Kiowa go hungry that Tai-Me, "a vision born of suffering and despair" (p.1), comes to them. Momaday undoes his own personal grief by a ritual re-enactment of the tribal journey, by his own personal "**Kwuda.**" There is nostalgia in circling back to the remembered earth, but the action of the imagination upon the storied landscape creates something new.

In Kiowa lore, it is the trickster, Saynday, who pulls the Kiowa out of the hollow log.[14] Mostly he is seen as fooler or befooled, but the **Kwuda** myth is one of the few myths in which he is seen as culture hero. It is strange, then, that Momaday seems to avoid the most famous and most storied of all Kiowa mythic figures.

Maurice Boyd notes that among the Kiowa, the vision quest, the Amerindian coming-of-age ritual, often takes the form of a journey.[15] In order to understand his Rainy Mountain home and in order to imagine who he is, Momaday travels "fifteen hundred miles" (p.7), a long circuit back

to where he already stands. Rather than Aho's death signifying the end of a culture, her death becomes the starting point for Momaday's vision quest, his entry of mind into the traditions and landscape of his ancestors, his attempted literal imitation of Aho's mental journey (p.7).

The first myth that Momaday retells, in Chapter 1, is that of the Kiowa coming out into the world from a hollow log, bringing to consciousness the obscure hints contained in his epigraphical poem, "Headwaters:" "A log, hollow and weather-stained,/ An insect at the mouth." The epigraph involves the return to the Rocky Mountain sources of the Kiowa, and hints at the welling in the latest recreation of the journey:

> What moves?
> What moves on this archaic force
> Was wild and welling at the source. (no p. number)

The reason then that Momaday avoids mentioning Saynday is that he **is** Saynday. Momaday's vision quest has led him to the conclusion that he too can pull the Kiowa into a new cultural context. In the act of narration, Momaday seeks to emulate the Culture Hero by remaking the culture. In beginning a story with "They were coming along" (p.20), Momaday reverses the traditional opening of the Saynday stories--"Saynday was coming along."[16] Instead of the tribe telling the story of the trickster, Trickster tells the

story of the tribe.

Even so, Momaday does not see himself as the first of his tribe to circle back to his origins: in Chapter 15 Quoetotai, a great Kiowa warrior, wandered with the Comanches for 15 years before returning home, and in Chapter 21 Mammedaty was "on the way to Rainy Mountain" (p.97) when he spied great medicine in the form of the head of a little boy. Although neither of the journeys is specifically a vision quest, the way Momaday phrases Mammedaty's movement suggests that Momaday is consciously doing what Mammedaty did unconsciously. Also, the head that Mammedaty saw not only looks forward to the grandson, but is also reminiscent of the disappeared Half-Boys of Kiowa myth and so connected to Mammedaty's cultural heritage.[17] It is possible that when Momaday talks of "many journeys in the one" (p.1) he means both the way that each mythical incident involves some new recognition of self (the tribal coming-of-age) and the way that the quest is, knowingly or unknowingly, repeated by every generation (the personal coming-of-age).

Momaday's vision quest begins not in the self, not in an isolated imagination, but in Aho and in the landscape. Although Momaday has his grandmother "only in memory" (p.11), it is in memory that vision stirs. The simple memories of Aho cooking, doing beadwork, even looking at her hands in the Introduction, are a necessary prelude to the

memories of the vital tales she told. The snare of grandmother spider, despite its hinted connection to the web of white civilization, holds a promise of comfort. Grandmother Spider captured Sun Boy only after his mother was killed and only in order to feed him. A popular Kiowa lullaby[18] contains the Grandmother Spider's words: "Go to sleep and do not cry./ Your mother is dead, and still you feed upon her breasts" (p.32). The implication is that the capture is somehow necessary to wean the Kiowa from a way of life in which the source of sustenance had dried up--another step in coming of age.

Neither does Aho's house confine Momaday for any length of time. The smallness of the house causes Momaday to move out immediately onto the plains where his vision can extend a long way. Among other things, he sees the Big Dipper, which, for the reader, should call to mind Aho's story (that Momaday mentions earlier in the Introduction) about the seven sisters who were chased up into the sky and became the Big Dipper. This association extends Momaday's vision into the mythical past, and signifies not alienation but remembered archaic relationships: "so long as the legend lives, the Kiowas have kinsmen in the night sky" (p.9).

Momaday's sighting of the cricket filling the moon, subsequent to moving out of Aho's house, does not remain simply a fossilized vision. Traditionally, Momaday's

simile, "like a fossil" (p.14), is emblematic of death. But fossils are also reminders of 'what once was,' and Momaday's shift in perspective indicates that he weights the meaning towards this latter sense. Instead of reducing the moon to the size of the cricket, the cricket is apotheosized by the more-than-visual, by the imaginative, perspective: "there, of all places, was its small definition made whole and eternal" (p.14).

A singer in the grass, the cricket becomes emblematic of the Kiowa singer's, Momaday's, culture. The imagination, working with whatever the landscape offers, makes eternal not the self, but the symbol. The discovered symbol in the landscape becomes, then, the first consolation, the first replacement for Aho. Through her tales "of the Crows, whom she had never seen, and of the Black Hills, where she had never been" (p.7), Aho convinces Momaday of the greater perfection of "the mind's eye" (p.7). Momaday asserts that the Kiowa journey "continues to be made anew" each time it "comes to mind" (p.2). Aho is also the one who bestows sun worship upon Momaday: "My grandmother had a reverence for the sun.... She was a Christian in her later years, but she had come a long way about, and she never forgot her birthright" (p.9). Aho's regard for the sun diminishes the sense of "deicide" that informs the Introduction because, even after the Sun Dance's disappearance as a vital

ceremony, the sun itself remains:

> To look upon the landscape in the early morning, with the sun at your back, is to lose the sense of proportion. Your imagination comes to life, and this, you think, is where Creation was begun (p.5).

The landscape itself, which helps to lessen the sorrow at Aho's passing and inspires even small-scale creations, infuses Momaday with an intimate understanding of the sun symbolism upon which the Sun Dance is based. Momaday begins in the mythical mindset where the symbol is promiscuous, where it seems that everything reminds one of the centre. Momaday not only tells stories about the early Kiowa symbols for the sun--buffalo (p.1), redbird (p.26), porcupine (p.45), the rings of the Kiowa hoop game (p.41),[19] the sacred Sun Dance doll, Tai-me (p.7, 47), the peyote buttons (p.51),[20] possibly even the hunting circle (p.21)--not only does he tell of the boy-medicine bundles (p.45), the symbols for Sun boy, but Momaday also adds his own description of a sunlit plain (p.19) and his own symbolic representation of the sun in the form of a fleeing pronghorn antelope: "the white rosette of its rump seemed to hang for the smallest fraction of time at the top of each frantic bound--like a succession of sunbursts against the purple hills (p.22).[21] Just as the sun itself is the ordering principle of the Sun Dance, Momaday makes the sign, "sun," one of the ordering principles for his play of language.

In "The Going On" and in the first part of "The Closing In," Momaday nevertheless moves his sun symbolism towards the "deicide" prophesied in the Introduction and in the myth explaining the alienation of the Kiowa from the sun ("the sun went away" p.29). He does this by charging the sun with destructive power. The passage about an heraldic teepee destroyed by fire precedes a description of the sun making the earth glow red in Chapter 12, and Momaday further undercuts the sun symbolism with the three blighted Sun Dances--the 1879 Horse Eating Sun Dance (p.90), the 1861 Sun Dance when a horse was sacrificed (p.95), and the 1843 Sun Dance when a woman was stabbed. He also attributes the disappearance of the buffalo, the death of a woman, and the transformation of men into monkeys to the influence of the sun. At the death of the steel-horned buffalo, its horns flash "once in the sun" (p.73), the unfaithful woman is thrown away "at sunrise" (p.78), and the men changed to monkeys are found in "the sun's home" (p.81).

By the time the reader gets to the account of the fall of Tai-me (p.108), a fall thought by the Kiowa to be portentous of great sickness,[22] it is hard to dismiss the blight as Momaday seems to do in his Prologue: "But these are idle recollections, the mean and ordinary agonies of human history" (p.1). Chapter 24 puts the emphasis on the necessity of recollecting "the glare of noon and all the

colors of the dawn and dusk" (p.113). By stressing the agonies and the "glare of noon," Momaday reveals that he does not wish to deny the otherness of the sun, to ignore the elegiac elements of the Kiowa past, or, counter to that early profession, to do away with history. Instead, he discovers how history can be transformed, how imagination can be "superimposed upon the historical event"[23] to create story: "The imaginative experience and the historical express equally the traditions of man's reality" (p.2).

From the medicine account of the mole sifting the earth in its mouth it is clear that earth seen truly is vision. The same cannot always be said for the sun. Momaday understands that he cannot outwit nature in the way that the Half-Boys can, and the "gorgeous hostility between the human and the wild"[24] that Roger Dickinson-Brown sees in "Rainy Mountain Cemetery" is carried on by the sun throughout the entire poetic narrative. Although Chapter 24 conflates myth, history, and autobiography, the burden of the sun's otherness may be too much for even this visionary chapter to carry.

Momaday recognizes this incompletion of his vision in "The Man Made of Words:"

> I had written the greater part of The Way to Rainy Mountain--all of it, in fact, except the epilogue. I had set down the last of the old Kiowa tales, and I had composed both the historical and autobiographical commentaries for it. I had the sense of being out of

> breath, of having said what it was in me to say on that subject. The manuscript lay before me in the bright light. Small, to be sure, but complete, or nearly so. I had written the second of the two poems in which the book is framed. I had uttered the last word, as it were. And yet a whole, penultimate piece was missing.[25]

Momaday was unexpectedly obliged to look to a living, not a dead, human being for his completing epilogue.

Just as Saynday comes alive in Momaday and the nurturing Grandmother Spider comes alive in Aho, Aho comes alive in Ko-Sahn, who, instead of being a younger version of Aho, is a more ancient one. Interestingly, the Kiowa dispute the death of Grandmother Spider: "Some say she died...but others point out that she appeared once again at a later time in the Saynday famine story when she turned the white crow black."[26] Ko-Sahn becomes the personal face for the "human spirit which endures" (p.2), and Momaday surmises, at the end of his poetic narrative, that she may even be "that old purveyor of the sacred earth" (p.118), the archetypal buffalo woman herself, who brought buffalo spirit power to the Kiowa.[27]

The language with which Momaday introduces Ko-sahn suggests a fusion of the personal and the ancestral within the created words: "The living memory and the verbal tradition which transcends it were brought together for me in the person of Ko-sahn" (p.115). And the fact that it is a woman who brings story and person together makes an

implicit criticism of the patriarchy of Plains horse culture which even in the golden age made life hard for women.[28]

The words of Ko-sahn quoted in the Prologue--

> There were many people, and oh, it was beautiful. That was the beginning of the Sun Dance. It was all for Tai-me, you know, and it was a long time ago. (p.3)--

can easily be interpreted as nostalgic; but, put into their proper context, in the Epilogue, they carry the conscious echoes that occur whenever someone 'makes' a Sun Dance:

> she began to sing:
> We have brought the earth.
> Now it is time to play;
> As old as I am I still have the feeling of play. (p.117)

Ko-sahn revitalizes for Momaday both the lost Sun Dance culture and his own words: "The name seemed to humanize the whole complexity of language."[29] The "play" that Ko-sahn speaks of is the holy play before a god. The chant-like quality of her speech and her willingness, several times, to sing the old words serve almost as incantation, as invocation of the beginning of the dance again.

Beginning the dance again means a renewed connection to generation. Whatever was destroyed when Grandfather Snake was killed (p.44) is regained, though transformed, at the fertile fork of the ceremonial cottonwood tree (p.49) which always forms the centre pole for the Sun Dance.[30] Grandfather Tai-me too contains both ends of generation: the Tai-me room contains "a great holiness... as if an old

person had died there or a child had been born" (p.49).

Structurally, Ko-sahn replaces Aho. Like Aho, who in death had the face "of a child" (p.6), and like Momaday's great-grandmother, Keahdinekeah, whose "skin was as soft as the skin of a baby" (p.46), Ko-sahn becomes almost a child: she is "extraordinarily small" (p.115), the story she tells is from her early youth (p.115), and, above all, she has that "feeling of play" (p.117). Unlike the Kiowa trickster, Saynday, however, these 'old children' function only as culture heroes, the ones who give Momaday what he needs to survive in the world.

Thematically, Ko-sahn serves as the new mediator between Momaday's sense of irretrievable history and regained mythical consciousness, as well as between Momaday and the landscape:

> I think she must have wondered, dreaming, who she was. Was she become in her sleep that old purveyor of the sacred earth, perhaps, that ancient one who, old as she was, still had the feeling of play? And in her mind at times, did she see the falling stars? (p.118)

Regardless of how conscious she is of her mythical identity as buffalo woman, Momaday fashions her as his centre, incorporating through her the Sun Dance into his own being. More audaciously, Momaday uses his creation of Ko-sahn's human presence (he says that she steps out of and recedes into his language)[31] to justify his setting up of

himself as the one who can revitalize myth by means of language, and to justify his own sense of literary shamanic vocation.

Several things besides his impersonation of Saynday point to Momaday's characterization of himself as shaman. First of all, his adaptation of Kiowa myth almost always follows the pattern of reduction of detail, as if Momaday thought that he could edit the oral storytellers' personal additions in order to give the stories mythic depth and strangeness. For example, the lovers' triangle between a man, a woman, and the buffalo-that-ruled-the-world[32] is not mentioned in Momaday's version of the steel-horned buffalo story (p.73); neither is it made clear where the voice which gives the life-saving advice is coming from,[33] so that the action is mysteriously motivated and the dialogue mysteriously attributed. Instead of sticking to the usual version of the coming of Tai-me in which the Kiowa get Tai-me from a poor Arapaho who in turn got it from a Crow priest,[34] Momaday makes the account much more supernatural, giving it subliminal echoes of biblical myth: "A voice spoke to him and said, 'why are you following me?'" (p.47)[35]

As well, Momaday's emphasis on Aho's role in his upbringing, while he does not mention his mother's role, identifies him with the orphaned Half-Boys who were raised by Grandmother Spider. By giving the Half-Boys such a

prominent place in his myths, and by attempting to transform his own autobiographical experience into eucharistic form, he implies an equality between himself and the one Half-Boy who was transformed into ten medicine bundles (p.45)--in effect he implies a rewriting of himself as shaman. Even Rainy Mountain itself comes to seem like Momaday's version of the cosmic mountain at the centre of the world to which the shaman has recourse.[36]

Kenneth Fields' implied criticism, that Momaday is "obsessed with forces he cannot fully apprehend,"[37] may need to be reworded to suggest that Momaday thinks he can shape, by means of poetry, forces that he cannot fully understand. And the comment about Kiowa superiority that Momaday inserts, coupled with the constant hints of kinship between the Kiowa and the stars, could suggest that Momaday has lost his humility in wondering who he is. Momaday's virtually Romantic assumptions about the power of language to recreate the self--"we are all made of words.... Only when he is embodied in an idea, and the idea is realized in language, can man take possession of himself"[38] --may indicate that Momaday has decided to make himself a shaman rather than wait for divine election.[39] The autobiographical nature of the narrative may also indicate that Momaday has distorted the now-silent ancestors and that "the artist would equate the artwork with his own soul."[40]

But Momaday's individualism is unlike rebel Romanticism in that it is closely tied to the community of ancestors and because the words that Momaday sees as creative are not only his own words, but the words of the oral tradition. Momaday is much nearer to the modernist re-working of "Romantic concerns with consciousness, with self-object relations, and with intensified experience."[41] Roger Dickinson-Brown and Michael Raymond have noted that Momaday attempts to fuse alien cultures,[42] a modernist trait. Certainly the structure of Momaday's 'novel,' moving as it does towards poetry, concerned as it is "with precision of texture and form,"[43] and setting as it does "form over life, pattern and myth over the contingencies of history,"[44] recalls modernist attempts to recreate the world by means of a word. Even the paintings by Al Momaday, N. Scott's father, which are interspersed in the narrative, reveal a traditional Amerindian shunning of realist perspective--the paintings have much more in common with symbolist-influenced styles of representation.

In the struggle to put a form on the wilderness, Momaday as shaman recalls the singer in a classic modernist poem, Wallace Stevens's "The Idea of Order at Key West:"

> It may be that in all her phrases stirred
> The grinding water and the gasping wind;
> But it was she and not the sea we heard.[45]

Like Momaday, Stevens approaches near to Romantic self-

creation--"she was the single artificer of the world/ In which she sang."[46] But, by putting the singer in a dramatic context--"the singing ended and we turned/ Toward the town"[47] --Stevens stresses the conditional nature and the finitude of her created world. It is not in the voice of the sea, which is "sound alone,"[48] but in the "rage to order,"[49] in the act of singing, as conditional and quickly-ended as it is, that Stevens finds meaning. Momaday, like Stevens in "Of Modern Poetry," seems most committed to "The poem of the mind in the act of finding/ What will suffice."[50]

Yet Momaday, more than Stevens, is also critical of the solipsism of mind which sees nothing but its own workings in the face of the world. In his comments on Frederick Goddard Tuckerman, Momaday praises what he sees as the integrity of Tuckerman's anti-Emersonian unwillingness to mirror his own thoughts in nature: "Tuckerman.... attributed no moral significance to the details themselves."[51] It should be no surprise, then, that Momaday qualifies his visions with "seemed" or "as if." Momaday recognizes the way that the unknown landscape surprises any literary attempts to order it--for example, the tarantulas are "always larger than you imagine" (p.34).

And yet Momaday, in embodied imitation of Stevens, relies most of all on a formal ordering device to avoid Stevens's

kind of solipsism. Dramatically, the voice that speaks The Way to Rainy Mountain, which we have conveniently attributed to Momaday, perhaps belongs more to the Reverend J.B.B. Tosamah of House Made of Dawn, "Pastor and Priest of the Sun."[52] The sermon he preaches is called "The Way to Rainy Mountain," and it involves an explosive welding of the Gospel of John onto what is, almost word for word, the Introduction to The Way to Rainy Mountain. Most of the few changes in that portion of Tosamah's sermon which became the Introduction to The Way to Rainy Mountain are minor and seem to be merely a tightening of the prose. Still, in two instances a growing humility is evident: "I did not always understand her [Aho's] prayers"[53] became "I never understood her prayers" (p.12) and Momaday cut two sentences which attributed cosmic significance to his cricket/moon vision--"But for a moment I had seen to the centre of the world's being. Every day in the plains proceeds from that strange eclipse."[54]

Tosamah's marvelous oratory in House Made of Dawn shows his profound understanding of both Christian and Kiowa myth, and yet, though he is far from a con-man as Michael Raymond insists,[55] Tosamah does not contribute to the healing of the alienated protagonist, Abel. The narrator of House Made of Dawn identifies Tosamah's "arrogance"[56] and Ben Benally, who helps to re-integrate Abel into his tribe, says that despite

Tosamah's education Tosamah does not understand Abel or Abel's fears,[57] that Tosamah likes to make fools out of people, and that most of the time Tosamah is only "talking big."[58] H. David Brumble suggests that there is "a good deal of bluff" in Tosamah, especially since his middle name is Big Bluff.[59] Brumble mentions the link to Momaday whose middle name is Tsotohah (Red Bluff), but the name, along with the propensity to brag and fool, also links Tosamah to Saynday. By giving Tosamah his best thoughts and then ironically undercutting him, Momaday formally undercuts his own position and he undercuts him in the same way that the oral story-tellers acknowledged Saynday's importance at the same time as they laughed at him.

Barbara Strelke's comment that Abel's "personal redemption is more clearly placed in the context of racial memory and community in The Way to Rainy Mountain"[60] than it is in House Made of Dawn must be carefully qualified by the dramatic context of the former work. The redemption from profane history and death pictured in The Way to Rainy Mountain is not Abel's redemption, but Tosamah's. It is the salvation of a well-educated intellectual who has hever been in World War II, in jail, or in the gutter as Abel has. Far from allowing the reader to dismiss The Way to Rainy Mountain, this ironic context, plotted by Momaday against his own figure in literature, serves to locate the

redemption in a person. And if Momaday seems arrogant or seems to distort the ancestors, tainting the regained mythical consciousness with self, at least he recognizes his own culpability. He admits his own isolation from uneducated men like Abel or Ben or even Welch's narrator in Winter in the Blood, and realizes, formally, the need to be cautious in his grand pronouncements. What Momaday says of his arrowmaker holds equally true for the autobiographical figure of N. Scott Momaday/Reverend Tosamah/Saynday in The Way to Rainy Mountain: "The arrowmaker is preeminently the man of words.... he imagines himself, whole and vital, going into the unknown darkness and beyond.... And yet the story has it that he is cautious and alone..."[61]

But Momaday, like the arrowmaker, is not really alone. The autobiographical self that Momaday displays is always set in the context of the tribe's stories. He is fitting himself into his ancestors' view of the world, adjusting himself to them as much as he is adjusting their world to fit his personal, modern vision. Memory never becomes purely personal or purely mythical, but consists of the interplay of the two.

The act of remembering is crucial. Often, when Momaday mentions memory, he attempts to fuse the personal and the mythical: "I remember coming out" (p.19) connects Momaday's origin to the tribal origin. "The journey herein recalled"

(p.2) places Momaday's journey in the context of the tribal migration, and Momaday's detailing of the landscape finds its source in Aho, in whom "the immense landscape... lay like memory" (p.7). Since he turns to white aesthetics to validate his tradition, Momaday's memories are indeed in tension with those of his unlettered forbears. However, the journey is not merely inward; the very decision to retrace the ancient tribal journey is an outward imitation, an act by which the ancestors live again in him, are renewed by his communion with them. As well, the personal glosses approximate the oral story-teller's verbal inflections.[62]

Like the narrator of Winter in the Blood, Momaday cannot naively return to a time that is gone, but must recreate the myth by imitating it. Momaday's characterizing of the poet as shaman suggests a more self-conscious understanding of the tensions that might pull apart aesthetics and story than Welch shows, and more cross-cultural sensitivity than Watson shows. And yet, in all three cases, racial memory preserved in story functions as a bridge across a distance--as a disruption of common existential isolation for Watson and Welch, and as a check on artistic self-sufficiency for Momaday.

[1] The term "poetic narrative" captures the tension between poem and novel at the heart of The Way to Rainy Mountain and allows for the personal element in a way that "mythic narrative" cannot.

[2] Eliade, Shamanism, p.510.

[3] Kenneth Fields, "More Than Language Means," The Southern Review, 6(January 1970)199.

[4] N. Scott Momaday, The Way to Rainy Mountain, (New York: Signet, 1967) p.10-11. All further references to this work will be by page number within the text.

[5] Fields, p.202.

[6] Momaday, The Gourd Dancer, (New York: Harper & Row, 1976), p.22.

[7] Tai-me, the sacred Sun Dance doll also offers more than physical sustenance. Looking for food, the Kiowa find Tai-me (p.47).

[8] Maurice Boyd, ed. Kiowa Voices: Myths, Legends and Folktales, Vol. II, (Forth Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1983), p.137-38. The Kiowa warriors were gone from the camp, so the Osages slaughtered the women, old people, and children, leaving their heads in Kiowa cooking pots.

[9] Momaday, "The Man Made of Words," Literature of the American Indians: Views and Interpretations, ed. Abraham Chapman, (New York: New American Library, 1975), p.109.

[10] The same struggle is evident in Momaday's title poem from *The Gourd Dancer* (p.37), where Momaday speaks of his grandfather:

> And all of this was for Mammedaty, in his honor,
> as even now it is in the telling, and will be,
> as long as
> there are those who imagine him in his name.

[11] Fields, p.203.

[12] Boyd, p.198.

[13] Elsie Clews Parsons, *Kiowa Tales*, (1929; rpt. New York: Kraus Reprints, 1969), p.75, 89.

[14] Boyd, p.13. So popular is Saynday that "**Sendeh hoeitekya...** (Sendeh story) is the term not only for tales in which Sendeh figures, but also for tales in general." Parsons, p.xvii.

[15] Boyd, p.198.

[16] See Parsons, p.38 ff, and many of the stories in Boyd, Vol. II, p.14 ff.

[17] Tai-me is often called grandfather so that Mammedaty may have been the human face of Tai-me for Momaday. See Parsons, p.98.

[18] Boyd, p.104.

[19] See Parsons, p.12, 120.

[20] In Momaday's *House Made of Dawn*, (Harper & Row: New York, 1966), p.109, the Reverend Tosamah calls peyote "the vegetal representation of the sun."

[21] The same visionary landscape is evident in *House Made of*

Dawn, where dawn holds preeminence (p.57-58), and where Ben Benally's healing Night Chant is all about the details of the land (p.146). Only in running through the landscape is Abel finally able to overcome his alienation.

[22] Parsons, p.109.

[23] "The Man Made of Words," p.105.

[24] Roger Dickinson-Brown, "The Art and Importance of N. Scott Momaday, Southern Review (Baton Rouge) 14(1978) 38.

[25] "The Man Made of Words," p.97.

[26] Boyd, p.11.

[27] Boyd, p.96-102.

[28] This is most explicitly stated in the historical section of Chapter 17 (p.79).

[29] "The Man Made of Words," p.98.

[30] In House Made of Dawn, the grandfather, Francisco, returns to a worship of the phallic deities of the earth even as he serves as altar-boy in Fray Nicholas's church. (p.51,58).

[31] "The Man Made of Words," p.98-99.

[32] Parsons, p.77. Boyd, p.73.

[33] It comes from the tree in Parsons (p.77) and from the woman in Boyd (p.73).

[34] Boyd, p.48.

[35] For a discussion of how myth differs stylistically from

literature, see Erich Auerbach, _Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature_, trans. Willard R. Trask, (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1953), p.3-23.

[36] Eliade, _Shamanism_, p.266.

[37] Fields, p.203.

[38] "The Man Made of Words," p.96, 104.

[39] See Eliade, _Shamanism_, p.23.

[40] "'Looking into a Void,'" p.37.

[41] _Modernism_, p.47.

[42] Dickinson-Brown, p.30. See also Michael W. Raymond, "Tai-me, Christ, and the Machine: Affirmation Through Mythic Pluralism in _House Made of Dawn_," _Studies in American Fiction_, 11(Spring 1983) 67-69.

[43] John Fletcher and Malcolm Bradbury, "The Introverted Novel," in _Modernism_, p.394.

[44] Fletcher and Bradbury, p.406.

[45] Wallace Stevens, "The Idea of Order at Key West," _The Collected Poems of Wallace Stevens_, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1971), p.129.

[46] Stevens, p.129.

[47] Stevens, p.130.

[48] Stevens, p.129.

[49] Stevens, p.130.

[50] Stevens, "Of Modern Poetry," p.239.

[51] _Tuckerman_, p.xxiv.

[52] House Made of Dawn, p.89.

[53] House Made of Dawn, p.133.

[54] House Made of Dawn, p.136.

[55] Raymond, p.38.

[56] House Made of Dawn, p.91.

[57] House Made of Dawn, p.148, 150.

[58] House Made of Dawn, p.159.

[59] Brumble, p.44.

[60] Barbara Strelke, "N. Scott Momaday: Racial Memory and Individual Imagination," in Literature of the American Indians, p.349.

[61] "The Man Made of Words," p.109.

[62] See Elaine Jahner, "A Critical Approach to American Indian Literature," in Allen, p.216.

Conclusion

William A. Johnsen, in "Towards a Redefinition of Modernism," suggests that it is an exaggeration to say that modernists desired to escape from the contingencies of history and from a chaotic world into the perfectly-ordered world of myth and metaphor. Rather, Johnsen rates this stereotype as merely an initial stage which led most modernists into a realization of "the falsification of reality that order irrevocably produces.... Facing again two polarized choices, man tries to envision an excluded middle."[1]

As his primary example, Johnsen shows that Joyce undercuts Stephen Dedalus's theories about the god-like and impersonal artist very clearly in Ulysses and, to a lesser extent, in A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man. But Johnsen could just as easily have used T.S. Eliot, Ernest Hemingway, or Wallace Stevens to illustrate his thesis. Eliot's theories about art as "an escape from emotion,"[2] while consciously present in The Waste Land--he does after all end on the note of "**Damyata**" or "control"--are belied by the sexual uneasiness that pervades the poem's psychological infra-structure. By the time Eliot wrote "Burnt Norton" he was indeed pursuing that contingent middle way. There, even as he celebrates "the still point of the turning world,"[3] even as his words climb toward the abstraction that they

worship, Eliot recognizes the problem in the high places:

> Words strain,
> Crack and sometimes break under the burden,
> Under the tension, slip, slide, perish,
> Decay with imprecision, will not stay in place,
> Will not stay still.[4]

Eliot no doubt preferred the still ordering point to "the waste sad time / Stretching before and after,"[5] but he uses the wasteland--"The Word in the desert/ Is most attacked by voices of temptation"[6] --as ballast against a too-sudden **"Erhebung"**, allowing the uncertainties of history to continuously qualify the artist's vision:

> Yet the enchainment of past and future
> Woven in the weakness of the changing body,
> Protects mankind from heaven and damnation
> Which flesh cannot endure.[7]

The tenuous nature of the vision that Eliot allows his speaker reflects the contingent nature of the artist's ordering principle, reflects a middle way.

Hemingway and Stevens undercut the artist in even more vigorous fashion. Hemingway's teller in The Sun Also Rises, Jake Barnes, appears at first to be honest about his narrative bias against Robert Cohn. However, since Jake does not attempt to keep from distorting Cohn, in fact goes on to vilify him, Jake's shaping vision becomes suspect. His main ordering principle of a "lost generation" becomes somewhat of a subterfuge for his own irresponsibility.

In Stevens' poem, "The Idea of Order at Key West," the idea, as whole and perfect as it seems to be, gives way in the last two stanzas, as the singing ends, to Key West itself. The apartness of the landscape from any ordering principle early in the poem gives the reader eyes with which to see through any naturalism that "the lights of the fishing boats"[8] may have later. Stevens affirms the poet in his role as myth-maker even as he names those myths as artificial.

This is precisely the strain of modernism that Watson, Welch, and Momaday extend and enrich. All three writers find themselves in a wasteland and depend upon art to redeem the sterility. Watson rescues her created community from drought and firms Eliot's still point by allowing sexual fusion as a precipitator of community. At the same time, she reduces the Eliotian artist's role: although she consistently calls attention to language in The Double Hook, she desires to move beyond the self-sufficient word. The fusion of word and thing forms Watson's middle road. But her success on the level of plot is a failure in terms of myth. Like Eliot returning to the orthodox camp, she returns finally to her Christian myths at the expense of the adopted Amerindian tradition so that the New Testament myths, renewed, compose an oligarchy over the Amerindian. She finds the **modernist's** middle road in imaginatively

joining what St. Paul separated--Christian man and his world--but loses the mythical middle when she brings Coyote into the Christian fold.

Welch is more successful. He inserts Hemingway's The Sun Also Rises into a new tribal context and uses the new context to extend the story, to give his alienated trickster a guiding mythical past that helps him assume a maturing shamanic role in the secular Montana wateland. Welch's reticence in his use of oral materials perhaps makes too much allowance for the dominant culture, but it is still true that the tribal materials reshape Hemingway's novel as much as The Sun Also Rises provides an aesthetic framework for Welch. Welch reinterprets his oral tradition in a way that keeps "the story going."[9] Even if the stories are fragmented in Winter in the Blood and even if they have shifted from a religious to an almost exclusively aesthetic context, Welch's trickster matures along Amerindian rather than along white lines.

Momaday, in the renewed person of Saynday, is Trickster/Culture Hero /shaman/modernist poet fused into one, and he seems determined to continue the religious meaning of his forefathers' art. His unique poetic autobiography itself is a stylistic middle ground, a half-way point between oral literature and white forms of fiction.[10] The Way to Rainy Mountain not only explodes

Eliot's objective fallacy[11] but Momaday also finds in the ancestral traditions a counter to the complete subjectivity that any "single artificer of the world"[12] must surely sense. In Saynday he finds a tribal self that allows for changes in a new cultural situation. And in making new stories for Saynday, Momaday remains in the tradition of many present-day Kiowa oral story-tellers.[13]

Where Welch questions the wasteland of his teller, Momaday questions the position of the artist who does the questioning, even as he affirms the artist in his deepening personality. Where Watson, though insisting that without art people are driven "either towards violence or towards insensibility,"[14] wonders about the final necessity of the artwork itself, Momaday strongly asserts the artist's shamanic calling and insists that men are made of words even as he undercuts his best creations. If any of these artists were to pare their nails like God behind their creations,[15] the irony of the seeming indifference would not be lost on them any more than it was lost on Joyce.

In these writers, the formal self-criticisms follow so closely upon clear indications of their faith in art that we are brought to an acceptance of illusion, an acceptance that both the traditional illusions and their own created illusions can form a basis for community. "Illusion" implies a recognition of the wasteland behind the illusion,

the wasteland that again and again divides world from word, content from form, self from community, Jahweh from Messiah, Trickster from shaman, and white from Amerindian. "Acceptance" suggests a deeply-imagined if dimly-sensed redemption of that wasteland:

> The final belief is to believe in a fiction, which you know to be a fiction, there being nothing else. The exquisite truth is to know that it is a fiction and that you believe in it willing.[16]

Watson, Welch, and Momaday would probably agree with these words of Stevens, though they might doubt that there is "nothing else." The gods who authorized the traditional fictions and the ancestors who held them cannot be **entirely** subsumed by illusion. In story and idea there are always ancestors who must be faithfully remembered because they are "that which we know,"[17] that which we cannot abandon **en route.** In our experience as in our myths, we live out again the changing career of Trickster.

[1] William A. Johnsen, "Towards a Redefinition of Modernism," Boundary 2, 2, No.3(Spring 1974) 544-545.

[2] "Tradition and the Individual Talent," p.529.

[3] "Burnt Norton," in Collected Poems 1909-1962, p.191.

[4] "Burnt Norton," p.194.

[5] "Burnt Norton," p.195.

[6] "Burnt Norton," p.194.

[7] "Burnt Norton," p.192.

[8] Stevens, p.130.

[9] Tedlock, p.48.

[10] See Kathleen Mullen Sands, "American Indian Autobiography," p.62, and Elaine Jahner, "Intermediate Forms between Oral and Written Literature," p.67, both in Allen.

[11] This is the fallacy that art or any human endeavor, including science, can be objective or impersonal.

[12] Stevens, p.130.

[13] See Boyd, p.297.

[14] "What I'm Going to Do," p.15.

[15] As Stephen Dedalus wants to do. James Joyce, A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1916), p.215.

[16] Wallace Stevens, "Adagio," Opus Posthumous, ed. Samuel French Morse, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1971), p.163.

[17] "Tradition and the Individual Talent," p.526.

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